CHINESE POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

INNOVATION AND INVENTION

EDITED BY NICOLA HORSBURGH, ASTRID NORDIN AND SHAUN BRESLIN
Chinese Politics and International Relations

The question of how China will relate to a globalising world is one of the key issues in contemporary international relations and scholarship on China, yet the angle of innovation has not been properly addressed within the field. This book explores innovation in China from an international relations perspective in terms of four areas: foreign and security policy, international relations theory, soft power/image management and resistance.

Under the complex condition of globalisation, innovation becomes a particularly useful analytical concept because it is well suited to capturing the hybridity of actors and processes under globalisation. By adopting this theme, studies not only reveal a China struggling to make the future through innovation, but also call attention to how China itself is made in the process.

The book is divided into four sections:

- **Part 1** focuses on conceptual innovation in China’s foreign and security policies since 1949.
- **Part 2** explores theoretical innovation in terms of a potential Chinese school of international relations theory.
- **Part 3** expands on innovation in terms of image management, a form of soft power, in particular how China exports its image both to a domestic and foreign audience.
- **Part 4** highlights how innovation is used in China by grassroot popular groups to resist official narratives.

This book will be of interest to students and scholars of Chinese studies, Chinese foreign policy and international relations, international relations theory and East Asian security.

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Chinese Politics and International Relations
Innovation and invention

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Nicola Horsburgh, Astrid Nordin and Shaun Breslin

Summary: “The question of how China will relate to a globalising world is one of the key issues in contemporary international relations and scholarship on China yet the angle of innovation has not been properly addressed within the field. This book explores innovation in China from an International Relations perspective in terms of four areas: foreign and security policy, international relations theory, soft power, image management, and resistance. Under the complex condition of globalisation, innovation becomes a particularly useful analytical concept because it is well suited to capturing the hybridity of actors and processes under globalisation. By adopting this theme, studies not only reveal China struggling to make the future through innovation but also call attention to how China itself is made in the process. The book is divided into four sections. Part 1 focuses on conceptual innovation in China’s foreign and security policies since 1949. Part 2 explores theoretical innovation in terms of a potential Chinese school of International Relations Theory. Part 3 expands on innovation in terms of image management, a form of soft power, in particular how China exports its image both to a domestic and foreign audience. Part 4 highlights how innovation is used in China by grassroots popular groups to resist official narratives. This book will be of interest to students and scholars of Chinese studies, Chinese foreign policy, and international relations, international relations theory, and East Asian security.” -- Provided by publisher.

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Introduction

China innovates: concepts, contexts and cases

Innovation is a concept whose time has come in China. For some time now, Chinese scholars have argued that Chinese innovation will stimulate world economic growth and thus benefit the world because of globalisation (Yan Xuetong 2001: 33). More recently others have called for institutional innovation in order to improve China’s “core cultural competitiveness” (Hua Jian 2011: 8; see also Pan Maoyuan and Liu Xiaojiang, 2008). For Ramo: “newness and innovation are the essential words of power. … rebounding around journal articles, dinner conversations and policy debates in China with mantra-like regularity” (Ramo 2004: 4).

This interest is supported by a soft propaganda campaign designed to highlight and support the state’s attempt to transform China’s political economy. For example, it is difficult to go far in Beijing without being reminded of its importance via the city’s official slogan, launched in 2011 after consultation with residents. The eight characters for “patriotism, innovation, inclusiveness and morality” (aiguo, chuangxin, baorong and houde) are highly visible all over the city. Rather ironically, they are often seen on a poster of an idealised three generation family that includes two young children – a sight that is somewhat rarer in the city than the new motto. China Central Television also hosts a show called “I Love Invention” to showcase the innovative spirit of the Chinese people. Concerned that growth had become too dependent on producing exports, which themselves were often dependent on imported foreign licensed technology, China’s leaders have attempted to take a new developmental turn. The headlines have largely focused on the need to “rebalance” the nature of economic growth; to become less reliant on exports and investment and for domestic consumption to take a growing role. But alongside this rebalancing – or more correctly, as part of it – there has also been a renewed emphasis on what in 2006 was officially championed as “indigenous
innovation” (zizhu chuangxin). The phase of “reform and opening” associated with the early days of reform under Deng Xiaoping were now over. The new task was to focus on innovation as part of China’s rejuvenation and the creation of a new modern China; a China that is no longer simply trying to catch up and emulate existing great powers but which is ready to take (or perhaps, retake) its place at the top table of global politics.

The “indigenous innovation” campaign has meant new industrial policies that are designed to decrease reliance on foreign technology, and instead employ China’s growing domestic market and strong regulatory mechanism (McGregor 2010: 3–4). The slogan has been followed up more recently in the form of “unprecedented senior level management mobilization, elaborate web of policies and implementation tools and surging government science and technology spending” (McGregor 2010: 4). The Sixth Plenary Session of the 17th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CCP) in November 2011 again stressed the importance of indigenous innovation in technology as well as in a range of cultural industries including film, television drama, animation and the Internet (Hua Jian 2011).

It is perhaps worth noting at this stage what this book is not about. As Horsburgh notes in her chapter, despite this cultural dimension, the main emphasis (supported by considerable government funding) has been scientific research and development on technological projects. To be sure, these projects have relevance for this study. Technological advances increase both Chinese “hard” power (for example, in terms of military capabilities) and the way that others think about China – not just the nature of Chinese power but also the capacity of the state to attain its objectives and goals. It also impacts on the way that China thinks about itself; all issues we will return to shortly. But we do not intend here to repeat the focus of other books that deploy “innovation” in a rather narrow sense, and study the technicalities and mechanics of policy making from technological or business management perspectives (Tan 2011; Rowen et al. 2008). We are not directly interested in how innovative initiatives have come about, how they are progressed (and funded) or whether they have been successful or not. Rather, the intention here is focus on innovation in broadly defined political arenas with a particular focus on the importance of innovation in ideas and in theorising about politics, governance and security.

What is innovation?

Having established the issues that this volume focuses on, it makes sense to establish more clearly what we mean by innovation. According to the
standard dictionary definition, to innovate means to make changes to something already established, by introducing new methods, ideas or products. Joseph Schumpeter similarly defined innovation as “the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already done in a new way” (Schumpeter 1978: 74). According to this understanding, innovations are not only new things but also new ways of dealing with what is considered already known, and knowing it in new ways. It involves a creative act that is often triggered by a particular problem in an actor’s interaction with their environment. This broad understanding was the working definition of innovation used by all the contributors to this volume.

Without wishing to delve too far into semantics and translation studies, it is worth spending a couple of paragraphs considering Chinese understandings of innovation. When writing in English using non-English language sources and analysing non-English language discourses, words, terms and concepts can be translated, but don’t always have the same meaning. There are a number of Chinese concepts that translate as “innovation”. Combining the character chuang – which means to begin, initiate, inaugurate, start or create – with xin – meaning new – results in chuangxin. Chinese–English dictionaries typically translate the term as bringing forth new ideas or blazing new trails. But it has become the most common Chinese translation for “innovate” and “innovation”, and the official translation of the above mentioned Beijing city slogan directly uses innovation for chuangxin. The chuang character moreover appears together with other characters in chuangzao, chuangzuo, chuangli and chuangye to indicate the creation, production, establishment, or initiation of something or some task. When placed after yuan, meaning origin, cause or source, to create yuanchuang, the emphasis is on originality and creativity rather than just innovation. Gexin can also mean innovation. It contains the same xin character indicating newness, but combines it with ge. Here there is an implication that innovation is not so much building on something in new ways, but rather throwing away or expelling old ways, means and ideas.

Despite these different nuances the concept of “innovation” emphasises the emergence of something new and has (perhaps not surprisingly) very positive connotations. Notably, it does not contain some of the same political implications (and thus potential political consequences) of using other related concepts that are typically deployed in discussions of Chinese society, politics and international relations in a globalising world. Unlike concepts of “development”, “modernisation” or “socialisation”, there is no implication or expectation of necessarily following a linear path towards becoming more like established
(Western) powers. Even compared to “change” or “transformation”, innovation emphasises Chinese agency and China’s ability to shape its own future; which of course helps explains its current popularity.

**Innovation in a one-party state**

But just saying that you are innovative doesn’t make innovation happen. And there is considerable scepticism about whether China can in fact become an innovative society. This is, after all, a political system where it’s not so much a case of heterodox ideas being considered to be dangerous, as it is new ideas sometimes being assumed almost by definition to be heterodox (simply because they are new). Challenging the status quo can mean challenging very powerful embedded vested interests even when there is no direct challenge to the existing structure of one-party rule. The death of Apple’s co-founder Steve Jobs in 2011 spurred a discussion of why China had not produced a Jobs, with many pointing to the lack of freedom of expression as inhibiting innovation in China. Evan Osnos at *The New Yorker*, for example, echoed an editorial of journal *Nature* (2008) in arguing that “China’s discomfort with radical thinking is perhaps its greatest handicap on bold innovation” (Osnos 2011). The punishment of inventiveness is seen in the form of censorship and/or “harmonising” of dissidents; practices that have in turn triggered an international response, for example in the *Wall Street Journal Magazine* naming dissident artist Ai Weiwei “Innovator of the Year” in art, after he was detained for 81 days by government agents in spring 2011 (*Wall Street Journal*, 2011).

Yet this reminds us that it is not just the Chinese government that has the ability and power to be innovative. Rather, innovation in non-governmental segments of Chinese society has been understood in opposition to the governmental take on innovation. In fact, a sub theme that runs through this volume is the importance of innovation as a means of getting round the structural obstacles that prevent change in the system. The clearest and most obvious example is Nordin’s investigation of how China’s Internet community get round restrictions on what they can and cannot say. If the official media doesn’t report a story deemed to be negative or in some ways dangerous for the regime, then the Internet community can and does take up the challenge of ensuring that the story is spread and that somebody has to take responsibility. And almost as soon as a word or term is banned, then new indirect ways of talking about the same issue emerge.
As Kinnari shows in her chapter, even state actors have to find innovative ways of doing things. Denied the funds from the central government (via the fiscal system) to do what they want and invest in local projects, local officials have found new ways of getting money from different sources; most recently through selling land use rights to raise revenues for local infrastructure projects. For Yao Yang (2008) the importance of local governments as agents of innovation forms part of a wider pragmatic approach to economic reform that has been a key characteristic of China’s transition from socialism. Rather than pursue an ideological or interest driven reform process, China’s leaders have simply been pragmatic and done whatever works best in promoting growth. This includes encouraging local governments to experiment with different types of policy preference, and then selecting the ones that appear to work as best practice, while still allowing local authorities to do what works best for them given specific local conditions. And for Heilmann (2009: 450), “the key to understanding the adaptability of China’s political economy” lies in focusing on just this type of innovative “policy experimentation” as a form of Communist Party institutional engineering (Heilmann 2005).

Moreover, the state has actively promoted innovation in some parts of political life. The acceptance and promotion of experimentation suggests a Chinese party-state seeking to maintain legitimacy through adaptation and re-invention (Laliberté and Lanteigne 2007). This has included Chinese leaders having to be theoretically innovative in order to bring the theoretical ideological basis of Communist Party rule somewhat closer to the reality of the contemporary political economy (Wang Haojun 2011). Gregory Chin has shown how China’s party elite have increasingly prioritised leadership innovation in order to preserve party rule under the challenges posed by globalisation (Chin 2011).

So, while constraints clearly do remain in place on some innovative practices (and thoughts), innovation is also part of a top down process and project, promoted and funded by the state. One of the collective themes that emerges from the chapters here is that where the state not only tolerates but encourages innovative thinking, China’s intellectuals and scholars are able to engage in lively debates with very diverse opinions and strategies on a range of issues. As Horsburgh shows in her chapter, this was the case in the past when China’s leaders were seeking a new role and identity as a nuclear power. Today, state-led attempts to create a preferred national image and identity of China create a space for truly innovative thinking on what type of global power China should be, and how it should project itself (and its power) – issues that are both recurring themes throughout this collection.
Innovation and globalisation

Underpinning the analysis in all of the chapters in this collection is an interest in the extent to which globalisation and being a global actor influences processes of innovation in China. Because innovation builds on change to something already existing, but simultaneously indicates a significant newness and particularity, it is well suited to capturing the hybridity of actors and processes under globalisation, yet avoids the lapse into globalisation as some undifferentiated homogeneity. It moreover steers between the two extremes of particularism and socialisation into “global norms” – an issue we will return to shortly.

Explorations of the theme of China and globalisation not only reveal a China struggling to make the future through innovation, but also calls attention to how China itself is made in the process. In the formulation “Innovating China”, China is both subject and object of innovation. Overall, this book seeks to answer questions like: to what extent has globalisation forced China to innovate and with what effects? Which China is being innovated in response to globalisation? What precisely does innovation mean in China today, furthermore, what is continuity and what is change in this process? What may have prompted innovation in the past? What may prompt it in the future? What potential barriers to innovation can be identified in a given field?

In order to answer such questions, researchers must be explicit about what is being innovated and who is innovating in any given case. Moreover, if innovation is a question of newness, we need to be explicit about our benchmark in each case – in relation to what is something considered new? Some authors will consider the newness of Chinese innovation in relation to something in a different place to contemporary China – to similar concepts or processes in the US, Europe or some other part of the globe. Others will measure it against a different time to contemporary China – to related notions in China’s own past. Some will consider it in relation to both of these simultaneously. All will indicate some point in a process, some crossing of a threshold that marks a phenomenon as distinctively new, as an innovation.

The authors in this collection consider the relationship between China and the global in two different ways. The first is the impact of the global on China. We have already noted above, for example, that the way in which China integrated into the (capitalist) global economy played a key role in spurring the new emphasis on innovation. This “outside in” approach is also important for Nordin’s understanding of the impact of the Internet on Chinese politics. Her primary concern is the way in which the Internet community find new and innovative ways
of getting around restrictions on what they can and cannot say. But she also points to the ways in which Chinese surveillance techniques and technologies owe much to both the practice of previous Chinese regimes/dynasties and “copying and borrowing from abroad”. And of course, one of the reasons that the authorities have been so keen on establishing firewalls and blocking politically sensitive debates is to stop new ideas coming in from the outside.

But this is far from just a one-way street, and the second approach is to focus on the “inside out” impact of China on the global. At a very basic level, and as discussed by Horsburgh and Warmerdam respectively, as a long time nuclear power and a more recent major provider of aid related financial flows, Chinese innovation in these areas has massive potential to have a very real and measurable impact on the globe. But as already noted, we think that innovation in ideas (and representations) are important too. And here, the chapters in this collection combine to contribute to debates over the nature of China’s global significance in three main ways: how is an idea of what China is/will be as a global power being constructed? is this China in some way different from other powers (or even unique)? and will the way that Chinese interests are projected overseas fundamentally alter the nature of the global order?

**Constructing a national image**

As Horsburgh notes, for many years China was widely viewed as a country that was lagging behind in the race to develop and trying to play “catch-up”. In nuclear policy (and elsewhere), this not only entailed trying to reach the technological levels long since attained by the major powers, but also trying to integrate into an existing international regime created and shaped by the power and interests of others. Even as economic growth began to accelerate rapidly through the 1990s and beyond, the way in which this growth was being achieved still often resulted in a focus on China as in some ways being a second rate or inferior global power. China was often seen as having grown by copying from others and inserting itself into the pre-existing global economy dominated by Western powers. Rather than develop its own technology and its own global companies as Japan and South Korea had previously done while catching up, China had instead focused on screwdriver assembly – importing components, putting them together, and then sending them back out to the world. China has also faced recurrent accusations from outside of not protecting the intellectual property rights of others (see McGregor 2010: 4) and effectively
cheating its way to growth. Even where the state had supported the
global reach of major Chinese companies, these were often seen as
predatory actors buying existing (Western) companies and technologies
rather than developing their own. Innovation has also become a sore
spot in China’s international relations. In short, China fails to innovate,
and just copies (Hille 2011).

Of course, this was not the only perception of China and we shall
return to alternative conceptions shortly. Nevertheless, as Kinnari
argues, it seems to have played at least some role in shaping Chinese
policy in terms of national image construction. Innovation has been,
and remains, central to how China portrays itself externally, in its for-

ign policies and strategies, as well as governing itself internally. And
supporting innovation is understood and portrayed as foundational to
China’s future and the world’s future. Hence, for example, the sig-
nificance of holding major international events like the Asian Games.
We could also add to this case study hosting the Olympics and the
Shanghai World Expo to signal that China has arrived and become a
modern member of the global community. Launching a manned space
programme also gives China membership of an elite group of countries
that has the technology (and now perhaps more importantly, the
money) to act as a power “beyond the globe”.

At a local level cities like Beijing and Guangzhou have also estab-
lished clear policies to try and establish their place in the global econ-
omy. While this formerly entailed finding ways of attracting investment
to produce exports, there is an emphasis today on marketing cities
that are moving into “postmodern” or post industrial phases, with
an emphasis on finance and services rather than manufacturing and
production.

This image promotion forms part of what is often referred to as
China’s “soft power promotion” (though it’s not always easy to see
how soft this state project actually is). The impulse behind the project
is not purely academic. There is a strong feeling in China that for-
eigners often depict the country – what it wants and how it will act – in
largely negative ways. This can lead to the creation of a fear of a Chi-
nese Threat that results in other countries trying to block China from
achieving its real (benign and paci

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f) intentions. So rather than let
others control the agenda, it is important to ensure that real Chinese
voices are heard articulating real Chinese agendas and objectives.

Notably, while innovation by definition is forward looking and in
some ways new, there is a tendency in China also to look backwards.
Innovations across a range of areas from space technology to a “Chinese
school” of international relations are placed in the context of a long
tradition of an always-innovating Chinese people (see for example Nordin 2012). This is a society and culture that made many of the great inventions of mankind including gunpowder, paper and printing, and developed ways of regulating rivers and water flows that are still in use today. Even football is now officially credited as having a Chinese origin. It also developed a code of Confucian ethics to guide society centuries before Western philosophers brought forth the European Enlightenment. This historical emphasis serves two purposes. First, it suggests that if there has been a recent period of copying others, it is historically insignificant when judged against a much longer history of Chinese innovation. Second, it emphasises China’s fundamental differences from Western societies.

These issues are covered in more detail in Hartig’s chapter, which traces the way that Confucius Institutes have emerged as a key tool in national image management. It is perhaps a little ironic that this “innovation” entails looking backwards to Chinese history and attempts to create an idealised version of this history that might appeal to outsiders more than China’s present (its political system at least). But this is seen as being the best way of convincing others that China’s peaceful nature is not just a political choice, but something that is deeply engrained within the very essence of China (and indeed, of being Chinese). As China’s history and philosophies are very different from those of previous and existing (Western) great powers, there is no reason to expect that China will behave as they did (and do). Understanding this difference will thus explain why others have nothing to fear from China’s rise or dealing with China. To be effective, this understanding has to be supported by policy. And just as Horsburgh argues that China historically constructed a nuclear strategy designed to emphasise China’s difference from the superpowers, so Warmerdam points to the establishment of China as a different type of aid provider to other great powers today.

A similar logic applies to recent innovations in Chinese international relations theorising, as discussed here in two chapters by Cunningham-Cross and Nielsen and Kristensen. Pessimistic predictions of the consequences of China’s rise are not just the result of deliberate attempts to mislead. They also, so the argument goes, result from judging China against erroneous comparators using erroneous theories. In particular, realist theory, the source of much of the conception of China as destabilising threat, is seen as being a theory built on the experiences of a small number of Western states. There is a need, therefore, to develop a “Chinese school” of international relations (Qin Yaqing 2011; Yu Zhengliang 2005). Again, we see the idea that China is radically
different from other countries and therefore can only be properly understood through the lens of “Chinese culture”. Thinkers that are (sometimes perhaps reluctantly) drawn upon as part of this emerging school utilise an eclectic mix of concepts and thinkers from China’s past as a source of inspiration for developing theories that can better explain China’s rise in a globalising world (see for example Qin Yaqing 2007; Yan Xuetong 2011).

Building Chinese theories or schools, then can play a similar role to national image promotion by building a (correct) idea of what China is, what it stands for, what it wants, and how it will act. Up until fairly recently, the emphasis in terms of ideational innovation in China has been on “sinifying” existing concepts. This takes the form of modifying existing concepts to take into account the specificity of Chinese circumstances. Originally designed to explain how Chinese socialism took a specific form that reflected the country’s specific and unique circumstances and experiences, the suffix (in English) or prefix (in Chinese) “with Chinese characteristics/you zhongguo tesede” has now been extended to apply to just about anything. To be sure, some of this sinification might simply be an attempt to explain and justify why China’s political system does not match up to international expectations in terms of human rights and democracy. But there are a number of scholars who take the search for “Chineseness” very seriously.

Notably, and as reflected in this volume, there is a strong feeling in China that the time is right to move to a new level; to no longer simply be a taker of norms, processes and ideas generated by others, but instead to look for new Chinese ways of thinking. Rather than simply modifying what is already there, a number of Chinese scholars instead focus on looking for fundamentally Chinese alternatives. As Cunningham-Cross puts it, the aim is to move “beyond ‘dependence’ on western theories” to find alternatives that start from Chinese circumstances rather than starting from what’s already there and then sinifying it.

It is possible that this exercise will result in theories that are only applicable to China itself. And presumably, by the same logic, other countries should develop their own theories too, as all countries have their own unique histories and philosophies. There are, however, some scholars who see China’s case as not only different (from the West), but in some ways exceptional; all countries are unique, but China is in some ways uniquely unique. This can help the process of national image promotion. As Nielsen and Kristensen argue, “doing ‘something the Westerners do not understand’ suggests that some scholars use essentialism and radical difference to obtain international recognition”. But if a theory is only applicable to the case that generated it, and
it cannot travel and have relevance elsewhere, then its efficacy as a
generalisable theory of international relations *per se* is somewhat
questionable.

But for some, there is the possibility that Chinese experiences and
understandings might create the basis for ways of thinking about the
world that have purchase elsewhere. It’s not just that they might create
the foundations for alternatives to Western ways of theorising beyond
China, but of theorising about the nature of global politics and inter-
national relations today. And this possibility of Chinese innovation
providing fundamental alternatives to the Western way forms part of a
wider debate over what Chinese innovation might mean for the global
order; not just the way that it operates, but the fundamental principles
and norms that underpin it.

**Globalisation, Chinese innovation, and the global order**

*Chinese exceptionalism?*

The idea that China might provide an innovative alternative to the
West began to gain popular attention with the publication of Joshua
Ramo’s *Beijing Consensus* in 2004. Rather than following the dam-
aging and rigid neoliberal prescriptions of the Washington Consensus,
Ramo depicts a Chinese project driven by innovation and a commit-
ment to equity. Given the above mentioned understandings of the lack
of innovation in China, and growing income disparities and inequality,
this took many China watchers by surprise. Kennedy (2010: 471)
rebutted Ramo’s arguments by arguing that:

> the intellectual source for most of China’s economic reforms
> has been the experiences of other countries, and China’s experts
> and officials have closely examined and borrowed from elsewhere.
> Ramo would have been closer to the mark if he said China was
> following in the footsteps of other developmental states.

Indeed, Ramo seems to have been describing the type of economic
system that the Chinese leadership wanted to move towards, rather
than the one that had generated such rapid growth rates over previous
years.

Nevertheless, the idea of the Beijing Consensus seemed to catch a
popular mood. Both those who were opposed to neoliberalism and
capitalist globalisation and those who feared a China challenge to the
existing global order took up the task of promoting the idea of a Chinese
alternative (the latter in an attempt to provoke a liberal response/resistance). China’s growing economic relationships with Africa and later Latin America and the Caribbean lent a material weight to the argument as China became a real economic alternative to aid and trade relationships with existing Western powers.

Originally, enthusiasm for/fear of this Chinese alternative was more evident in outside observers of China than within China itself. But over time this has changed, albeit with the term “China model” more often used than the Beijing Consensus. In particular, the onset of the global financial crisis helped stimulate a sense of pride in the relative success of the Chinese economic structure when compared to the crisis-ridden states in the West – and perhaps also a sense of schadenfreude. At the very least, China’s achievements showed other countries that you don’t have to follow Western (neo)liberal prescriptions for development; to be sure they might not all be able to do what China has done, but they should seek their own paths to development, supported by China as a partner that doesn’t insist on linking economic relations with political conditionalities. Official Chinese White Papers and government statements have also become increasingly confident in asserting Chinese difference and uniqueness. And alongside Xi Jinping promoting a rather weakly defined “China Dream” as the ideological basis of his leadership, there was an upsurge in news reports and articles condemning “Westernisation” and explaining why Western modes of thinking and governance are simply not appropriate for China.

As hinted at above, there has been an extensive and at times rather testy debate over what the Beijing Consensus or China model actually is (or might be). These discussions are covered in detail by Warmerdam in his contribution to this collection, so we won’t repeat them in detail in this introduction (see also Breslin 2011). What is important for our purposes here is to suggest that many of the innovations in thinking discussed in this book form part of this debate over difference, uniqueness and perhaps even exceptionalism. And what emerges collectively from these analyses is the idea of a self reinforcing discourse. The understanding that there is a distinct China model is reinforced (or partly legitimised) by conceptions of China’s historical difference from the West. At the same time, that there is a China model is a manifestation of this difference.

**Globalisation and socialisation**

The Chinese particularistic imaginary may conceive of China as a threat or as an opportunity, but insists on China as a unique case. At
the other extreme of the debate the idea of socialisation not only rejects particularistic arguments, but suggests the probable eventual convergence of China with existing dominant (Western liberal) norms and practices. This understanding of how China will respond to a globalising world is found in the literatures that deploy the language of “integration” or “engagement” (Johnston and Ross 1999; Shinn 1996).

One of the more influential pieces of scholarship in this line of thought is Alastair Iain Johnston’s seminal *Social States* (2008). His starting point is the simple claim “actors’ behavior that prior to social interaction tended to diverge may converge as a result of this social interaction” (Johnston 2008: xiii). He identifies three micro-processes through which socialisation takes place: mimicking, persuasion and social influence. Through observing these processes in a number of international organisations, he argues that Chinese diplomats, strategists and analysts have been socialised from a prior worldview based in realpolitik to a new one that imagines greater potential for cooperation. Johnston understands that the behaviour resulting from socialisation may be cooperative or conflictual (Johnston, 2008: xv). Nonetheless, his three micro-processes of socialisation focus on actors “becoming the same” because of integration and interaction in an environment characterised by specific norms.

This logic is part of a long tradition of both English and Chinese language scholarship that has portrayed the country and its people as behind or backward. This Euro-centric or Western-centric way of imagining the world asks not if, but when China will be “socialised” into the dominant norms of “international society”. Herein rests an underlying assumption that Europeans are truly innovative when it comes to social, political and international organisation. In this story, China is a follower, or in Johnston’s words a “novice” (Johnston 2008: 32–33), that has only recently “joined the world” (Oksenberg and Economy 1999) and needs to and/or will learn to be more like “us”. Johnston’s own work draws on child socialisation (Johnston 2008: 5), and is but one example of an awkward acceptance in the wider international relations (IR) literatures of imagining China as a child or teenager. In this imaginary, China is conceived as a prior version of our mature selves to whom we relate in terms of a “huge educational effort” (Oksenberg and Economy 1999: 28). Rather than innovating, China, in this story, copies. In other words, China’s joining the world and engagement with world affairs from the late 1980s onwards is unsurprising, an inevitable evolutionary step, and a “coming around” to innovative Western ideas governing international affairs.
**Innovating China: arguments and outline**

These two extremes of exceptionalism and socialisation have been framed similarly elsewhere in the literature on China’s predicted rise in international affairs. In this literature, only a dichotomous outcome is posited: China as either a rising power that will threaten to over-turn existing international structures; or as a rising power that will conform to international structures. Put differently, will China be a status quo or a revisionist power? (see for example Feng Huiyun 2009; Taylor 2007; Roy 2003; Johnston 2003; Shambaugh 1996). Added to this debate is consideration since the mid 2000s of whether China will be a “responsible” great power and stakeholder in international affairs. The implication here again, is dichotomous – China will either be responsible or irresponsible in its rise (Christensen 2005).

In this book, we posit innovation as an alternative reading of China’s rise and interaction with the world; a fourth possible result of interaction not covered by Johnston’s three micro-processes of socialisation, and one that does not resort to Chinese particularism. The research question driving this study is whether in contemporary China we can see actors not only mimicking, being persuaded and being socially influenced, but also innovating in response to globalisation.

The book goes about this investigation through seven chapters that each elaborates a case study of a particular innovation, with the analysis divided into four main sub groups of analysis. The first two chapters examine Chinese innovation in the foreign and security policy making realm. Horsburgh asks to what extent we can see innovation in Chinese nuclear policy over the lifespan of the PRC. Innovation might not be what first comes to mind when one thinks of Chinese nuclear policy. Indeed, a quick glance at the literature paints a somewhat different picture: of a belligerent China during the Mao period; irresponsible in the 1980s and 1990s following suspected proliferation of nuclear technology to countries like Pakistan; and a slow and sometimes reluctant student of global nuclear norms such as non-proliferation. According to this view, rather than innovate, since opening up to the world, China has been catching up with mainstream nuclear ideas and integrating itself into the non-proliferation regime.

However, Horsburgh argues, this is only half the story. While China has integrated itself into the global nuclear order, most notably by joining the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1994, what is often overlooked in Western analysis is the degree to which China has developed innovative ideas regarding nuclear weapons. She argues that innovation in
Chinese nuclear policy can be traced back as early as the Mao period, from the “paper tiger” thesis disparaging the significance of nuclear weapons to the emphasis on minimalism in nuclear development, at a time when other nuclear weapons states were actively building vast nuclear arsenals. However, it was during the period of reform, amid intense internal debates on military strategy, that truly innovative thinking regarding nuclear weapons began to take shape in China. This chapter pays particular attention to those internal debates and changes that began in the 1980s to highlight three areas of innovation: the making of nuclear strategy; the reconsideration of deterrence in declaratory nuclear policy; and finally, academic discussions of nuclear strategy in China today.

Chapter 2 by Warmerdam takes a similar long-haul perspective to trace the evolution of China’s foreign aid programme from 1950 to 2011, highlighting key political and economic considerations driving China’s aid policy formulation and evolution. It argues that the Chinese government, despite earlier economic and financial constraints, was able to develop innovative foreign aid policies, principles and practices that helped achieve its foreign policy goals and further its domestic interests.

Warmerdam takes these innovations to fall into two general categories: policy and practical. Innovative policies, particularly in comparison to internationally traditional donor aid, include: non-interference in recipient affairs, respect for sovereignty, non-conditionality, equality and mutual benefit, and the requirement that Chinese experts in recipient countries must receive the same conditions as their recipient counterparts. These policies were crafted both as an expression of China’s ideology and as a means of realising China’s foreign policy objectives. Practical innovations in China’s foreign aid include: widespread use of turnkey projects, joint venture projects, special economic zones, and the pursuit of mutual benefits and common development. These practical measures were formulated in recognition of China’s economic and financial limitations, with reference to China’s own developmental experience, to be of minimum cost and maximum gain. Through these policies and practices, faced with foreign policy imperatives and economic and financial limitations, the government found innovative ways to “make the most of what they had”.

The next two chapters discuss innovation in what has come to be discussed as a potential “Chinese school” of international relations. Chapter 3 by Cunningham-Cross examines the politics going on in debates over the claim that a “Chinese school” of international relations is something that Chinese academics can and should innovate.
Cunningham-Cross addresses the common claim that academic research in the field of international relations has a short history in China. On this view, it is only in the past two or three decades that something recognisable as a “discipline” of IR is said to have emerged in China. What’s more, it is a discipline that, in the eyes of both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars, is still in its infancy. It is not as well developed or as rich as that of other countries, particularly the US. It is, therefore, a field of study in need of improvement and “modernisation”. The work it produces is often said to be lacking in quality, to be repetitive or superficial and, most importantly, to be theoretically weak. Greater theoretical innovation is therefore seen by many as the key to modernising international relations research in China and creating a discipline to rival that of the US or the West.

Cunningham-Cross’s chapter interrogates these and other claims that are frequently made about disciplinary international relations in China. It asks what stories they tell of Chinese IR research and why; what possibilities these narratives open up and what possibilities they preclude. It explores some of the driving forces behind such narratives and in particular their relation to modernisation discourses both within and beyond China. It argues that such historical narratives play a vital role in the creation of an IR “discipline” in the first place and argues that they are necessary in sustaining a certain identity for Chinese IR scholars vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

Chapter 4 by Kristensen and Nielsen examines the same debates about whether and how to innovate a “Chinese school” or IR theory, but does so from a different vantage point. Their chapter examines the driving forces behind this innovational drive by challenging the commonsensical link between external events in the subject matter (i.r.) and theorising (IR), in this case that the innovation of a Chinese IR theory is a natural product of China’s geopolitical rise, its growing political ambitions and discontent with Western hegemony. Kristensen and Nielsen propose instead a sociological theory of intellectual innovation that opens the black box of knowledge production and argue that the Chinese innovational drive is best understood as interplay between several layers.

Where Cunningham-Cross’s chapter focuses on the place of Chinese IR scholars in the global academic hierarchy, this chapter zooms in on how academic positions are negotiated vis-à-vis other actors in the domestic academic context. The first layer examined consists of the local academic context of intellectuals pursuing prominence where each intellectual tries to carve out a maximally distinct position in order to receive attention from peers – innovating and theorising a
Chinese IR theory being one important way of doing this. A second layer consists of Chinese academics’ institutional environment, where the control over rewards such as research funds, promotion and publications affects what kind of work is done – innovative theorising is increasingly being rewarded.

The next two chapters investigate two forms of Chinese “image management”, or what some would call instruments of soft power. Chapter 5 by Hartig introduces Confucius Institutes as an innovative tool of China’s cultural diplomacy. It explains the origins and implications of this new approach to promote China’s culture abroad and thus to shape China’s image globally. The chapter draws on case studies of Confucius Institutes in Australia and Germany. It shows how China is adapting a Western instrument of cultural diplomacy, namely an organisation like the British Council or Goethe Institute, in an innovative manner to accomplish its goals in the most effective way. In contrast to British Councils or Goethe Institutes, Confucius Institutes are typically set up as joint ventures between Chinese and international partners.

By exploring the advantages and disadvantages of this project for both sides, the chapter illustrates how the outside world shapes China and, in turn, China shapes the outside world in the context of cultural exchange and cooperation. It argues that global influences, namely the general negative perception of China in the West, have forced China not only to become active in the field of cultural diplomacy, but furthermore to strive for an innovative way to be successful.

Chapter 6 by Kinnari narrows the study of image management down to the local level in a study of the Guangzhou Asian Games. Unlike the Olympic Games, the Asian Games have always been directly and openly connected to politics both in the hosting country and among the participating countries. The Asian Games act as a medium not only for the host country to show its strength, but also for the host city to show its capability to become a world-class city. Through the 1990 Asian Games, the 2008 Olympic Games and the 2010 Shanghai Expo, China had already demonstrated its membership in globalised world. This meant that the 2010 Asian Games concentrated more on promoting Guangzhou city than China.

The chapter studies how Guangzhou promoted itself in bilingual Guangzhou 2010 magazine, which was published from 1 December 2007 to 17 October 2010. The purpose of the magazine was to promote both the Asian Games and Guangzhou city, and it provides us with a picture of the goals and objectives of the Chinese Officials when organising the Games. Kinnari examines this purported image through the lens of place marketing. She uses text and narratives of marketing
materials from the Asian Games to study identity formulation of a city, policy inclinations, state and popular narratives. She further examines the reception of this message through two internationally influential foreign newspapers, the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*, asking what their perception of Guangzhou was during 2009 and 2010. Through these examinations, Kinnari gets behind the topics and uses context analysis to show how a segment of people in the West perceive Guangzhou. Throughout, this case study shows the micro-processes of negotiation that are involved in a Chinese city’s efforts to reinvent itself in the eyes of local and global audiences.

**Chapter 7** by Nordin contrasts the un-innovative censorship mechanisms deployed on the Chinese Internet with the innovative and creative forms of resistance that have come about as a way of simultaneously avoiding and criticising that censorship. In doing so, it points to Chinese innovation beyond the country’s academic and political elites. It shows how the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalisation of information, and particularly the growth of the Chinese Internet, has urged a wave of creative and innovative resistance in the form of the language play and ironic humour that has become known as *egao* culture.

Nordin takes similar forms of ironic and political humour to exist both elsewhere in the world and in China’s own past. However, she argues that the *egao* phenomenon is indeed innovative in relation to both these contexts. First, it is innovative compared to Western political satire in the deployment of a particular form of wordplay and puns that are made possible by the Chinese script. It is also innovative in relation to similar puns and language play in Chinese history, because its articulation in the online context of virtual censorship makes for new forms of deployment. In this way, the chapter shows how young people in China are coming up with creative, humorous and innovative ways of negotiating a government that relies on old and uninnovative censorship tools. Moreover, this wave of innovation is brought about by the globalisation of information and the government’s efforts to curb it.

Our objective for the book was not to come to a single once and for all conclusion about the nature of innovation in China *per se*; to give some sort of score (against some sort of scale). Indeed, as this introduction has hopefully demonstrated, we are very wary of the tendency to first aggregate China into a single entity and then to dichotomise. Instead, we have sought to explore the nature of innovation in each particular case to contribute to an understanding of an (increasingly) heterogeneous China. Collectively, the chapters point towards creativity
and innovation in China, refuting the idea of China as merely a copycat. But at the same time, they illustrate the limits of Chinese innovation and inventiveness when negotiating its place in world affairs in the context of globalisation. And we recognise that this is not the end of the story. Things change, and seem to change faster in China than in many other places. Our modest hope is that thinking about innovation in the way that it is used in this book might provide a lens for future studies to analyse this rapidly changing Chinese landscape.

Bibliography

Introduction

Part I

Innovation in foreign and security policy
1 Innovation through debate and differentiation

Chinese nuclear doctrine since the reform era

Nicola Horsburgh

Innovation might not be what first comes to mind when one thinks of Chinese nuclear weapons policy and doctrine. Indeed, a quick glance at the literature paints a somewhat different picture: of a belligerent China during the Maoist period of its history from 1949 to 1976 (Ryan 1989: 17; Schram 1969: 129–30); irresponsible in the 1980s and 1990s when supposedly proliferating sensitive dual-use nuclear technology to countries like Pakistan; and more recently, a slow and reluctant student of global nuclear norms such as non-proliferation (Medeiros 2007: 30–88). According to this view, rather than innovate, since opening up to the world, China has been catching-up with mainstream nuclear ideas and integrating itself into the non-proliferation regime.

However, this is only half the story. While China has integrated itself into the global nuclear order, most notably by joining the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 1992 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1994, what is often overlooked in Western analysis is the degree to which China has its own innovative ideas in its nuclear doctrine. Indeed, innovation in Chinese nuclear thinking can be traced back as early as the Mao period, from the so-called ‘paper tiger’ thesis disparaging the significance of nuclear weapons to the emphasis on minimalism in nuclear development during the 1970s and 1980s, a time when other nuclear weapons states were actively building vast nuclear arsenals (Zhang 2009). During this period of reform under Deng Xiaoping, amid intense internal debates on military strategy, truly innovative thinking regarding nuclear weapons began to take shape in China.

This chapter will pay particular attention to three areas of innovation: dynamic internal debates in the 1980s that led to the making of China’s first nuclear strategy; the reconsideration of nuclear deterrence in Chinese declaratory policy throughout the 1980s and 1990s; and
finally, academic discussions of nuclear strategy in China today. In addition, the chapter will analyse China’s choices of nuclear strategy relative to other states, at different junctures of time. In essence, innovation is considered in two main ways: first, in an historical sense, through internal debates that have shaped Chinese nuclear thinking, and second, in terms of a process of differentiation, particularly from the West. In focusing on these areas, the chapter addresses a number of questions central to this book, namely: what has prompted innovation in the past in China? How has globalisation, in particular since the 1990s and 2000s, impacted upon past innovative ideas, and has it brought forth new ones?

**Innovation in the Chinese nuclear context**

Since 2006, innovation has become a buzz word in China. The official term used by the Chinese government, *chuangxin* (or *zizhu chuangxin*, indigenous innovation), has been applied almost exclusively to technology and science. This emphasis on technology extends more generally to the military field, where innovation has largely been studied in terms of China’s transition from imitation to innovation in weapons technology (Cheung 2011: 325–54). However, as Andrew Ross points out, there is more to military innovation than just technology; innovation can also be seen in military doctrine and organisation (Ross 2010). In addition, Chinese innovation has mostly been cast in a future orientated light, linked to a wider process of ‘catching-up’ with the West. According to these narratives, innovation is intrinsically linked to modernity and development. However, as will be argued here, the focus on technology and the traditional explanations for China’s innovation – namely the ‘catching-up’ and the ‘copy-cat’ model – overshadow innovation elsewhere, in particular the role of ideas and internal debates that have led Chinese doctrine down a different nuclear path to that of most other nuclear weapons states.

A brief word on innovation in the nuclear field is useful at this stage. Following the tragic atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, a consensus soon emerged among military strategists that nuclear weapons, with their potential for massive global annihilation, would likely result in a revolution in warfare (Brodie and Dunn 1946: 76). New thinking was suddenly required: should states consider these weapons of mass destruction as operational and usable, and thereby integrate them fully into their arsenals, or would their value be best served in their non-use, as a threatening ultimate weapon of last
resort? The latter idea won out, but only after a period of strategic and technological innovation in the 1950s and 1960s.

In terms of strategy and ideas, the two superpowers at that time, the US and USSR, oscillated between a number of different strategies, from massive retaliation to flexible response and warfighting, until both sides settled on a condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) based on a rough parity of forces and so-called TRIAD second strike/retaliatory capabilities such as nuclear bombers, land forces and sea-launched missiles (see Freedman 1989: 76–89; Smoke 1993: 72–75). This experimentation with strategy fuelled an enduring arms race and resulted in the build-up of vast nuclear arsenals during the Cold War. These debates on strategy were in turn shaped by further innovations in technology, in particular multiple warheads (known as MIRVs) and ballistic missile defence, both developments blurring traditional offence–defence boundaries, complicating strategy. Yet, since the end of the Cold War, as the world has become more globalised, there have been surprisingly few new ideas, and strategy and technology have reached somewhat of a plateau. This stagnation is perhaps unsurprising. Important international legal restraints now exist, such as the CTBT, forbidding the testing of nuclear weapons. Most nuclear weapons states have also ceased production of weapons grade fissile material (highly enriched Uranium and Plutonium), complicating the development of new nuclear weapons. Instead, since 2009, the nuclear debate has been moving somewhat in the opposite direction away from new nuclear weapons technology towards reducing reliance on these weapons, driven in part by the failure to heed the call for disarmament in the NPT, and wider threats posed by nuclear security and terrorism. In strategy, recent official documents from NATO, the US Nuclear Posture Review and the decision to renew TRIDENT in the UK, echo the logic of assured destruction established during the Cold War. As a result, there is little experimentation in doctrine today, most nuclear weapons states openly subscribe to a strategy of minimal deterrence.

This chapter offers a somewhat different approach to standard interpretations of innovation in the Chinese and nuclear context. First, what follows is a look back, rather than forward, to the reform era under Deng Xiaoping and an evolving internal debate on nuclear doctrine. In this debate, new ideas and concepts led to doctrinal innovation. Key actors engaged in this process included political elites, scientists, military strategists and later in the 1990s and 2000s, academics and arms control experts. Second, this chapter considers innovation as a political process of differentiation from other nuclear armed
states. During the Cold War and the reform era, this other was the superpowers, the US and former Soviet Union, and Chinese interpretations of superpower nuclear doctrine. In the post Cold War era of globalisation and China’s rise, this other is the US. It will be argued that China’s strategic choices in terms of nuclear doctrine differed – both during the Cold War and today in an era of globalisation – from the major nuclear weapons states, namely the US and former Soviet Union, leading to sharp asymmetry in terms of the size and scope of nuclear arsenals, as well as conceptual approaches to nuclear deterrence. While some analysts, such as the Center for Nonproliferation Studies’ Dr Jeffrey Lewis in his 2007 book The Minimum Means of Reprisal, highlighted unique aspects of Chinese nuclear thinking such as retaliation and minimalism, these aspects have so far not been framed within the context of innovation.

The search for Chinese nuclear strategy

In 1978, China’s leader Deng Xiaoping launched the ‘Four Modernisations’, placing defence modernisation the last of the four, subordinate to economic development. As a consequence the defence budget was reduced, slowing down the pace of weapons development. Such a decision seems, in retrospect, a risky one since at that time China still had a very weak nuclear arsenal, with no retaliatory second strike force capabilities in place. This meant that China’s declared policy of no-first-use (NFU), in place since 1964, rendered the country extremely vulnerable to a nuclear first strike. Indeed, during this period, China’s nuclear capabilities consisted of around 80 TU-16 bombers that could not penetrate US or USSR air defences; 30–40 Intermediate Range Ballistic Missiles (IRBMs) that could not reach the US, and only a few Soviet cities; no Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs); and no Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). In fact, the ICBM and SLBM systems were several years behind schedule. Throughout the late 1970s and most of the 1980s, relative to other nuclear states, China was arguably one of the weakest nuclear weapons states. However, despite the de-prioritisation of defence in China, the pursuit of nuclear capabilities was not abandoned. In 1981, two ICBM systems, the DF-5 and DF-4, were deployed, and then in 1986, China launched a SLBM system, the Xia (IISS 1985/6: 111–13; Lin 1988: 38–39).

More crucially, the de-prioritisation of defence sparked innovative domestic debates, some of which transformed military thinking in China, facilitating the formation of China’s first nuclear strategy. One
of the first discussions that took place related to the timing and urgency of military modernisation. In 1977, a theoretical group of the PLA Academy of Military Sciences challenged the decision to place defence last of the four modernisations by echoing an argument once used in the 1950s to justify nuclear weapons development: military modernisation was not just about national defence, the defence sector was also a highly advanced sector of benefit to the wider economy (Robinson 1982: 231–52). Others argued that since the prospect of nuclear war remained high, de-prioritising defence was too costly a compromise (Yee 1983: 239–49). An alternative view argued that the military, long a priority in China, could now afford to bide its time. According to this view, superpower parity – by now both the US and USSR had entered into a condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) – meant the likelihood of nuclear war had actually reduced in the 1970s, and China had sufficient conventional forces to deter an attack. This was the opinion of a powerful group in China, namely senior politician Deng Xiaoping; China’s then foreign minister, Huang Hua; and the father of China’s nuclear programme, Nie Rongzhen, who felt the USSR would hesitate to launch nuclear war (Beijing Review, 1980). In the end, this more moderate view won out. Discussions also centred on how modernisation would be carried out. In 1977, four military conferences took place in China to discuss this issue (Shambaugh 1979: 4–5). At these conferences a consensus emerged that defence modernisation would be best served through greater access to Western conventional technology, in keeping with the national goal of economic development (Tow and Stuart 1981: 286–300).

Changes also took place in China’s military strategy with implications for its nuclear posture. Initially, in 1978, ‘People’s War’ was modified into ‘People’s War under Modern Conditions’, with a focus on defending against the USSR. Then, in the mid 1980s, as the Soviet threat receded, an even bigger shift in strategy took place, from general war with the USSR to small scale wars (Godwin 1992: 191–201). In other words, China no longer based military planning on the prospect of entanglement in a world-wide ‘early stage, large scale war with nuclear weapons’ but instead re-orientated PLA planning to limited conflicts in the context of a new strategic environment of ‘peace and development’ (Medeiros 2006: 51). Ellis Joffe explains that this shift reflected an important change in Chinese nuclear thinking: whereas Beijing used to contend that nuclear weapons would not be enough to destroy China (on the basis that a ground invasion and conventional forces would be required) this no longer applied in the context of ‘limited nuclear wars’ and war-winning strategies under consideration
by the superpowers at the time (Joffe 1965: 91). Robert Wang expands on this, highlighting how China’s past strategy of ‘luring into the deep’ no longer sufficed – especially in deterring the USSR – since it placed at risk the northern areas of China where its nuclear plants and missile sites were located (Wang 1984: 1047–48).

In parallel with these debates, Chinese military strategists began research on nuclear doctrine, indicative of plans to formulate China’s first nuclear strategy (Medeiros 2006: 49–51; Johnston 1996: 543–76). In particular, the Second Artillery Corps (SAC) – China’s strategic force – initiated internal research on the use of nuclear weapons and the requirements of nuclear deterrence. In the 1980s, the SAC formulated regulations like the Second Artillery Military Terms. Research also began on ‘nuclear strategy theory’ (Medeiros 2006: 49–51). Among several debates between Chinese strategists in the 1980s, one centred on the declaratory policy of rejecting nuclear deterrence. The end result of these discussions was the continued rejection of the term at declaratory levels, but use of the term internally. Chinese considered nuclear deterrence, translated as weishe, a derogatory term, reflective of an offensive and threatening strategy, ill-suited to China’s nuclear weapons policy based on NFU and self-defence. Crucially, China’s decision to reject the term flew in the face of nuclear thought at that time since all other nuclear weapons states had openly embraced nuclear deterrence.

Despite a public rejection of nuclear deterrence, convergence started to form over the importance of retaliation in nuclear strategy. Indeed, the 1987 Zhanlue Xue (Science of Military Strategy) handbook, set against the background of a potential USSR northern invasion, outlined that the primary mission of China’s nuclear forces was to deter a nuclear attack. Support for retaliation was also clear in statements made by Deng Xiaoping, who outlined in 1978 that ‘we also want to build some nuclear weapons but we are not preparing to make many. When we have the power to counterattack, we won’t continue to develop them’ (quoted in Fravel and Medeiros 2010: 64). Later, in 1983 he remarked that ‘anyone who wants to destroy us will be subject to retaliation’ (quoted in Medeiros 2006: 49–50). China’s then defence minister Zhang Aiping reinforced this view, noting in 1981 that the power to strike back was the main task of strategic weapons. Zhang later added in 1986, that China’s nuclear forces ‘although few in number and poor in quality compared with others … have achieved the power to strike back’ (quoted in Fravel and Medeiros 2010: 64–65).

Following the deployment of the ICBM and SLBM systems in the late 1980s, China finally satisfied the basic credibility and capability
requirements of its first nuclear strategy based on retaliation. Retaliation meant that China’s deterrent capability was no longer symbolic, as it had been in the past, but actual, and the threat of sudden attack was reduced. However, the stability provided by this strategy was problematic since stability was based on ‘first strike uncertainty’ (Goldstein 2001: 44 and 136; Hagerty 1998: 26). Under first strike uncertainty, the enemy cannot be sure that a strike would be overwhelming and decisive because the scale of China’s retaliatory capabilities was unknown. This strategy also rested on a crucial assumption in China that instead of assured destruction – the predominant logic that guided other nuclear weapons states – a ‘low level of retaliatory damage would be considered unacceptable’ to deter the superpowers (Chari 1978: 823).

To maintain this strategy of uncertain retaliation Chinese military strategists relied on ambiguity and secrecy regarding the size, type and location of their nuclear forces (Medeiros 2006: 49). For example, fake silos were built to improve the chances that China’s ICBM sites would survive a first strike and nuclear weapons were dispersed in narrow mountain valleys (Saunders and Yuan 2006: 93; Dibb 1981: 103).

Many in the West doubted that uncertain retaliation would remain in place for long, rejecting the view that Beijing would be content with such a minimal retaliatory capability. China’s rejection of deterrence was not considered innovative by other nuclear weapons states. Rather, the superpowers regarded it as yet another attempt by China to carve for itself a different global image, and appeal to the developing world. For many Western analysts, uncertain retaliation was simply a transitory strategy and once more developed, China would inevitably seek parity and assured destruction with the US and USSR (Wong-Fraser 1981: 245–76; Chari 1978: 817–28). Furthermore, many contended that in the event of an impending Soviet invasion, China’s NFU policy would be quickly discarded revealing China’s true strategic intentions (Segal 1983/84: 26). From this perspective, economic and technical constraints of the reform period simply prevented China from pursuing a war-fighting strategy (Johnston 1995/96: 5–42). Even an assured destruction based strategy would require drastic changes to China’s nuclear arsenal so as to deter both nuclear and conventional conflicts, including potentially the development of tactical nuclear weapons (Jencks 1984: 305–19; Fieldhouse 1991: 37).

In summary, internal discussions during the reform period had an innovative effect at a domestic level by providing a platform from which to formulate China’s first nuclear strategy, based on uncertain retaliation. More crucially, the idea of uncertain retaliation contributed alternative thinking on nuclear strategy because it went beyond
standard notions of assured destruction and war fighting. However, the impact of this innovation was limited because it was largely dismissed by the West at the time. The predominant Western view was that China, when capable of doing so, would not only embrace deterrence, but also pursue a more ambitious and aggressive nuclear doctrine. A different explanation for the emphasis on a retaliation-only strategy is grounded in serious security concerns at that time of a Soviet invasion on Chinese soil. China’s debates on strategy in the 1980s were also in part possible because of the new domestic political landscape of reform, allowing, for instance, for a re-appraisal of Sun Tze’s strategic thought in considerations of nuclear strategy, something not possible under Mao (Yao 2010: 27; and interview, Beijing, 22 June 2011). Lastly, considerations of image played a role. As Table 1.1 illustrates, the decision to maintain NFU and a retaliatory-only strategy, as well as to openly reject deterrence, demonstrated to the developing world that China was not going down the same nuclear path – with its associated arms racing and massive build-up of forces – as other nuclear weapons states, in particular the US or USSR.

**Embracing nuclear deterrence**

In the 1990s, senior Chinese officials such as Disarmament Ambassador Sha Zukang and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen continued to denounce

| **Table 1.1** Differences in Chinese approaches to nuclear weapons 1945–1989 |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| **US, Soviet Union, UK and France** | **China** |
| Embrace nuclear deterrence | Rejection of nuclear deterrence |
| The US, UK and France provide extended deterrence to NATO member states | Neither beneficiary nor provider of extended nuclear deterrence |
| Experimentation with massive retaliation, flexible response, limited war and warfighting strategies until the US and USSR settle on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) based on second strike capabilities | No second strike capabilities until mid to late 1980s thus endures higher levels of vulnerability based on a strategy of uncertain retaliation developed in the 1980s |
| High level of alert/readiness Continuous at sea deterrent (UK) | De-alerted, de-mated warheads |

Note

* These are NPT recognised nuclear armed states. India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are not in the NPT. Material for the table has been taken from Freedman (1989) and Smoke (1993).
nuclear deterrence (Qian 1996; Sha 1995). However, while open rejection of nuclear deterrence had served a useful purpose in the past by differentiating China from other nuclear weapons states, support for a reversal of this policy gained ground in the 1990s, facilitated perhaps by growing access, in the era of wider globalisation and Chinese reform, to a number of Western writings on deterrence such as Freedman’s *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* and Brodie’s *The Absolute Weapon*. Those engaged in the debate argued that the West had distorted the idea of deterrence, conflating it with MAD. Chinese debates would ‘strip away’ these negative connotations, allowing China to openly embrace deterrence in a purer form (interview, Beijing, 1 July 2011). Chinese nuclear experts within the academic and scientific communities add that this reconsideration should be understood as part of an important learning process taking place at that time since nuclear deterrence had perhaps been previously misunderstood in China (interviews, Beijing, October 2010 and July 2011).

Whatever the reasons, in the post-Cold War environment, the Chinese argument against nuclear deterrence changed: China was now opposed to nuclear deterrence ‘based on first use’, distinguishing it from China’s nuclear policy, based on NFU. Deterrence based on first use was also considered out of date, with senior Chinese officials denouncing the term as a vestige of the Cold War. In this vein, in 1995, China’s Ambassador for disarmament, Sha Zukang, declared that, ‘though the Cold War has already come to an end, some countries are still adhering to the policy of nuclear deterrence based on the first use of nuclear weapons … the nuclear-weapon states concerned should abandon their policy of nuclear deterrence’ (Sha 1995).

Eventually, by the mid 1990s, Chinese leaders such as Jiang Zemin began to use the term, which almost made it into China’s first defence white paper released in 1998 (interview, Beijing, 16 June 2011). Finally, in October 2000, China’s defence white paper openly acknowledged the role of deterrence in nuclear strategy, declaring that ‘China maintains a small but effective nuclear counterattacking force in order to deter possible nuclear attacks by other countries’ (State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2000). Later, at a briefing on missile defence in 2001, Sha Zukang discussed existing mutual deterrence between China and the United States.

The official embrace of nuclear deterrence is an important development, indicating acceptance in China of a core aspect of mainstream nuclear strategic thought, in keeping with the declaratory policies of other nuclear weapons states. On the surface, then, it would seem that China had lost an important and innovative aspect of its nuclear
doctrine. However, since the 2000s, Chinese declaratory policy has deliberately shied away from detailed discussions of operational nuclear policy, force structure and modernisation, all useful indicators of the specific type of deterrence underpinning its nuclear strategy. Consequently, much intellectual debate in the West has since focused on categorising the type of deterrence that underpins China’s nuclear strategy, for instance whether it fits into frameworks of minimal or limited deterrence, the latter indicative of a war-fighting strategy. Chinese academic writings have responded to this debate with a consistent message: China’s approach to deterrence does not conform to traditional definitions and frameworks. Indeed, as recently as 2008, a debate took place between US and Chinese nuclear experts over the term ‘limited deterrence’ and whether it should be included in an English–Chinese glossary of nuclear terms.

Instead, China’s defence white papers have offered an alternative set of terms to describe Chinese nuclear strategy. China’s 2006 defence white paper, for instance, highlighted a ‘self-defence nuclear strategy’ consisting of two main principles: counter-attack and limited development so as to possess a lean and effective nuclear deterrent (State Council of the People’s Republic of China 2011). Here, counter-attack implies retaliation and reinforces the policy of NFU, while a lean and effective force commits China to the limited development of its nuclear arsenal. These terms also featured in China’s 2008 defence white paper, with a section dedicated to nuclear doctrine and retaliation to a nuclear attack. In the last two years, a growing number of comments have also been made by Chinese officials such as President Hu Jintao and retired PLA Major General Xu Guangyu reinforcing the terms counter-attack and self-defence (Xinhua 2010; Buckley 2010).

Overall, the decision to embrace nuclear deterrence in declaratory policy, in keeping with other nuclear weapons states, is perhaps not innovative in itself. However, the way in which the decision was justified – as a necessary reappraisal and cleansing of the Western dominated discourse on nuclear deterrence – and the resulting eschewing of traditional labels and distinction between deterrence based on first use and on second use, is innovative. Thus, as before, China is innovating in terms of differentiation. China embraces deterrence, but in a way different to nuclear weapons states such as the US and Russia. As will be explored in the next section, innovation in Chinese nuclear policy has continued to reside in differentiation, in particular in how the terms used by Chinese academics to explain nuclear deterrence and nuclear doctrine differ from those used by other NPT recognised nuclear weapons states.
Innovative academic discussions

While Chinese declaratory policy avoids detailed discussion of deterrence and operational strategy, fortunately, since the 1990s, enabled in part by China’s growing integration into global nuclear institutions such as the NPT in 1992 and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in 1996, a thriving community of nuclear experts has emerged in China (interviews, Beijing, August 2009 and October 2010; Gill and Medeiros 2000: 66–94; Medeiros 2007: chapter four). This community consists of academics from Beijing, Tsinghua, Renmin and Fudan Universities; experts from research institutes like the Chinese Arms Control and Disarmament Association; nuclear scientists from the Institute of Applied Physics and Computational Mathematics (IAPCM); and PLA researchers from the Academy of Military Sciences. This community performs the crucial task of clarifying Chinese declaratory nuclear policy, and it is thus in these circles that innovation thrives today.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, these discussions centred on US missile defence plans and whether this should change China’s nuclear strategy. Leading voices in this debate included retired PLA Major General Pan Zhenqiang, who argued that NFU should remain in place (Pan 2002) and Tsinghua University Professor Li Bin, who suggested China simply consider developing mobile missiles and countermeasures to NMD so as to maintain ‘a stable if asymmetric nuclear relationship with the US’ (Li 2001: 52). A war-fighting strategy was considered costly, in terms of security, economics and image. It would also require a drastic shift in modernisation plans. The dominance of this opinion was echoed in numerous Chinese military studies at this time including Operational Studies and a study in 2001 by Xue Xinglin, of China’s National Defense University, titled Campaign Theory Study Guide. These studies argued that China’s nuclear strategy should be focused on prevention, survival and retaliation. Second strike force was deemed essential, incorporating the principle of ‘striking after the enemy has struck’ (quoted in Medeiros 2006: 63–64). Indeed, in Operational Studies, three tasks for China’s nuclear forces were outlined: a willingness to retaliate, the ability to ride out a nuclear weapons attack and the ability to respond to a nuclear attack (in Lewis 2007: 41–46).

Since the mid 2000s, innovative ideas have continued to emerge, with some PLA officers and scientists calling for a more flexible and credible form of deterrence, based on the development of tactical weapons, as well as sea and air based nuclear forces. A leading voice in this regard is former SAC Deputy Commander, Zhao Xijun, whose work...
sheds light on the circumstances under which NFU might be abandoned: in response to a conventional attack on nuclear targets in China; a change in declaratory nuclear policy to bolster leverage in a crisis, for instance over Taiwan; and when national survival is at stake (Zhao 2003: 42–48, 160 and 173). Others discuss how current weapons systems could adapt to a war-fighting strategy, from cruise missiles supporting nuclear warheads to the MIRVing of China’s DF-5s (Chase, Erickon and Yeow 2009: 67–114).

However, an alternative view is set out by Li Bin, for whom China’s nuclear strategy has always been based on the concept of ‘counter-coercion’ (Li 2007). This concept does not entail war-fighting capabilities, but instead works with NFU and means not yielding to a rival through defence and retaliation (Li and Nie 2008: 13–19). Counter-coercion is an innovative concept and differs from minimum deterrence – the dominant nuclear strategy today among nuclear armed states – in three respects. First, it maintains NFU, which rests on a taboo against the use of nuclear weapons. Second, deterrence is based on preventing coercion rather than a nuclear attack. This is because the aforementioned taboo renders nuclear attack unlikely. Third, a retaliatory capability is deemed essential. This form of retaliation need not be immediate, but can take place even one week after receiving nuclear attack. This last point is crucial. China need not reach a condition of assured destruction with the US to achieve stable deterrence. Instead, China need only be able to retaliate with a few ICBMs. China’s nuclear forces can thus remain limited but still deter.

The principles behind counter-coercion underpin respective analysis provided by Sun Xiangli of IAPCM and PLA Senior Colonel Yao Yunzhu. Both highlight innovation in Chinese nuclear strategy, based on limited nuclear forces, restraint in military modernisation and NFU. For Sun, China’s military modernisation is just for survival and is focused on the development of mobile ICBMs (Sun 2006). It has continued to be guided by the principle of minimalism and this explains why China, with around 240 nuclear warheads, has one of the smallest nuclear arsenals in the world (Kristensen and Norris 2011: 134–41). PLA Senior Colonel Yao Yunzhu has gone further in unpacking the type of deterrence that underpins Chinese nuclear strategy: stating that China’s nuclear force is based neither on denial nor punishment – the classical foundations of deterrence (Yao 2005). Instead, for Yao, Chinese nuclear deterrence rests on the ‘advantage of uncertainty’ rather than a ‘show of force’ (Yao 2010: 28–29). Further, unlike other nuclear weapons states, China is ‘willing to accept vulnerability as its NFU policy indicates’ (Yao 2005). Moreover, limited development
is also possible because for China, minimal deterrence is a relative concept, based not just on numbers, but also on the credibility of counterattack and the survivability of nuclear forces.

The discussions above suggest that China’s academic community is engaged in innovative discussions regarding how best to define and shape China’s nuclear strategy. While some argue that China’s strategy remains based on uncertainty (Wu 2013) others suggest that China is moving towards a more assured form of retaliation (Fravel and Medeiros 2010). Li Bin explains that assured retaliation requires more accurate and mobile ICBMs and SLBMs rather than a larger nuclear arsenal or a change in NFU (Li 2006: 78–89). So, whereas under uncertain retaliation, quantitative ambiguity prevented the enemy from knowing for certain that a first strike would be decisive, with assured retaliation, deterrence resides on the additional risk of the enemy failing to locate and destroy mobile nuclear missiles in a first strike. Crucially, both uncertain and assured retaliation are based on ambiguity and minimalism, preserving NFU. Assured retaliation also reinforces the principle that, unlike most other nuclear weapons states, China need not subscribe to notions of parity or assured destruction to deter.

The emergence of a Chinese community of nuclear experts and the on-going innovative debates on strategy discussed in this last section are in large part a result of China’s embrace of globalisation and integration into major institutions of the global nuclear order such as the NPT. Globalisation has also arguably placed China under greater pressure to be more transparent regarding its nuclear doctrine. However, it has not led to China abandoning innovative ideas of the past related to NFU, retaliation and minimalism. Instead, globalisation – and fears surrounding China’s rise – has served to reinforce and sustain past innovative ideas since these ideas serve a variety of interests, promoting a reassuring global image of China to both developing, emerging and developed parts of the world. In other words, globalisation, and in particular China’s growing preoccupation with its global role and status, have contributed to the endurance of innovative and different thinking on nuclear deterrence and nuclear weapons more generally. Table 1.2 highlights some of the major areas of innovation and differences in Chinese approaches to nuclear weapons since the 1990s.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the period of opening up and reform was a particularly innovative period, during which ideas related to nuclear deterrence,
retaliation and counter-attack began to take shape in China. These debates offered China an alternative nuclear path to that of other nuclear weapons states, beyond the traditional notions of mutual assured destruction or nuclear superiority/primacy considered by

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>US, Russia, UK and France</th>
<th>China</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embrace nuclear deterrence</td>
<td>Eventual embrace in 2000 linked to No First Use (with Chinese distinguishing between deterrence based on first use and no first use)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The US, UK and France provide extended deterrence to NATO member states</td>
<td>Neither beneficiary nor provider of extended nuclear deterrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assured destruction based on second strike capabilities</td>
<td>China maintains second strike capabilities but still endures higher levels of vulnerability based on a strategy of assured retaliation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Use</td>
<td>No First Use²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum deterrence</td>
<td>Refuses to use mainstream labels: uses ‘counter-attack’, ‘counter-coercion’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High level of alert/readiness Continuous at sea deterrent (UK)</td>
<td>De-alerted, de-mated warheads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US and Russia have over 5000 warheads</td>
<td>Small arsenal: approx. 240 warheads, no significant SLBM capability or bombers³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK and France have comparably sized nuclear arsenals to China, but as NATO members share an extended deterrent with the US</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes
1. These are NPT recognised nuclear armed states. India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea are not in the NPT. Material for the table has been taken from Freedman (1989) and Smoke (1993).
2. China is the only country to have consistently maintained an unconditional NFU pledge since becoming a nuclear weapons state. The former Soviet Union promoted NFU in 1982 but Russia abandoned it in 1993. India and North Korea also have a NFU pledge, but doubts surround the credibility of North Korea’s ‘unconditional’ pledge since 2006 and India’s NFU is conditional – in 2003 India changed the policy to first use against biological and chemical attacks.
3. These numbers – for China and the other nuclear weapons states represented in the table – are based on the most recent estimates from the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists (Kristensen and Norris, 2011), SIPRI 2011 Yearbook and the Arms Control Association (2012).
Soviet and American nuclear strategists in the Cold War. Table 1.2 illustrates some of these differences. Furthermore, by emphasising retaliation rather than subscribing to the logic of assured destruction, China was able to maintain its pledge of NFU as well as the principle of minimalism that had guided nuclear development throughout the Mao period.

Innovation through debate and differentiation has continued in the 1990s and 2000s. In 2000, after a long internal debate spanning the 1990s, China for the first time openly acknowledged the term ‘nuclear deterrence’ in its declaratory nuclear policy, yet China has resisted efforts to place its strategy in traditional categories of limited or minimal deterrence. Here, as in the past, China sought to establish itself as a different nuclear weapons state, refusing to whole-heartedly embrace nuclear deterrence. This chapter has also highlighted how during this period, a set of nuclear experts have emerged in China, and together this community provides fertile ground for innovative ideas on how best to define and shape Chinese nuclear strategy. Essentially, debates today continue an innovative trend that began in the reform period, with China demonstrating that credible deterrence need not conform to notions of nuclear superiority, parity or assured destruction. Instead it can exist at asymmetric, low numbers (given the small size of its nuclear arsenal) and under a high degree of vulnerability (through NFU and retaliation).

It has perhaps been easy to overlook these innovative trends in Chinese nuclear doctrine. In the past, dismissing China’s focus on retaliation, minimalism and NFU as a strategy of the weak, and therefore only temporary, made sense. Today, this argument carries less weight. China, a rising power in a globalised world, can afford to significantly change its nuclear doctrine if it wanted. China’s image is surely a factor in this restraint. More significantly, this chapter has argued that the enduring continuity of retaliation, minimalism and NFU in Chinese nuclear thinking suggests that these core aspects of its nuclear doctrine remain sufficient to its needs. In other words, there is a deeply engrained view in China that nuclear weapons have extremely limited military value. Yet sceptics in the West, particularly in the US, continue to doubt the sincerity of Chinese nuclear positions such as NFU. Despite these difficulties, it would be a mistake to overlook the innovation in Chinese nuclear doctrine. This is because concepts championed by the Chinese such as minimalism, retaliation and NFU are today of international policy relevance, most notably in the context of achieving a world without nuclear weapons, or even a less salient nuclear world, goals openly promoted by US President Obama since 2009.
Notes

1 I would like to thank Dr Evelyn Goh for very useful comments on an earlier draft, as well as Astrid Nordin and participants of the Innovation and Invention workshop held at the University of Oxford in September 2011.

2 Until the nuclear revolution, immediate annihilation of states was not thought possible. Hence, for Brodie, ‘thus far the chief purpose of our military establishment has been to win wars. From now on its chief purpose must be to avert them’. The technology behind nuclear weapons also promised a parallel revolution in the energy sector, though this will not be discussed in this chapter.

3 The Four Modernisations refer to China’s agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defence.

4 Major Generals Peng Guangqian and Yao Youzhi outline levels of deterrence – maximum (overwhelming striking capabilities), minimum (smaller arsenal and selective targeting of high value areas, like cities) and moderate intensity (retaliatory capability) – in Peng and Yao 2005: 213–29.

5 This the 2008 English–Chinese, Chinese–English Nuclear Security Glossary, see also Lewis 2009: 201.

Bibliography


2 China and globalization
International socialization and Chinese development cooperation

Ward Warmerdam

Introduction
There are those who argue that China’s foreign aid program is unique, and its impact is thus either positive or negative. There are also those who argue that China’s aid program either is, will be, or should be like those of the ‘West’ or traditional donors. This chapter will utilize the conceptual framework set out in the introduction of this volume to investigate whether China’s aid program shows signs of mimicking, being persuaded, being socially influenced, the three micro-processes of socialization put forward by Alastair Johnston (2008), or in fact shows signs of innovation and a socializing influence on others in the international aid system. The international aid system has long been dominated by the principles and practices of traditional donors, thus any new entrant will be met with the processes of persuasion or social influence encouraging it to conform to the group, or, due to its aspirations of joining the group, will mimic group principles and practices, as Johnston argues by drawing on social identity theory. However, this chapter will argue that successfully challenging these processes should be considered a fourth process called innovation, which leads to changes in principles and practices in the group later through the other three micro-processes.

This chapter is composed of four sections. The first will deal with the issue of whether or not China’s foreign aid program is unique. The second section will describe the evolution of China’s development cooperation and the policy innovation mechanisms integral to the Chinese Communist Party system. It will then investigate how China’s aid program can be considered innovative. This prepares the way for the analysis in section three of the three micro-processes of socialization. There are similarities between China’s aid program and that of other donors, and indications of China’s development cooperation
innovation. This section will present the views of different authors regarding the issue of the impact of the re-emergence of China in the international aid system and how the international aid system should respond.

The conclusion will draw together findings, and show that while at first glance Chinese aid may be considered unique, closer analysis shows not only complementarities, but also similarities. Investigation into the similarities and differences can be partly explained by the three micro-processes of socialization – mimicking, persuasion, and social influence – however, a fourth micro-process – innovation – is necessary to complete the picture. China is not just a passive receiver it is an active player; it is not only being influenced by other donors it is also exerting an influence itself.

**Different from the West?**

In order to carry out an analysis of impact of socialization processes on China’s foreign aid program, the similarities and differences need to be established. Similarities are potentially the results of the three micro-processes of socialization as described by Johnston (2008). Where there are differences, the questions arise as to why there are these differences, are they challenged by the three micro-processes of socialization, or are these differences themselves challenging existing norms and behaviors? One example of this debate and investigation is that regarding the so-called ‘Beijing Consensus.’ The term was first coined by Joshua Cooper Ramo in his book of the same name in 2004. Among both Western and Chinese academics the views on the Beijing Consensus essentially fall within two camps. There are those such as Drew Thompson (2005), Stephanie Rupp (2008), He Wenping (2011) and Zhu Zhiqun (2010), who agree there is such a thing as the Beijing Consensus. He (2011) argues that there are two major differences between the Beijing Consensus and the Washington Consensus. Firstly, the former is more development oriented and the latter is more liberalization oriented. Secondly, there is a difference of attitudes, with Western donors taking a more paternalistic, prescriptive approach and China taking an approach of equality and mutually beneficial cooperation. Rupp emphasizes the difference in principles, most notably non-interference, non-conditionality and respect for state sovereignty. Although she doesn’t state this explicitly, her analysis shows that while the principles and rhetoric might be different, in fact her presentation of the comparison between Chinese and European engagement in Africa, shows practical similarities in the exploitation of African
resources and unequal benefits of the relationship. Thompson (2005) argues that the Beijing Consensus refutes Western notions of political liberalization and economic reforms. He states that China, on the basis of its own experience of development as a result of stimulating trade and investment in infrastructure and social institutions, is effectively promoting African countries to adopt the same model (Thompson 2005). Zhu (2010), agrees with Thompson by arguing that the Beijing Consensus refutes Western notions of liberalization as essential for development, encouraging African nations to develop themselves through trade and investment in infrastructure and social institutions, while not dictating political or economic reforms. However, as Zhu observes, China has never officially promoted this, either as a model or as an example.

Other scholars such as Kenneth King (2006), Scott Kennedy (2010) and Xia Cai (Qin et al. 2011) argue that there is no Beijing Consensus, and that no such model or consensus is being promoted. Xia Cai states that what is special about China’s development is the level of involvement of the government guiding and promoting market economics, however, China is not the only country that followed such a state-led development path (Qin et al. 2011). He concludes that the only thing special about the case of China is its geographical size, population size, the scale of the development and the low starting point. Sun Liping, however, argues that there is a China Model, and that it is near completion (Qin et al. 2011). What is special about the case of China is that while the system did not change, the institutions within it did. The China model cannot be emulated because it was uniquely suited to China’s own socio-economic and political conditions (Qin et al. 2011).

Yi Lei, on the other hand, argues that it is too early to talk of a successful China model, China’s development and integration into the global system is still at a too early stage to measure its success and provide an adequate description of its characteristics (Qin et al. 2011). Yushi Mao, however, argues that the China model should be considered as a sample book (Qin et al. 2011). There are a number of experiences of China’s development and economic transition that can be copied, however, there are also some that cannot. One experience that can be copied is China’s point-to-surface mechanism (Heilmann 2008) described below. Another is its gradualist approach to policy changes, rather than radical reforms (Qian 2003). An experience that cannot be mimicked with similarly, relatively, egalitarian impacts is the use of the household responsibility system. This is because Chinese land reform of the 1950s distributed land more equally, thus the starting point in the household responsibility system was more equal than
would be the case in countries where there had not been more equal distribution of land among peasants.

Moving beyond the debate on the Beijing Consensus and the China model, the differences between China’s engagement with the developing world and that of traditional donors are still emphasized. Axel Berger et al. (2011) state that there is a difference between the Chinese form of engagement and that of Western donors as they look at developing countries from a different perspective. The Chinese see Africa, for example, as a continent of investment opportunities; Western donors, however, see Africa as a continent of poverty and instability, one that should be treated as an object of charity (Berger et al. 2011). Joshua Eisenman and Joshua Kurlantzick (2006), state that the Chinese government tries to present itself as being different from the West, by using a range of mechanisms – from supporting African countries in the UN Security council and sending peacekeepers to debt relief – to show that it listens to Africa, implying that countries such as the US do not.

In fact, the Chinese government in its publications *China’s Peaceful Development Road* (Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China (IOSCPRC) 2005) and *China’s Foreign Aid* (IOSCPRC 2011a) does present itself as being different. In *China’s Peaceful Development Road* the government asserts ‘China’s road of peaceful development is a brand-new one for mankind in pursuit of civilization and progress’ (IOSCPRC 2005). In *China’s Foreign Aid* the government first used the term ‘model’ when it said ‘China’s foreign aid has emerged as a model with its own characteristics’ (IOSCPRC 2011a), thereby asserting both its uniqueness and that the government felt sufficiently confident in the development of its foreign aid program to give it the label ‘model.’ Rongmin Li (2006) argues that the concept of ‘harmonious world’ was devised to promote China’s new perspective on the world order, security, development, and civilization among others, presenting China’s new concept for international relations. He identifies three main elements on the path to realizing the ‘harmonious world’: 1) searching for security through multilateral engagement, achieving ‘common security,’ 2) searching for development through mutually beneficial cooperation, achieving ‘common prosperity,’ 3) searching for harmonious relations and establishing a harmonious world through mutual tolerance (ibid.). Implicit in Li’s article is that the current world order is on the opposite of these paths, and as such, China presents a new concept.

It has been argued (de Haan and Warmerdam forthcoming; Kennedy 2010; Warmerdam 2012) that the case of China, and the Beijing
Consensus, in foreign development cooperation is not, in fact unique, with differences in practices, principles, and perceptions. Although a number of authors described above, and the Chinese government, have tried to present China as different, the question arises, whether or not China really is different. A look first at the motivations for providing aid shows that there is not much difference between China and traditional donors. The development of China’s foreign aid program has been separated broadly into two time periods (Li 2007a). Prior to 1978, Chinese aid was provided for security reasons in response to war on the Korean peninsula and Vietnam. Soon afterwards aid was given to neighboring socialist countries. Later, after the Bandung Conference in 1955, China started to provide aid to other countries in Asia and Africa. This was provided partly in support of the newly independent countries and liberation movements, but also as a challenge to Taiwan and the US and its allies. After the Sino-Soviet Split aid was also provided as part of the geo-political struggle against the USSR. Thus aid at this time was motivated by a combination of security, ideological, and geo-political considerations similar to those of the other major powers at the time, the US and the USSR (Black 1968; Goldman 1967; Lebovic 2005; Schraeder et al. 1998). After the reforms of 1978, China coupled its foreign aid program to its domestic economic development and commercial interests. Again this domestic aid determinant, and the related practices of tying aid and other mechanisms, is similar to that of major donors such as Japan and France, and even smaller donors such as Canada, who sought to connect their foreign aid to their own commercial interests and domestic economic development (Schraeder et al. 1998).

The principles, such as non-interference, respect for state sovereignty, equality, and mutual benefit, upheld by the Chinese government since 1954 have not changed. These principles are different from those of other traditional donors as described below. However their motivations and practices are not very different. This leads naturally in to the debate on socialization – if China is not unique, and its aid determinants and practices are not unique, can China’s aid program be explained by the three micro-processes of socialization?

The development of China’s aid program

This section will outline the evolution and characteristics of China’s development cooperation. It will highlight aspects that are similar to other donors, and how they inspired a number of practices, indicating a degree of mimicking the micro-process of socialization. However, it
will also be argued that a number of aspects are innovative, understood here as doing old things in new ways and thinking in new ways – the latter is intended to capture China’s innovative principles and attitude to development cooperation that traditional donors do not have – as well as exerting an influence on the international aid system. The latter will be described in more detail in section three below.

**Policy innovation mechanisms**

The Chinese Communist Party has a long history of experimentation and innovation, utilizing the point-to-surface mechanism of experimentation in national policy development (Heilmann 2008). Experimentation is so central to Chinese government policy design that it was written into the 1992 constitution of the Chinese Communist Party (Heilmann 2008: 26). In the point-to-surface approach a national policy objective is set and local experimentation is encouraged in order to identify the best policy mechanism, which is then scaled up to the national level, hence point (local pilot) to surface (national level). Two notable outcomes of the point-to-surface mechanism are the Household Responsibility System (HRS) and the New Cooperative Medical Scheme (NCMS).

This same policy experimentation process is used for China’s development cooperation. Although China learned a lot of its pre-1978 foreign aid practices from its experience of receiving aid from the Soviet Union prior to the Sino-Soviet Split, and China’s post-1978 aid practices were based on its experiences of receiving Japanese and Western aid during the 1970s (Brautigam 2009; Brautigam and Tang 2009), its practices were not simple imitations of those practices. Instead, experimentation to identify the most appropriate mechanisms played a vital role. While experimentation played a lesser role in foreign aid during the 1960s and early 1970s, reflecting also a decline in experimentation domestically (Heilmann 2008), it was re-launched by Zhao Ziyang in the 1980s. Ramo (2004) identifies experimentation and innovation as two elements of the Beijing Consensus. Brautigam even goes so far as to argue that the Beijing Consensus might simply be ‘embracing experimentation’ and avoidance of easy certainties (Brautigam 2009: 308).

Not only is experimentation important in China’s agricultural development cooperation (Brautigam and Tang 2009; IOSCPRC 2011a; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (MFAPRC) 2006) but it is important for China’s development cooperation in general as the government seeks to identify mechanisms that
will make aid projects more sustainable. This is particularly important in reflection on the failures of many Chinese aid projects before 1978, such as the Tazara Railway which suffered, and still does, from low profitability, and the Mbarali State Farm which failed due in large part to mismanagement (Ping 1999). The principle of non-interference was actually re-interpreted by the Chinese leadership in order to allow Chinese management and technical service teams to be employed after turnkey projects were handed over to recipients (Ping 1999). China’s experimentation with mixed financing and BOT projects was the result of learning from the experience of foreign donors’ use of these forms of development assistance in China, and the government’s desire to diversify the sources of aid financing (Wang 2003). The introduction of profit incentives was thought to increase the possibility that projects would become sustainable (Brautigam 2009). This indicates a degree of mimicking, as it was copying the practices of traditional donors in China, but also a degree of innovation in a number of ways. This practice improved the sustainability of China’s aid projects, and allowed it to engage in more aid projects than using government financing would have allowed it to. Mixed financing and BOT projects allowed China to utilize this foreign policy and commercial relations tool while it was still a developing country, something that most other developing countries had not started to do yet.

**China’s pre-1978 foreign aid program**

What is innovative about China’s foreign aid program during this period was not so much the practices, which were based on those of the Soviet Union, but the fact it was providing foreign aid while it was itself still a very poor country, and the principles with which it provided aid (as no other donor employs such principles, even now, in the eyes of recipients). As has been described briefly above, China’s foreign aid program can be separated into two broad time periods, pre-1978 and post-1978. The characteristics of these two time periods have been generally described as political and ideological pre-1978 and economic and commercial post-1978 (Li 2007a). In 1950 China received a request from the President of Mongolia for assistance from China in its construction efforts. Given China’s lack of financial capacity, by 1954 it had dispatched 8,200 workers to Mongolia, rather than allocating financial resources, to aid in the construction of factories, hospitals, schools, thermal power stations, and old people’s homes, even providing assistance in the restoration of temples (Shu 2010). Aid quickly expanded to neighboring socialist countries. At this time the guiding
principles of China’s foreign economic relations were those enshrined in an agreement signed between China and India in 1954 known as the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, still referred to today. Ideologically, China’s aid was being provided in opposition to the US and the so-called imperialist camp. After the 1955 Bandung Conference at which the Five Principles were also incorporated in the conference declaration, China expanded its aid program further into Asia and Africa (IOSCPRC 2011a; Zhang 2008; Zhou 2008). Aid was no longer limited to socialist countries, but came to include other developing countries (IOSCPRC 2011a), indicating that recipient ideology was no longer a determinant of Chinese foreign aid, and was instead a notion of international ‘proletarian solidarity.’ Toward the end of the 1950s and early 1960s the Sino-Soviet relationship turned hostile, with the Soviet Union withdrawing all its assistance from China in 1960 (Chen 2005; Lieberthal 1987), and China’s foreign aid was stepped up, starting to be provided also in opposition to the Soviet Union.

New principles of foreign economic relations were announced by Premier Zhou Enlai in 1963. Known as the Eight Principles of Foreign Economic Cooperation, these included: equality, mutual benefit, respect for state sovereignty, non-conditionality, promotion of self-reliance and independent economic development, and the principle that Chinese experts should enjoy the same living conditions as their local counterparts and not be allowed to make special demands (Ping 1999). These principles are still often referred to in China’s official foreign economic cooperation rhetoric. They indicate a continuation of the original Five Principles but they also include some new principles. These principles could be considered innovative at the time of their announcement, a number of them could still be considered innovative today. Other donors did not practice the concept of non-conditionality explicitly at that time, as foreign aid disbursed during the Cold War was part of the geo-political struggle between the Soviet Union and the US, who each sought to align recipients in their own camps, and conditionality is now common practice among traditional donors. Additionally, the principle that Chinese experts enjoy the same living conditions is something that was, and still is, foreign to other donors.

During this first period, turnkey projects gradually emerged as the most important form of China’s foreign assistance (Huang and Hu 2010; Shu 2009; Zhou 2008). China had learned this practice from the Soviet Union when the Soviets had assisted China in the industrialization of its northeastern region, again indicating a degree of the micro-process mimicking. The aid program and expenditures expanded
rapidly during this period, reaching 7.2 percent of total government expenditures and 2.052 percent of China’s expenditures as a percent of China’s GNP in 1973 (Shu 2010; Sun 2007; Wang 2010; Zhang 2006a). In 1971, China had successfully regained its seat in the UN General Assembly and UN Security Council. However, its aid expenditures far exceeded its domestic capabilities at the time.

Arguably the provision of aid at such a high percentage of GNP – as Figure 2.1 shows, from 1965 to 1975 China provided aid at more than 1 percent of its GNP (Zhang 2006a) – could also be considered innovative as no developed country did so, and the UN suggested norm is 0.7 percent of GNP. However, China’s aid as a percentage of GNP rapidly dropped after 1973, dropping below 1 percent after 1976 (Zhang 2006a). China’s aid expenditures in general dropped rapidly after 1973 as the government realized that it was spending beyond its domestic capabilities.

**China’s post-1978 foreign aid program**

In China’s post-1978 foreign aid program innovation is apparent in its ability to make full use of the opportunities present in developing countries for the advantage of both China and recipient economies. Aspects indicating mimicking are seen in the use of tied aid and concessional lending, although traditional donors had been moving away from these practices. In line with the reform and opening up of China’s domestic economy, its foreign aid program also underwent a period of

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**Figure 2.1** Aid expenditures as percentage of GNP

reform and readjustment’ (Bin 2008; Ping 1999; Wang 2010). Phrased in the rhetoric of learning from past failures and successes, and the need to bring foreign aid provision more in line with China’s domestic capabilities and actual conditions, the scale, arrangements, sectors, and structures of China’s foreign aid program were reformed and adjusted (IOSCPRC 2011a). Moreover, aid provision was diversified and became more flexible in its methods (ibid.). In the winter of 1982 and 1983, Premier Zhao Ziyang announced the four new principles that were to guide China’s economic and technical cooperation. Comparing Zhou Enlai’s Eight Principles and Zhao Ziyang’s Four Principles, it is evident that the Chinese government maintained the principles that had successfully attracted political allies, while increasing the economic and commercial emphasis of its aid provision in line with its goal of domestic economic development.

However, the reform and readjustment period of Chinese foreign aid provision saw the introduction of new practical aid modalities. These included: technical and managerial cooperation, lease management, and joint ventures. Although these were clothed in the rhetoric of learning from past failures, and the extended, closer supervision, training, and working relationships were intended to improve China’s aid provision, joint ventures and lease management, for example, also clearly indicate the increased prominence of China’s economic and commercial interests (Warmerdam 2012). This was an innovative means of combining foreign aid provision with economic and commercial interests, and ensuring that China’s foreign aid provision remained within its domestic capabilities.

China benefited from providing aid not only politically and economically, but also technically (Zhang 2007). By providing aid, especially in the form of turnkey projects, the technical capacities of, for example, engineers, manufacturing plants, and other enterprises were increased. This benefited them domestically, but also increasingly on the world stage. An example of this is documented regarding the construction of the Tazara Railway. According to the in-depth case study by Zhang (2007), the construction process achieved 70 percent mechanization and Chinese producers supplying the project improved their metallurgy capacities. Domestically new production lines were designed to meet the demand (Zhang 2007). Companies, such as COMPLANT, that participated in the construction of Tazara went on to become important actors in China’s efforts to open up international markets (Zhang 2007).

With the increasingly important role of the private sector in the Chinese economy in the 1990s (Oi 1999; Perkins 1997; Qian 2003;
Xia et al. (2009), and the successes of reform and readjustment, Chinese foreign aid was further reformed between 1993 and 1995. Administrative rules and regulations were developed to create a general contractor system for the implementation of aid projects, and a project supervision system was introduced for the assignment of projects (Huang and Hu 2010). These systems distanced the government from aid implementation by bringing in contracted enterprises that competed for project allocation within a market system (Huang 2007; Huang and Hu 2010; Ping 1999; Zhou 2008). These new measures were said to bring Chinese aid provision closer to international norms, while they effectively mobilized private sector engagement in foreign aid provision, indicating a degree of mimicking of foreign practices. These reforms formalized the new economic and commercial emphasis of foreign aid that had first become apparent in 1978. This is likely why the Chinese government refers to this period as the ‘Complete Reform Period’ (NBSC 1999). The aid, trade, and investment model was essentially created.

Chinese concessional lending started in 1995 following the establishment of the China Exim Bank (Davies 2007). Concessional loans were found to be the main form of aid to all four countries in an African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD) (2008) study of Chinese aid to Africa. Chinese concessional loans are tightly tied to China’s domestic economic and commercial interests as concessional loan agreements stipulate that no less than 50 percent of all goods and services procured by the loans must come from China (AFRODAD 2008; Davies et al. 2008). Concessional lending is a practice that other donors also utilize, again indicating a degree of mimicking, as is the tying of aid. Traditional donors have been moving away from tied aid, however, the re-emergence of China as a donor, and the onset of the global economic crisis have caused donors to reconsider this practice (see, for example, de Haan and Warmerdam forthcoming; Xu 2011).

The state policy bank, the China Exim Bank, also issues export and import credits to stimulate trade between China and developing countries. These trade stimulation efforts with developing countries were part of the government’s overall objective of increasing exports to promote domestic economic growth through the 1990s (Cerra and Saxena 2002; Perkins 1997). What is interesting to note when comparing Figure 2.1 with Figure 2.2, is that while aid expenditures as a percentage of GNP decreased from 1973 onwards, evening out after 1990, aid expenditures as value declined between 1973 and 1980, gradually increasing until 1993 when it again saw a rapid increase.6
A number of Chinese scholars and officials (e.g. Xing 1996), including Deng Xiaoping, have noted the opportunities of trade and investment in developing countries garnered by the liberalization of their economies. These liberalizations of the developing countries’ economies were the result of traditional donor, especially international financial institution, conditionalities and involvement in the development of macro- and micro-economic policies through the Structural Adjustment Programs. China’s commercialization of its engagement in developing countries is taking full advantage of the liberalized developing country economies (Xing 1996; Zhang 2006a), something which developed countries have either through concerns of investment security or morality failed to do. Innovation here is making full use of the opportunities present in developing countries for the advantage of both China and recipient economies, while mimicking is seen in the use of tied aid and concessional lending, although traditional donors had been moving away from these practices.

China’s readiness to experiment with and adjust its development cooperation practices put it in a good position to be an innovator. The analysis of the evolution of China’s foreign aid program above has shown that many of its practices were copied from its experiences with other donors, indicating the socialization micro-process mimicking.

Figure 2.2 China’s aid expenditures 1950–2004
Measure: Billions of RMB. This figure is presented for illustrative purposes only. Zhang cites his source as a PhD researcher in the Ministry of Finances responsible for the management of foreign aid expenditures. A comparison to Brautigam’s (2009) estimates, generally believed to be the most accurate in the absence of official Chinese government foreign aid data, and a currency conversion shows that the figures are generally similar, thereby verifying both her
The use of turnkey projects was learned from the Soviet Union, the use of concessional loans and Exim Credits was learned from Japan and Western donors, as was the use of the general contractor system mobilizing private enterprises. However, China’s willingness to engage in foreign aid while it was itself still a poor developing country for both political and economic motivations can be considered innovative as very few other developing countries did so. Additionally, while its practices are similar to traditional donors, its principles are not. Its innovative principles are attractive to recipients who view China more as a peer than Western donors, whose relations are often considered more paternalistic on the basis of their principles.

**China and the international aid system**

The re-emergence of China’s development cooperation spurred debates on whether or not China is different, and if/when China will become like the West. The latter is based on a reading of China as a younger version of developed countries. The debate on whether China’s aid program is different has been presented in section one above, coming to the conclusion that in many ways Chinese development cooperation is not different. However, its re-emergence has had a very visible impact on the development debate, particularly in terms of how traditional donors should respond. It is on this latter topic that this section will continue with a more thorough investigation of the processes of socialization in China’s foreign aid program, and whether the three micro-processes suggested by Johnston (2008) – mimicking, persuasion, and social influence – provide a sufficient explanation of the debates and policy options or whether a fourth process is needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding and policy response.

Richard Manning (2006), writing on the impact of emerging donors, including China, on the international aid architecture, argues that non-DAC (Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC)), donors should be engaged with, and discussions should explore the possibility of maintaining DAC standards (Manning 2006). Manning argues that recipients should encourage the non-DAC donors to adhere to the policies regarding tied aid and the Paris Declaration. He recognizes that space is needed to allow non-DAC donors to contribute their own thinking and experience, however, he argues that ‘qualitative’ standards should be maintained through the OECD-based rules. Looking at Manning’s depiction of how the aid community should respond to the emergence of non-OECD donors through the micro-processes
described by Johnston, it is evident that his description would fit the ‘persuasion’ process, especially as he argues that recipients should also play a role in promoting emerging donors’ conformity to OECD norms.

A slightly different perspective is taken by Arjan de Haan (2010), former social development adviser for DFID China, who argues that China will soon no longer be seen as a special case. He states that collaboration with China is increasing both with multilaterals such as the World Bank and the UNDP as well as bilateral organizations such as DFID (de Haan and Warmerdam 2013). He adds that as China’s role in the international community increases, it will modify and adapt its processes, to be more in line with those of traditional donors. De Haan’s view fits the ‘social influence’ micro-process of socialization as China adapts its processes in line with the other members of the social group.

Joshua Kurlantzick (2006) investigates the impact of China’s entry into Africa on aid, development, and governance. He argues that China is exporting its own ‘brand of capitalism’ and has caused the World Bank to again start investing in infrastructure after a period of being hesitant to do so (Kurlantzick 2006). The author proposes that the appropriate response to the potential impact of China on the international aid architecture is to work with China in order to create a permanent Chinese aid organization that would be less influenced by the Ministry of Commerce, which has a greater tendency to provide tied aid. He adds that this would empower those Chinese officials who want to make aid more transparent. Through the lens of the three micro-processes of socialization, it seems that Kurlantzick’s description of policy response fits the ‘persuasion’ and ‘social influence’ processes. However, he also notes that China is having an impact on the practices of the World Bank, indicating that a fourth process might be needed to complete the picture.

Sebastian Paulo and Helmut Reisen (2010) investigate the possibility of a DAC donor peer review of China and India. They state that while it has become clear that integrating China and other emerging donors into the governance of global development cooperation is necessary, it has often been assumed that the existing structures such as DAC and other Western institutions are the most appropriate place to realize this. This is driven by the nature of the DAC system itself, which does not have hard laws and regulations, but relies on the power of soft law to maintain standards (Paulo and Reisen 2010). In order to maintain the power of soft law, and for the standards to have global reach, it is necessary to include as many members as possible (Paulo and Reisen 2010).
The authors, however, question the attractiveness for emerging donors of becoming a DAC donor, especially countries like China and India. While they have increased dialogue with DAC, and there is a growing membership of non-DAC donors in OECD committees and subsidiary bodies, and China also engages the DAC through the China–DAC study group which also carries out a joint review of China’s development cooperation in Africa, there are significant trade-off costs between standing apart from institutions such as the DAC and being part of them (Paulo and Reisen 2010). Paulo and Reisen argue that a more appropriate arena for cooperation and coordination between DAC and non-DAC donors would be the UN Development Co-Operation Forum, as this would place both sets of donors on more equal ground than the Western developed-nations-dominated DAC.

Viewing Paulo and Reisen’s description through the three micro-processes shows that while the authors observe the necessity of ‘social influence’ for DAC standards, the use of the UNCF as an arena for exchange creates room for non-DAC donors to also influence DAC donors, something that Johnston’s three micro-process does not allow for, and which the suggested fourth process, ‘innovation’, compensates for.

In a policy brief for the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) Paul Collier (2008) puts forward a novel response to the impact of the emergence of China on the efforts of EITI. Collier argues that there are many positive aspects of China’s resource-backed financing in Africa. Resource-backed financing allows African finance ministers to use resource revenues for investment this reduces the risk of capture (Collier 2008). These deals also bypass the civil service, and thereby avoid possible implementation bottlenecks and corruption (Collier 2008). One of the shortcomings, however, is the lack of transparency making it difficult to compare components (Collier 2008). Collier argues that in order to increase transparency the Chinese approach should not be resisted, rather it should be ‘embraced.’ Rather than simply integrating China into the international aid architecture, the future international aid architecture will become a synthesis of the two approaches. Collier proposes that by embracing the Chinese package deal practice, competition would be created among package providers, this in turn would lead to greater transparency in the packages as recipients want to choose the most attractive deals, and providers seek the best ways of satisfying their potential clients. Collier’s description of the influence of China’s development cooperation on the international system again cannot be described by any of Johnston’s three micro-processes of socialization. By urging that China’s package deal
process be adopted Collier is ascribing an influencing factor to China. Rather than China conforming to existing norms and practices, it exerts an influence on others.

Chinese authors also present a variety of different readings on the impact of the re-emergence of China’s development cooperation on the international aid architecture. Jiajun Xu (2011) argues that China is having an unintentional impact on the international aid system. She states that as competition from China increases, other donors feel an increasing need to coordinate with China in order to decrease the effects of competition – undermining traditional donors’ efforts and providing an alternative to recipients – and increase burden sharing. Xu argues that China’s re-emergence has caused a reconsideration of the norms and rules of the international aid regime, most notably on the tying of aid, the balance between national interests and development purpose, and the role of aid in attracting investment. She observes that Japan is reconsidering its use of package approaches that it used in the 1980s in China and Southeast Asia, and the Obama administration has been piloting projects combining USAID and US Exim Bank financing in order to promote economic development in recipient economies. Using the three micro-process framework, the re-emergence effect of China’s development cooperation again cannot wholly be explained by the processes of mimicking, persuasion, or social influence. Rather, China is also exerting a socializing influence on other members of the international aid community. This influence is the result of its innovation.

Other authors, however, argue that there is much that can be learned from Western donors. Yunhong Qi (2009) for example, states that while China’s foreign aid program should remain in the service of ‘China’s peaceful rise,’ more attention needs to be paid to improving aid institutions, improving aid effectiveness, and the establishment of independent aid research institutions to research, monitor, evaluate, and coordinate the specifics of aid implementation. He adds that much can be learned from the West’s use of NGOs and other CSOs in aid implementation. Seen through the lens of the three processes it appears as if Qi’s description would fit into the processes of mimicking and social influence.

Hongxi Yang and Kaiming Chen (2010) argue that while maintaining the concept of keeping development cooperation up with the times and keeping it in the service of China’s diplomatic strategy, lessons need to be drawn from Western development cooperation concepts. Yong Zhang (2007) similarly argues for the necessity of drawing lessons from Western donors in order to improve China’s development
cooperation. Xueliang Ding (2009) even investigates the possibility of China introducing conditionalities into development cooperation especially as this relates to securing the repayment of debts. These three publications again indicate a degree of mimicking necessary for the further development of China’s development cooperation program.

Minbo Huang (2007) states that while the development cooperation systems of traditional donors have clear rules, regulations, and laws in place to govern their aid systems, China does not. Moreover, the systems of traditional donors are transparent not only in their figures, but also their decision-making processes. So far, China lacks transparency on both these counts, and this has made Chinese aid rather whimsical (Huang 2007). Huang argues that if China is to become a modern responsible big/great country then China’s foreign policy and diplomacy need to become more professional, scientific, comprehensive, and coherent. He states that China needs to increase its cooperation with and contributions to international and intergovernmental organizations, especially as these organizations have an important position in the increasingly globalized world and doing so will also improve China’s international position. Huang adds that these organizations also have no special national self-interests in these recipient countries, therefore their motives for reducing poverty are pure and their aid effectiveness will be better. He further proposes that China fully develop tendering and transparent marketized processes for financial aid distributions. Huang also states that NGOs’ involvement in China domestic poverty reduction can be expanded into international development cooperation through the assistance of the government. Huang’s recommendations fit the socialization process of mimicking.

Ailan Liu and Minbo Huang (2011) note that the number and influence of non-DAC donors is increasing, and their emergence is giving more strength to calls for reform of the international development cooperation architecture. Emerging donors, including China, have different standards, practices, management styles, and financing sources (Liu and Huang 2011). They substitute for what traditional donors do not do, or no longer do. Emerging donors have markedly weakened the position of traditional donors, however, developed countries are still in control of the international development architecture (Liu and Huang 2011). The authors argue that there are two possibilities for the impact of the emerging donors on the international aid system: 1) increased cooperation between emerging donors and DAC donors, where emerging donors influence reform of the international aid system, or 2) non-DAC donors establish their own system in
opposition to the DAC (Liu and Huang 2011). However, they add that there is great potential and value in DAC and non-DAC donors learning from each other. Using the lens of the three micro-processes of socialization, it is again apparent that these cannot fully describe China’s foreign aid program, and influence in the international aid system is not mono-directional. Therefore, a fourth micro-process that accounts for the influence of new members of the group on existing members is required, which this chapter argues is innovation.

In their reflections on China’s foreign aid program Li Xi and Fan He (2008) argue that there are many similarities with traditional donors. They state that approximately 80 percent of US ODA is tied to US goods and services, creating export markets and large numbers of employment opportunities. France similarly requires that aid projects such as hospitals, schools, and agricultural irrigation are constructed by French firms, stimulating French investment in recipient countries, and helping these firms become established in recipient countries (Xi and He 2008). Xi and He argue that Japanese investments in China were first made possible through the provision of foreign aid, which improved relations between the two countries and allowed Japanese firms to enter the Chinese market. The difference between China and traditional donors is China’s concept of the ‘harmonious world’ as described above. Xi and He argue that through the provision of foreign aid China should have as one of its goals the active promotion of its concepts of development and values. The authors further argue that China learns from the experiences of other traditional donors such as country specific aid policies and the specialization of programs. In addition, the authors propose the Chinese aid system be restructured, learning from the lessons of traditional donors by separating the management and implementation institutions, and either creating a separate foreign aid department or a foreign aid committee (Xi and He 2008). Viewing this description of China’s foreign aid program and its interaction with the international aid architecture through the lens of the three micro-processes, it appears that there are elements of the process of social influence and mimicking as China learns from other donors, especially with regard to the reforms of the aid system. However, there is also an element of China exerting an influence on the world in the promotion of its concepts of development and its values, which cannot be explained by the three micro-processes described by Johnston (2008), but is more readily described by the suggested fourth micro-process, innovation. While Johnston presents literature that argues that new entrants can also alter the behavior of a group, he does not find this relevant to the case of China’s cooperation with major
security institutions in the 1990s. This chapter, however, has found that in the case of China’s role in the foreign aid system China is adapting its behavior in conformity with the group, but the group’s behavior is also changing with the increasing prominence of China. This can partly be explained by the changes in the cost-benefit balance, and partly by the changes in the domestic polities of the donors. In this sense the contractual institutionalists mentioned by Johnston could add to the socialization processes as they argue that the behavior of actors in cooperative directions can change as the cost-benefit balance changes.

**Conclusion**

Johnston’s three micro-processes – mimicking, persuasion, and social influence – are limited in their purview. All three processes are exerted either consciously or unconsciously to cause a new member or potential member to adapt its behavior to be consistent with the behavior of the existing group. Adding a fourth micro-process that reflects independent development of behavior broadens the spectrum of socialization processes. It allows for changes in the norms and behaviors of the group. Initially the innovation micro-process is faced with the challenge of the other micro-processes being consciously or unconsciously exerted by the existing members of the group, as innovation challenges the existing norms, values, and behaviors of the group. Not all innovators succeed. Many will adapt under the pressure of the three micro-processes. However, when innovation is successful in resisting pressure to conform to existing norms, the new practice will be incorporated as normal procedure through the other micro-processes, and these micro-processes will again be utilized by the group in order to maintain cohesion and conformity until its norms are again challenged successfully by other innovators.

China’s use of aid, and the successful choice of modalities, when it was itself still very poor, is innovative, and many countries, such as India and Brazil, followed suit. China is not just a passive receiver, it is also an active player. However, analysis of the evolution of China’s aid program has also shown elements of mimicking, as Beijing has mimicked and learned from practices adopted by other donors. Nevertheless, China is not simply being influenced by other donors it is also exerting an influence on them. It has been shown here that China’s principles of foreign economic relations are innovative, as is its non-paternalistic attitude. These set it apart from traditional donors. The
processes assume that China adapts itself, however, academics, practitioners, and policymakers describe that China is also exerting an influence on others. It is also innovating and others are also adjusting their practices through social influence and mimicking.

Understanding that China is also exerting an influence on others in the international aid community is important. It places the expectations that China will one day be like other Western donors to one side, providing the space for critical reflection on the principles and practices of traditional donors. As a former aid recipient, China is now shaping contemporary foreign aid standards, with the potential to benefit recipients in different ways. Realization that a fourth micro-process – innovation – is at work in the international aid system, not only from China but also other donors, allows members to view these challenges to existing principles and practices with a more open mind. A more open-minded approach, in turn, has the potential to allow principles and practices to emerge that can help aid recipients realize the goals of independent social and economic development.

Notes
1 She adds that one of the biggest failures of the Western model is the Western attitude. Anshan Li (2007b) makes a similar argument regarding the failure of Western aid and the success of Chinese aid.
2 Introduced by Hu Jintao in 2005 at the summit for United Nations 60th anniversary.
3 For an in-depth discussion see Warmerdam (2012).
4 While more detailed time periods have been used (see NBSC 1999; Ping 1999; Warmerdam 2012), the general characteristics of the two time period model is sufficient for the current analysis.
5 The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, part of a treaty signed between China and India in 1954 (United Nations (UN) 1958).
6 The government considers grants and interest-free or concessional loans, the former provided directly by government ministries and the latter provided by the China Exim Bank state policy bank, as foreign aid finances (IOSCPRC 2011a).
7 Kurlantzick misreads or neglects a number of important points. Firstly, within the foreign aid department at MOFCOM there does not seem to be any political will to create an independent permanent aid agency. Officials have looked at other models, but the current model is most conducive to the current policy framework and national goals of coupling foreign aid to China’s domestic development. He also neglects the fact that China’s foreign aid department once existed independently at the ministerial level, reporting directly to the State Council, and reforms would have to be carefully evaluated, especially how these reforms would be beneficial to China. While data and figures are beneficial to academics and policy analysts, aid
transparency is not in China’s best political interests. If China’s domestic population, many of whom are still living in abject poverty, became aware of aid levels, it might create domestic political unrest. Internationally, countries will start considering their political allegiance to China on the basis of their comparable levels of aid inflows.

8 The other remit is joint review of poverty reduction in China.

9 A point first emphasized by Zhao Ziyang and repeated by successive leaders.

10 The Chinese version of responsible stakeholder is ‘responsible big/great country’ (fuzeren de daguo).

11 This view seems rather naïve as the decisions of these organizations are often also influenced by their largest creditors and more influential members. See, for example, Barro and Lee (2005); Fleck and Kilby (2006); Kang (2007); Kilby (2009); Vreeland (2004); Wade (2002).

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Part II

Theoretical innovation

Chinese school of international relations theory
3 Narrating a discipline

The search for innovation in Chinese international relations

Linsay Cunningham-Cross

Introduction

The search for innovation in Chinese international relations research and, in particular, the innovation of a ‘Chinese school’ of IR theory, has drawn the attention of scholars both in and beyond China in recent years. This agenda has been driven forward by a number of influential Chinese academics and public intellectuals. Indeed, since as early as the 1980s there have been calls for innovation in Chinese international relations studies and, specifically, for the creation of a new (and distinctly Chinese) brand of international relations theory. Some scholars have argued quite strongly against such a project but few have failed to participate in the debate. This chapter considers the wider context of this drive for innovation – the specifics of the ‘Chinese School project’ as I call it are taken up in greater detail in the chapter that follows and in my other work (Cunningham-Cross 2011). In looking at the academic discipline of international relations in China in a wider sense, this chapter uncovers a fixation with the notion of innovation amongst Chinese IR scholars. It uncovers the origin of this ‘innovation imperative’ in disciplinary storytelling, which I argue is particularly widespread in the field of IR in China and key to understanding recent debates. The chapter questions the ways in which such disciplinary narratives, their telling and their re-telling, impact upon China’s changing relationships with other parts of the world, arguing that Chinese scholars’ drive for innovation both shapes and is shaped by a particular relationship between the West (and/or the US) and China that is both spatially and teleologically hierarchical.

Defining innovation

In recent years, innovation has become a buzzword in the field of international relations in China. Many Chinese scholars have called for
greater innovation (chuangxin) or creativity (chuangzaoxing) in Chinese approaches to international relations research and in particular to international relations theory (see, for example, Qin 2006; Ren 2009 and Tang 2004). There is a clear emphasis on newness or creativity in the debates on innovation in Chinese international relations theory, but there is also a clear sense that innovation means coming up with something that is not only new but also distinctive. Chinese scholars frequently identify a clear role for Western international relations theory in establishing the discipline of international relations in China, and what is meant by this will be examined in greater detail below. But today’s calls for innovation ask for something that will move Chinese scholars beyond ‘dependence’ on Western theories of international politics to a position of standing on their own feet or ‘walking their own path’ (Ren 2009). As Wang Yiwei describes it, the discipline of international relations in China is currently moving ‘between copying and constructing’ (Wang Yiwei 2009). An innovative theory of IR is therefore a Chinese theory of IR; it is not a Western theory of IR. In other words, newness is measured against certain ostensibly Western markers and originality can only exist where there is evidence of a clear distinction from the so-called Western theory that preceded it. This understanding of the nature of innovation is closely related to wider discourses on globalisation and modernisation in China and is reliant on a particular understanding of China’s relationship to the West that may limit the possibilities for innovation in Chinese international relations research and even beyond.

**Storytelling in Chinese IR**

I turn first of all to the object of study of this chapter – disciplinary storytelling in international relations – and set out below why I think it is crucial to understanding recent debates on innovation and the ‘Chinese School’ in Chinese international studies. Disciplinary histories are common in Chinese international relations literature and have also been a significant factor in driving calls for greater innovation in the discipline. Such accounts are frequently found in introductory textbooks for new students of the subject. This phenomenon is not unique to Chinese volumes; many English-language textbooks also include a chapter or introduction to the ways in which the subject of international politics has been studied up to this point (see, for example, Baylis and Smith 2001). They commonly tell the field’s history in terms of the ‘three great debates’ and the competing theoretical perspectives of realism, liberalism and critical theory, variously defined. This type
of scene-setting is, however, particularly prevalent in Chinese-language IR textbooks and tends to focus specifically on the history of international relations research within China: all but one of the textbooks surveyed included an overview of the development of disciplinary IR in China. Frequently this serves as the only introduction to the subject for new students and therefore plays a significant role in setting the terms of later discussions of how to study world politics and what is, or ought to be, the object of that study.

Self-reflective debates and the historical accounts they have engendered are well recorded in the leading IR journals in China over the past twenty years and are still producing new and interesting works today. These include two full-length volumes, which provide in-depth reviews of international relations research in China over recent years and are therefore particularly useful here. The most comprehensive of these is titled *Forty years of Chinese International Relations Research*, by two young scholars, Wang Jun and Dan Xingwu, both of whom were trained at leading research institutes in Beijing (Wang and Dan 2008). The book is a recent volume in the *Young scholars and International Politics* series, published by the Beijing-based Central Compilation and Translation Press (CCTP). In the foreword, the authors are described as belonging to a new generation of IR scholars in China and the book, correspondingly, reflects the viewpoints and standards of that new generation (Wang Yizhou 2007: 1). A similar volume was published by one of China’s leading international relations scholars Wang Yizhou a few years earlier (Wang and Yuan 2006). Both give step-by-step historical accounts of what they see as the major developments in international relations research from the pre-PRC era to the present. They also include a section exploring recent debates amongst Chinese scholars centred around the theme of establishing China’s own distinct discipline or approach to the study of international relations, which is key to the debates on innovation explored below.

Held in Shanghai in 1987, the first National Conference on International Relations Theory is also highly significant. This conference was both a product of the desire amongst scholars to establish a discipline of international relations in China as well as a key factor in driving that agenda forward (Wang and Dan 2008: 19). In October 1998 a second national conference was held where once again a large proportion of the conference was dedicated to consideration of Chinese IR theory and building the discipline. These high-profile conferences continue to play an important role both in leading and reflecting key debates in Chinese academia.
Discourse about IR discourse

Historical narratives of this sort that describe the development of international relations studies in China over time are highly significant because they provide key insights into the nature and scope of international studies in China to date. They help us to understand how Chinese scholars have defined the international, and what they consider the best approaches to studying it. More importantly, they help to paint a picture of how Chinese academics themselves see the field of international relations in China, past, present and future. Such debates, as part of the wider practice of what Gerard Holden (2002) calls ‘discourse about IR discourse’, are also significant because of their role in setting the terms of debate for future discussions of world politics (loosely defined) in China and beyond. In other words, they are vital in creating and shaping the very discipline they seek to describe. Academic disciplines are not self-evident; they do not simply exist, rather they must be discursively created. This occurs through both formal and informal practices and recognising these practices is vital to understanding how we make sense of the world around us and why. International relations cannot be seen as simply a collection of scholars and research that self-evidently ‘fit’ together, nor does it consist of all that can truthfully be said about the subject of international politics, however (ill)defined. Rather, it is a distinct field of knowledge whose boundaries are discursively constructed to include certain understandings of the world and to exclude others. The discipline, in Foucault’s words, ‘fixes limits for discourse by the action of an identity which takes the form of a permanent re-acutation of the rules’ (Foucault 1984: 120). Disciplines are best understood as a set of discursive practices of inclusion and exclusion. Such practices are responsible for setting limits both on what can legitimately be studied in IR, how such knowledge can be produced and who can legitimately speak about IR. Nevertheless, such limits are neither stable nor self-evident; they must be constantly created and renegotiated. ‘Disciplinarity must be performed in order to be’ (Beier 2005: 59).

Discussions of ‘the discipline’ of international relations in China are therefore highly significant as they form a key part of our understanding of how the boundaries of that discipline are discursively drawn and play an active role in the drawing of those boundaries. Chinese scholars, by consciously articulating the existence, or absence, of a defined discipline of international relations are also creating the boundaries of that discipline. They are making judgements about what can, and therefore cannot, be considered ‘international relations’, setting out
possibilities for *how* knowledge about international relations can(not) be produced and *who* can(not) produce it and what is *new* in these processes. In these narratives Chinese scholars are explicitly, and often implicitly, setting out their understandings of the correct subject matter, methodology and approach to the study of international politics. They are making many unwritten assumptions about the world and how we can best understand it, that then become the basis for future knowledge and innovation within ‘the discipline’ of international relations. These historical narratives are therefore vitally important for understanding the role of and possibilities for innovation in Chinese international relations theory.

**Why innovation? The story of a young discipline**

Accounts by Chinese scholars of their discipline’s history, while widespread, are remarkably homogeneous. International relations (*guoji guanxi*), they tell us, is a young discipline in China. Some scholars identify an emerging discipline of international relations in the 1950s or 60s (Liang 2004), while others argue that ‘strictly speaking, international relations research only appeared in China in the past ten or twenty years’ (Wang Yizhou 2005). Theoretical research is said to have started even later and as a result international relations ‘began to take shape as a distinct discipline only in the early 1980s’ (Ni 2001: 486). Despite disagreement on exact dates or timings, there is a general consensus amongst Chinese, as well as many non-Chinese (see, for example Geeraerts and Jing 2001), commentators that international relations is a ‘new and developing discipline’ in China (Liang and Hong 2000: 1).

International relations, as an academic subject, is also said not to be indigenous to China. As one textbook explains it; international relations is ‘an import’ (*bolaipin*) from the West, the US in particular (Zhao and Ni 2007: 53). International relations research has, according to such accounts, made significant progress since its inception and particularly in the period since the early 1980s (Zhang Ruizhuang 2003). This ‘progress’ has largely followed from the success or influence of the reform and opening up policies begun under Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s. As Ni and Xu (1997) argue, ‘progress in Chinese international relations theory research has been moving in step with reform and opening.’

Despite this recent progress, however, a number of problems continue to exist in Chinese IR research. Many accounts identify specific areas in which the discipline is lacking or underdeveloped, others
simply argue that it is. Su Changhe (2000), for example, argues that despite some recent attention, failure to meet basic academic standards is a serious problem within Chinese IR research. He argues that plagiarism and failure to give a clear indication of ones sources or to provide complete and accurate bibliographies, are all common occurrences in academic work in Chinese international relations. Chinese IR research suffers from ‘confusion over disciplinary boundaries, low level of specialisation, out of date methodologies, lack of academic standards, repetition or reproduction of low-quality work’ (Zhang Ruizhuang 2003). In addition, scholarly critique is not sufficiently well developed (Wang Yizhou 2005a). One of the most frequently cited problems is a perceived lack of creativity or theoretical innovation in Chinese IR research (Zheng 2005). This lack has been a key driving force behind recent self-reflective debates in Chinese IR that have been responsible for producing much of the historical storytelling this chapter draws upon. Later in this chapter I consider this storytelling in greater detail contending with some of the key assertions Chinese IR scholars make about their discipline and how these assertions constrain the possibilities for innovation in Chinese international relations and drive it in a particular (US realist) direction.

**Patriotic worrying and the innovation imperative**

Telling the history of IR became particularly popular amongst Chinese academics from around the mid 1980s onwards. Since then, debates about the future direction of the field have become widespread and increasingly intense. Fundamental to such debates is the ‘stock-take’ that prefaces most scholars’ contributions, the purpose of which is to set out the current state of affairs for IR research in China and the historical background which led to that situation. As I have shown, such accounts focus heavily on perceived problems or shortcomings with international relations research in China. Scholars have questioned the quality of research to date, the subject-matter or scope of research that is undertaken across the country and the methodologies and theoretical approaches adopted by Chinese researchers. Their ‘histories’ are therefore forward-looking in the sense that their primary motivation appears to be improving the situation of international relations research in China so that it can be a healthy and firmly established discipline within the social sciences in China. They focus on the problems or shortcomings in Chinese international relations research in order that they might offer solutions and/or prescriptions for change. Greater theoretical
innovation is therefore seen by Chinese scholars as the key to modernising international relations research in China and creating a discipline to rival that of the US or the West.

What makes these debates within the Chinese academy particularly interesting is their focus on establishing China’s own international relations discipline. As I mentioned above, innovation is understood in a context whereby historically international relations theory has emanated from the West and new theory must therefore be distinctive; meaning distinctively Chinese. However, the drive for a Chinese IR theory goes beyond creating a separate discipline in China but also requires the creation of a discipline for China. In other words, China needs an IR discipline and an IR theory that serves its (the state’s) own needs. This is reflected in many of the narratives reviewed, which frequently argue that the failure to have a successful and productive IR discipline is unacceptable for a country as large as China. Size matters, it seems, in IR research. There is a widespread view amongst Chinese scholars that since China is a large (read powerful) country it must have an IR discipline to match. For example, Zhang Ruizhuang (2003) argues that:

not only has the academic standard of Chinese international relations research lagged far behind that of such major western powers as the US, UK, Australia and France but also behind that of countries that have learnt from the west such as Japan and Korea, to the extent that China is unable to rival even the academic achievements of Hong Kong or Singapore. For a country of over 1 billion people, this must be said to be a tragedy.

It is seen as both tragic and unsustainable that a country as large as China, a country that is rising to prominence on the world stage, should produce sub-standard research in the field of international relations. Such views are driven partly by a desire for the prestige that comes with academic success but also by a belief that to be powerful in the world one must first understand that world. Chinese scholars see a vital need to understand the international system, so that they might play an active part in it. Not only that, they must innovate and develop a uniquely Chinese way of understanding the world so they might contribute to bringing about a better world into the future. According to Wang Yizhou, a country as large as China can and must have its own perspective on international politics (Wang Yizhou 2005b). China’s IR discipline must therefore be modern and successful but must also serve China’s national interests.
Innovation in Chinese international relations research is therefore a key component in nation-building and strengthening (new) China. In order for China to play its proper role in the world it must develop a clear understanding (its own understanding) of international politics and how it works. This type of argument follows a very similar logic to the seminal work of Stanley Hoffmann on the dominance of the US in the global study of international relations. Hoffmann argued that since the US dominated the practice of international politics so it also dominated the construction of knowledge about it (Hoffmann 1977). Chinese scholars are concerned that if Chinese research is not up to scratch it will hamper China’s rise on the world stage.

This type of concern is widespread in Chinese academia. According to Gloria Davies, one of the key distinguishing features of the Chinese intellectual scene is the phenomenon of ‘patriotic worrying’ (youhuang) (Davies 2007). Under such conditions, the strength of an argument is judged not against some notion of scientific accuracy or theoretical soundness but rather is against whether or not it benefits China’s national interest (Saussy 2008: 685). The strength of international relations research is thus judged against whether or not it benefits China’s national interest, both on the micro level of individual theories and research projects and on the level of the discipline as a whole. This thinking shapes Chinese IR scholars’ approach to the notion of innovation and creates an imperative to innovate in order to build a successful discipline that can compete on the world stage. Chinese IR scholars are clambering over one another to solve the ‘Chinese School’ problem and come up with a Chinese theory of international relations that will firmly establish Chinese international relations as a worthy participant in the global discipline and with it contribute to the PRC’s rise on the world stage.

Developing Chinese international relations theory

The historical narratives that create this innovation imperative also shape the possibilities for such innovation and drive it in certain directions. As I set out earlier, disciplinary storytelling in Chinese IR makes certain claims about the discipline – that it is ‘new’ or young and underdeveloped, that it requires modernisation and, most importantly, theoretical innovation. Here I look in greater detail at these disciplinary narratives in Chinese IR and the manner in which they are told to demonstrate how such innovation is to be achieved.

Virtually all historical accounts of Chinese international relations research narrate the development of ‘the discipline’ in terms of stages
or phases of development. Each account differs in the exact periodisation employed; however, the ubiquity of this approach means that it warrants further attention. Despite variations in the number and length of periods used to describe the development of disciplinary international relations in China, there are certain events or shifts that commonly appear in such accounts, in addition to a clear similarity in the language and logic of linear progression apparent in each. Table 3.1 summarises the periodisation approach used in a selection of accounts taken as indicative of disciplinary storytelling in Chinese IR.

Drawing upon the many individual accounts available, Wang and Dan (2008), settle on four broad historical phases: the period of time prior to the establishment of the PRC; from 1949 to the beginning of reform and opening (around 1978); the early reform and opening period until the end of the Cold War and the post-Cold War era. Wang Yizhou’s account includes five phases but follows the same basic pattern as Wang and Dan (Wang and Yuan 2006). He differs in splitting their second phase (1949–78) into two periods, 1949–63 and 1963–78, to account for the influence of the Cultural Revolution on international relations research as with all areas of academic work in China at that time. The key date markers used by almost all accounts revolve around external events. The first of these, the establishment of the People’s Republic of China in 1949, is understandably granted great significance. The founding of a new China brought with it a whole new system of academia to serve its new system of government.

The second key date marker used is the start of the reform and opening movement in 1978 (Qin Yaqing 2010; Wang and Dan 2008; Wang and Yuan 2006; Zhang Feng 2010). Many historical accounts focus solely on the period of time after the start of reform and opening policies since, they argue, there was little that could be described as a discipline of international relations prior to that time. This date is accorded such significance because the policy shift towards reform and opening facilitated an increasing openness to the outside world that enabled Chinese scholars to begin importing research from other countries, especially those in the West. Wang Yizhou characterises the period from 1978 to 1990 as one of ‘energetic learning’ or borrowing from the experiences of Europe and the US (Wang and Yuan 2006: 5). Yu Zhengliang and Chen Yugang (1999) likewise describe the phase from around 1978 to 1989 as one of opening and importation from abroad. During this period, international relations research is said to have made remarkable, unprecedented progress, largely accredited to the influence of importing Western literature and ideas (Wang and Yuan 2006: 5).
### Table 3.1 Summary of periodisation approach in accounts of Chinese IR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Periods of development identified</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qin Yaqing (2010)</td>
<td>1953–63 1964–79 1980 -&gt;</td>
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The third key date marker frequently identified is the end of the Cold War (Wang and Dan 2008; Wang and Yuan 2006; Yu and Chen 1999; Chen 2006; Zhang Feng 2010; Men 2002). This date marker has been widely used in disciplinary debates not just in China and is often described as a key turning point in discrediting certain theories of approaches to international relations. Whilst, according to Wang and Dan, international relations research in China was not as seriously affected as in the Western world, the end of the Cold War still brought many new challenges to Chinese international relations research. As with elsewhere, the end of the Cold War brought challenges to existing paradigms in international relations research, because of their inability to explain or predict the events of the time, but changes in Chinese international relations research were also brought about by domestic political change, development of the country’s university system as well as scholars moving into new areas of research (Wang and Dan 2008: 33–34).

Qin Yaqing offers a slightly different slant in his account of disciplinary development, by focusing on ‘institutional building’ in development of international relations in China. For Qin, institutional infrastructure is a key element in developing a discipline of international relations. Nevertheless, the periods he sets out largely replicate those identified by the other authors surveyed and do take into account many of the same ‘external’ events. He identifies three stages: 1953 to 63, beginning with the establishment of the Department of Diplomatic Studies at Renmin University; in 1955 it became an independent institute and is now the China Foreign Affairs University. The second stage, 1964 to 1979 was characterised by the establishment of international politics departments at three of the country’s leading universities: Peking University, Renmin University and Fudan University. The third phase, following Deng Xiaoping’s reform and opening, saw significant development in the field with exponential growth in both the quantity and the quality of research institutes across the country (Qin Yaqing 2010: 33–35).

**Import – critique – innovate**

These time markers are helpful and do bring to light the depth and extent of influence domestic and global social/political change has had on academic research in China over the years. Reform and opening did indeed make it possible for Chinese scholars to successfully access resources from the US and Western Europe for the first time, at least since 1949. Likewise, domestic political factors have often been responsible
for widespread changes in direction of research. Prior to the 1980s, most research into international politics was arguably policy-focused and scholars took their theoretical lead from the party leadership; the reform and opening policies did bring increasing openness to many areas of academia including international politics (Wang and Dan 2008: 43–44). Nevertheless, the near universal use of the time markers identified above is problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it assigns all agency to political leaders and external political events. Such narratives rarely take into account the influence of individual scholars, students and, with the exception of Qin Yaqing, changing institutional arrangements in setting the terms of debate, or drawing the boundaries of the international relations discipline (the chapter that follows provides a helpful account of Chinese international relations written from this perspective). Secondly, and more problematically, this manner of storytelling imposes a strict linear teleology onto the Chinese discipline of international relations; a teleology that conceives of success as effectively replicating the model of the US IR discipline in particular and of Western capitalism more generally. The narratives I have identified within Chinese international relations discourse provide us with helpful bite-sized pieces of progress toward this implicitly defined target. They give the impression of a seamless unidirectional progression and serve to solidify these events or policy shifts (and not others) in the historical narrative.

In these debates, Chinese scholars are setting out a particular story for the development of their discipline, which begins with the assumption that international relations is an ‘import from the west’ (Zhao and Ni 2007: 53), specifically the US. This is reinforced by constant reiterations that the development of the discipline was most productive after the onset of reform and opening because Chinese scholars were able to read Western theories of international relations for the first time and build upon them. This modernisation logic is clearly evident in the account given by veteran Chinese IR scholar Ni Shixiong. Ni also adopts a periodisation approach in his account of IR theory in China but chooses to focus solely on the post-1978 period, arguing that prior to implementation of the reform and opening policies there was nothing in China that could be called international relations theory. In Ni’s account, disciplinary development can be categorised into three distinct periods. The first stage, from 1980 to 1987, was characterised by widespread importation of theories from the West, many academic journals giving more space to articles related to international relations theory and top universities specialising more in theoretical research and teaching. The second phase, 1987 to 1994, saw the first attempts to move beyond
Western theories and establish China’s own system of international relations theory. From 1994 onwards, research in the field expanded into many new areas and the debate on international relations with ‘Chinese characteristics’ deepened significantly (Ni 2001: 486–90; see also Ni and Xu 1997). Ni’s phases of development reflect a widespread view amongst Chinese scholars that progress in the field of international relations is achieved through first importing and learning from Western theories, then critiquing or building on them before, finally, creating something new and distinctly ‘Chinese’ (or non-Western). Men Honghua (2002) states this explicitly, arguing; ‘importation – critique – innovation is the inherent logic of contemporary Chinese IR theory development’.

This logic, however, is unhelpful as it implies that innovation is not possible until Western theory is fully understood and critiqued. It is founded on the idea that international relations theory originates exclusively in the West. This type of argument reinforces unhelpful distinctions of West/East, West/China, developed/developing and, most problematically, promotes the idea that China is not different from the West but merely behind. This is compounded by the language used throughout the narratives I have examined, one of the most notable features of which is the near universal usage of terms such as ‘lagging behind’, ‘immature’ and ‘unhealthy’ to describe the current situation of international relations research in China. Wang Yizhou describes international relations as the ‘little brother’ in the wider family of social sciences (Wang Yizhou 2007: 1). International relations is often said to be in its ‘early’ or ‘preliminary stages’ (Liang and Hong 2000: 1), is described as a ‘latecomer’ to the party (Liang 2004) and as having ‘a long way yet to go’ (Zhao and Ni 2007: 54). The purpose of developing the discipline is therefore to ‘close the gap’ with other countries, and several accounts argue that in recent years Chinese research has been doing just that (Men 2002: 3). This ‘import – critique – innovate’ logic, however, works to set out the path along which Chinese IR has ‘yet to go’ and leaves little space for developments along different and competing trajectories.

**Storytelling logics and Marxist teleology**

This teleology is reinforced by disciplinary narratives not just in terms of what they say but also in what they don’t say. International relations research was, we are told, either non-existent (Zhao and Ni 2007: 53), or superficial and vague (Liang 2004), prior to the onset of the reform and opening period. What’s more, there was no theoretical research in
China until very recently (Wang Yizhou 2005b; Song 2001). Whilst it may be true to say that, due to structural reasons and state influence over what research could take place where and by whom, international relations research was somewhat limited prior to the reform and opening period; it is not, however, the case that no international relations research took place. Nor is it fair to say that what research did take place was not theoretical. Research that is self-consciously described as ‘IR theory’ (guojiguanxi lilun) is difficult to find prior to 1980 but this is due to the way in which theory is defined by Chinese international relations scholars rather than the fact that theoretical research did not take place. In Chinese international relations research theory tends to be viewed in a narrow positivist sense; as problem-solving theory that crucially must be systematic in its approach. Yet, as Algappa demonstrates in his recent review of international relations research across Asia: ‘strong practical orientation, however, does not imply theory has been absent from IRS in Asia … If conceived broadly to include understanding, constituting, and transforming the world, the post-World War II IRS in Asia has not been bereft of theory’ (Algappa 2011: 221).

The disciplinary narratives I have examined above claim that theoretical research in international relations began in China after the onset of reform and opening and Western (read American) theory could be imported. Such narratives completely ignore, or at best gloss over, the influence of Soviet theories and methodologies during the 1950s and 60s and even before. They rarely mention such contributions as Mao’s three world’s theory and the works it spawned, both directly and indirectly (see, for example, Li 2008; He 2010). Research that was conducted during this time into international politics, communist movements worldwide, other socialist countries and regions is not considered relevant for inclusion in a Chinese ‘discipline’ of international relations and its influence and achievements are therefore totally ignored. Marxist theory is sometimes identified as a potential source of future theoretical innovation, but only in its contemporary guise of ‘socialism with Chinese characteristics’. The widespread importation and development of Soviet theory in the early years of the PRC and before its founding is not recorded in these accounts. Where it is mentioned, for example by Song Xinning in his paper on IR with Chinese characteristics, it is explicitly denied a role in disciplinary international relations. Song states that: ‘Before the 1980s no real IR theory was taught in China. The so-called theory of international politics before then was just interpretations of the viewpoints of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Mao Zedong’ (Song Xinning 2001: 63).
Research that was conducted prior to the reform and opening period was undoubtedly influenced by Marxist-Leninist systems of thought (Shambaugh 2011: 341), yet this should not necessitate its exclusion from historical narratives of disciplinary international relations in China. This exclusion is made possible by the widespread adoption of a positivist understanding of the nature of international relations theory by Chinese scholars. A recent PhD thesis is indicative of these widespread views on theory. In it Yuan Wei argues that Mao Zedong’s three worlds theory should not be considered a valid IR theory because it was not based on theoretical arguments and did not suit China’s specific circumstances (Yuan 2008).

These narratives effectively write out Chinese IR’s Soviet past and in doing so present the appearance of a coherent historical narrative that demonstrates progress in Chinese IR towards a clear goal. In the case of Chinese international relations, progress is defined against a model of ‘Western IR’, which here means American or possibly Anglophone international relations research. We are told, for example, that the reform and opening policies sparked a trend in translation of a number of classic works of Western international relations theory7 and that these early works of translation had the biggest impact on Chinese international relations research and became the foundation for theoretical work in the 1990s (Wang and Dan 2008: 19). According to Qin Yaqing, five major translation series have been particularly influential and of these ‘the translation of Hans J. Morgenthau’s Politics Among Nations was the milestone’ (Qin 2010: 29). Nevertheless, it is worth considering that Lenin’s theory of imperialism entered China after the Russian revolution in 1917 (Zhang Xiantao 2007: 130). The active translation of Lenin’s work continued throughout the 1930s and 40s and ‘by the time the People’s Republic of China was proclaimed on October 1, 1949, practically all major works by Lenin were known in China’ (Pantsov 2000: 30). The scholarship that dominated prior to the Cultural Revolution and the onset of reform and opening was heavily influenced by Marxist-Leninist theories, particularly Lenin’s theory of imperialism. These foreign theories were imported and transformed in a similar way to that later advocated by scholars of Western (i.e. American) theory. Yet Lenin’s theories of international relations are dismissed in disciplinary narratives as irrelevant to contemporary Chinese IR theory. Such foreign theories, and their Maoist (re)interpretations, should be considered no less significant in shaping Chinese international relations research than later Western (American) imports. Yet in Chinese narratives Morgenthau is (once again) acknowledged as IR theory’s founding father. By failing to acknowledge the formative
role of Marxist-Leninist thought in Chinese international relations, Chinese scholars are closing down a potentially lucrative source of thinking about international relations theory and re-affirming a teleology that leads to their own discipline essentially replicating that of the US.

This exclusion, however, remains partial and impossible to sustain. Despite writing out the discipline’s Marxist legacy, the influence of Marxist theory continues to be pervasive in Chinese research. In fact the linear storytelling logic these narratives rely upon betrays a continued reliance on Marxist modes of thinking in contemporary Chinese international relations research. This storytelling logic is profoundly Marxist in that it seeks progress above all else and sets such progress out in various stages, each working towards a pre-defined goal.

What’s more, the Chinese disciplinary metanarrative relies too on a limited (and limiting) understanding of ‘western IR’ as (neo)realist, positivist research originating largely from the US. Despite the fact that positivist methodologies have been heavily criticised in Anglophone international relations research over the past two decades, Chinese scholars still seem to cling to them as the only possible way to do international relations research. Many scholars argue that the use of outdated research methods is one of the leading reasons for Chinese research lagging behind that of other countries. Men Honghua (2002), for example, argues that most researchers ‘have yet to break free from their reliance on historical and descriptive methods’ which are viewed as old-fashioned and not fit for the modern discipline of IR he wants to build in China. Yet in British IR, for example, the historical and descriptive methods Men is keen to move beyond are widespread and held in high regard by many in the field. According to Zhang Ruizhuang, the continued use of traditional philosophical and historical methods means that the field is still in a ‘pre-positivist’ phase and this presents a key barrier to its modernisation (Zhang Ruizhuang 2003; see also Yan Xuetong’s comments in Lu 2011: 240–44). Zhang also complains about a lack of specialisation in international relations research. Leading cadres, journal editors, scholars of history, philosophy, even literature ‘engage in loud and empty talk about international relations as if specialists’ (Zhang Ruizhuang 2003). He argues that the situation is such that international relations has become an amateur hobby rather than a professional branch of scholarship. For Zhang, IR should be something that only highly trained researchers can do. Here too, professionalism is equated with the use of positivist (data heavy) research methods. In these narratives then, Chinese scholars are defining not just what IR is (or ought to be) in China but also in ‘the west’.
Conclusion: constrained innovation?

Chinese scholars, in writing such accounts, are striving for innovation in their research. However, one of the consequences of their historical narratives, and the manner in which they are told, is that such innovation becomes limited or constrained. The narratives identified, and the teleology they impose, set out what ‘international relations’ is as fixed rather than moveable. The scope of IR research in China and the theories and methodologies it employs are measured against that of positivist American IR. As I argued in the outset of this chapter, once we recognise the limiting nature of ‘the discipline’, it becomes apparent that the possibility to exclude alternatives is inherent in the very notion of a discipline. As an academic discipline, international relations maintains its coherence and identity by excluding discourses that challenge it. ‘In a discipline, what is supposed at the outset is … the requisites for the construction of new statements’ (Foucault 1984: 118). It is not simply enough to say something new about world politics, however (ill-)defined, one must do so within the discursive limits of international relations. These historical narratives, then, set out what Chinese scholars can innovate, how they can innovate and what this might look like. In much the same way as ‘the insistence of Chinese leaders and some scholars on developing a ‘unique’ or ‘brand new’ Chinese model of development is predicated on assumptions about what a modern and developed China should look like’ (Barabantseva 2012: 76), the insistence on developing a ‘Chinese School’ of international relations theory is predicated on assumptions about what international relations theory should look like.

‘IR’ as a discipline relies on a common history and tradition, which is recorded in its written canon. Whilst many scholars working in Europe and the US have been striving to expose the discursive power of IR’s canon (see, for example Gruffydd Jones 2006; Shilliam 2010), it continues to hold considerable weight with Chinese scholars and influence their views of what counts as ‘international relations’. This is clearly evident in a recent interview given by leading Chinese IR scholar Yan Xuetong, in which he claims that he did not know what IR was, and did not understand what international politics was until he went to study at Berkeley, in the US. He did not know what ‘realism’ was or who Keohane was and what he did. He writes: ‘my education in China simply did not match what I was being taught at Berkeley’ (Yan Xuetong in Lu 2011: 235). It is also evident in the lists of translated texts available in Chinese university libraries and bookshops, where authors such as Morgenthau and Keohane feature heavily (see Qin 2010). We can see in these examples the importance of the ‘western canon’ in setting the
discursive limits for international relations not just in the West but beyond it.

Likewise, Qin Yaqing argues that Chinese scholars until recently have not contributed to the study of international relations because they lacked an understanding of ‘the international’. One of the key reasons Qin gives for the lack of international theory in China is a lack of an awareness of ‘international-ness’ (Qin 2010: 36). He claims that a traditional Chinese worldview, based on the concept of Tianxia (all under heaven) and practically lived out in the Tributary system, cannot be considered a theory of international relations because it does not contain any notions of sovereignty and territorial integrity and therefore lacks a sense of ‘international-ness’ (Qin 2010: 37). But here Qin is taking for granted conceptions of sovereignty and territorial integrity as essential to any understanding of international relations.

As I have argued elsewhere (Cunningham-Cross 2011; see also Gruffydd Jones 2006 and Jahn 2000), key concepts that have been integral in setting the boundaries or limits to what is ‘international relations’ (and what is not) have arisen as a result of (chance) historical encounters but have come to be seen as universal truths about the nature of world politics. These dominant positions are not natural but must be constantly (re) produced through discourse. The re-articulation of international relations as based on the (Western) canon of neorealist/neoliberal theories by Chinese scholars serves to re-produce the dominance of these ways of understanding the world. New work by Chinese scholars must be made to fit within these understandings of IR to be considered proper academic IR research. It is unable to challenge these boundaries because they are accepted and reproduced by much Chinese scholarship on international relations. For example, Yan Xuetong’s recent pre-Qin project, which considers the potential contribution ancient Chinese thought can make to contemporary international relations theory, is discursively set within a frame of (neo)realist international relations theory (see Callahan and Cunningham-Cross 2011). Pre-Qin thought is judged as relevant or otherwise according to whether or not it can ‘fit’ with realist understandings of international relations. This type of theoretical ‘innovation’ will struggle to push the boundaries of the discipline and certainly sells short what Chinese scholars have to offer the global study of international politics.

Notes

1 For a critical introduction to IR as a discipline see Steve Smith, ‘The self-images of a discipline: a genealogy of international relations theory’, in International
The textbooks surveyed include those used at the leading centres for teaching and research in international relations: Liang Shoude and Hong Yinxian, *Guojizhengzixue lilun* (International Political Theory) (Beijing: Peking University Press, 2000); Chen Yue, *Guojizhengzixue gailun* 2nd edn (*International Politics: An Outline*) (Beijing: Renmin University Press, 2006); Zhao Kejin and Ni Shixiong *Zhongguo guojiguangxi lilun yanjiu* (Chinese International Relations Research) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2007); Zhang Liliang *Guojiguanxixue gailun* (International Relations: An Outline) (Beijing: World knowledge publishers, 2002 – 4th reprint, originally published 1989); Ni Shixiong *Dangdai xifang guojiguanxi lilun* (Contemporary Western International Relations Theory) (Shanghai: Fudan University Press, 2001). Gao Shangtao’s introduction to IR theory did not include the type of disciplinary narrative identified in the others: Gao Shangtao, ‘*Guojiguanxi lilun jichu*’ (An Introduction to International Relations Theory) (Beijing: Current Affairs Press, 2009).

Wang received his doctorate from Peking University’s International Relations Institute in 2000 and Dan graduated in 2005 from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Both scholars have worked at CASS. See foreword to Wang & Dan, *Forty Years of Chinese IR*, 1.

In such accounts the term ‘international politics’ (*guoji zhengzhi*) is also frequently used. Whilst clearly the two terms are not completely interchangeable, and many of the works considered in this chapter have taken time to set out the differences between the two, in the context of disciplinary development, what is spoken of (the discipline) is the same thing. So, for our purposes in this chapter, those works that give an account of ‘international relations’ and those that give the history of ‘international politics’ can be considered together.

There is some ambiguity in the literature as to the date of the establishment of the diplomacy studies dept at Renmin University: Wang and Dan cite 1950 as the founding year rather than 1953 as identified by Qin Yaqing (see Wang & Dan 2008).

A keyword search of the Chinese Academic Journals Database revealed no articles published prior to 1982 contained the term ‘international relations theory’ (*guojiguanxi lilun*) in the title or abstract. We can see this number increase steadily in the years that follow, see Table 3.2.


**Table 3.2** Results of keyword search of the Chinese Academic Journals Database

<table>
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<th>Year</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Abstract</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010–2012</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>980</td>
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</table>
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4 ‘You need to do something that the Westerners cannot understand’
The innovation of a Chinese school of IR

Ras Tind Nielsen and Peter Marcus Kristensen

The conventional wisdom is that international relations is an ‘American social science’ dominated by US theories (Crawford and Jarvis 2001; Hoffmann 1977; Smith 2000; Wæver 1998). In recent years, however, Chinese scholars have begun debating whether and how a distinctly Chinese IR theory or school should be developed (Qin 2007, 2009, 2011; Ren 2008; Wang 2009; Yan 2008). In an academic world with growing exposure to online information and journals, increasing academic travel, exchange and conferences, it seems paradoxical that the Chinese IR community has taken a nativist turn. The Chinese attempt to deliberately produce a seemingly oxymoronic ‘national international theory’ is indeed a unique and puzzling case. The main puzzle of this chapter is thus how local and global influences interact in the innovation of a Chinese international relations theory. It addresses the question put forward in the introduction of this volume: To what extent has globalisation forced China to innovate? The object of innovation in this case is a Chinese IR theory and the innovators primarily Chinese IR scholars at universities and think tanks.

The chapter argues that it is necessary to challenge the commonsensical link between external events in the subject matter (i.r.) and theorising (IR), in this case that the innovation of a Chinese IR theory is a natural product of globalisation, China’s geopolitical rise, its growing political ambitions and discontent with Western hegemony. As noted in the introductory chapter, there seems to be an assumption in IR that China’s interaction with the world will make it ‘more like us’. By taking a micro-sociological perspective on intellectual innovation, we argue that ‘globalisation’ is not an external force that determines and homogenises the way Chinese theory is constructed. Rather, we suggest that globalisation processes at the micro-level such as growing exposure to Western IR books and articles, educational exchange and interaction
with Western colleagues at conferences, and the pressure for publishing in Western journals will not necessarily make Chinese IR ‘more like us’. On the contrary, we challenge the socialisation argument elaborated in the introduction by showing that growing interaction with the world, in the case of academic IR, may also lead to the emphasis, and even manufacture, of difference.

**A sociological approach to intellectual innovation**

As for the innovation theme of this volume, we abstain from defining ‘theory’ or ‘innovation’ in an absolute sense as this may prevent us from seeing theories we otherwise would (Acharya and Buzan 2007). The definitional battles about theory – what it is, who it is for, what its purpose is – are the objects of our analysis rather than something to be defined *a priori*. Contrary to the philosophy of science that conceives science as a thing and tries to define what ‘it’ is, we approach science sociologically: as the activities in which scientists partake and try to explain how ‘they’ work. In the sociological lens, new theories are understood by what they are designed to do rather than their content.

Instead of providing an absolute definition of theoretical innovation, we argue that it should be seen in relation to the intellectual attention space where it is put forward, locally and globally. Theoretical innovations are ideas that are *new* (creative) and *important* (relate to past debates). As the sociologist of science, Randall Collins, puts it: ‘ideas cannot be too new, whatever their creativeness [but] must also be important, that is, in relation to ongoing conversations of the intellectual community’ (Collins 1998: 31). Richard Whitley has also argued that scientific fields ‘reward intellectual innovation – only new knowledge is publishable – and yet contributions have to conform to collective standards and priorities if they are to be regarded as competent and scientific’ (Whitley in Wæver 1998: 716). For scholars to successfully promote their ideas as innovative, they need to effectively balance being original and recognisable. Innovation, in order to be *recognised* as such, must therefore contain both new and old elements in relation to the attention space in which they are put forward. According to this definition, the hybrid combination of different sources of knowledge – whether old and new, Western and Chinese, or local and global – is at the core of theoretical innovation.

This hybridity cannot be emphasised enough as it also brings the analysis beyond the traditional copy/construction dichotomy used to explain Chinese IR theorising. Some Chinese observers have argued that Chinese IR is still ‘between copying and constructing’ (Wang 2009) or between
‘theory-learning’ and ‘theory-innovation’ phases (Qin 2009). However, this quasi-Marxist conception of history as a stage-like progress towards maturity and theoretical sophistication that benchmarks itself against Western standards, may lead to a constant disappointment, as there is still no purely Chinese theory devoid of Western elements. Following the sociological approach to innovation outlined above, the innovation of a Chinese IR theory will most likely entail copying in some sense, especially as IR theory is a notion developed in the West during the twentieth century.

On the other hand, the Chinese attempt at constructing a local IR theory while at the same time trying to integrate China into the global IR family is original and innovative. In this sense the term innovation captures the tension between recognisability and originality and is well-suited to analyse the Chinese theoretical debates that are essentially about how to make a substantial contribution to (the already existing discipline of) IR that engages critically with existing perspectives, rather than inventing something radically new. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to explain why Chinese IR theorising takes the form of combining Western IR with (ancient) Chinese intellectual resources, and the focus is hybrids of local and global, particular and universal, Chinese and Western. Throughout the chapter, we employ interviews with more than 30 Chinese IR scholars to demonstrate how these hybrid combinations are made and how they are part of intellectual ‘moves’ (often against others) that aim to carve out attention space.

The chapter proceeds in four sections. The first section analyses the global influences on Chinese IR in the sense of import of Western, primarily American, theories and ideals of science. The second section shows how the application of Western theory is no longer considered sufficient to become prominent but must be recombined with distinctive Chinese ideas. The third section shows how the concept of a ‘school’ may provide the hybrid of local and global that gives Chinese IR a place at the margins of mainstream IR. The fourth and final section discusses the question in the introduction of this volume: ‘What potential barriers to innovation can be identified in a given field?’ The focus is on the prospect for international recognition of a Chinese IRT and whether it has the potential to make international relations a more international discipline.

**The import(ance) of American social science**

In order to understand the recent drive to innovate a Chinese theory of IR, we need first to understand how global influences have shaped Chinese
IR. Although contemporary Chinese IR scholars represent a plurality of perspectives, the common disciplinary history we are told is that modern Chinese IR was formed following China’s opening and reform. The processes of opening and reforming starting in 1978 are significant as they allowed for an influx of Western, especially US, influences and ideas that changed how Chinese academics dealt with the study of the ‘international’. One scholar, an assistant professor from Tsinghua, explains that Chinese IR today ‘is quite like in the US, we have realists, liberals, and constructivists’.\(^1\) Another scholar, educated in physics, who only recently entered IR working on nuclear disarmament, explains how he has had to learn the basic vocabulary of Western IR theory in order to communicate with his colleagues:

I think all universities, professors at all universities they teach the Western theories, IR theories or that kind of thing. [and he continues] The reason I began to learn IR theory is because I needed to communicate with my colleagues and my students. That was the original reason. I did not feel that IR theories are so useful but I needed to understand what my colleagues are talking about so I spent some time to read IR theory, books, articles.\(^2\)

In the eyes of this scholar, learning the theories of ‘realism, liberalism or whatever’\(^3\) were necessary to be able to communicate with his network.

A survey distributed among Chinese IR scholars largely confirms the relative dominance of Western IR in Chinese academia. When asking today’s IR scholars to characterise themselves and their peers by theoretical approach, the most prominent streams mentioned are the three paradigms realism, liberalism, constructivism. Realism is by far the most prominent. Marxism accounts for a small percentage – the smallest when scholars characterise themselves.\(^4\)

At a distance it might look like such Westernisation (or Americanisation) is simply an automatic product of globalisation. However, it is not ‘globalisation’ as an external force, but rather globalisation processes at the micro-level that explain the Westernisation of Chinese IR. It has been driven by social changes to the intellectual field, supported by specific changes in its material and organisational basis. Especially important in shaping and changing Chinese IR has been the personal linkages created between American and Chinese scholars, leading to the transferral of both US theories and scientific ideals.

For example, the most prominent scholars in Chinese IR all have a special connection to the US. Qin Yaqing and Yan Xuetong received
their PhDs there, while others have held visiting scholarships in the US (Wang Jisi, Wang Yizhou, Ni Shixiong). As one not-so-prominent scholar explains, these scholars became important and defining figures in the development of the Chinese IR discipline:

*Why do you think they became the most prominent?*

Because they are the first generation of Chinese students who got a PhD from abroad. They went to America in the earliest years and they got their PhD and they master the English language and know a lot about the Western IR theories. Then they came back to China. So they belong to the first young generation of Chinese scholars who had experience in America and have the knowledge about the Western IR theory, especially American IR theory. So after they got their PhD degree they came back to China and became a faculty member and they became the leading IR scholars in China.5

Opening to the outside world, thus, allowed Chinese academics and students to travel to the US on visiting scholarships or to achieve PhD degrees. Moreover US scholars were invited to China, whereby new academic ideas were exchanged (Y. Zhang 2003: 99–102). This occurred at a time when access and exposure to knowledge resources such as books, journals, conferences and other scholars was still extremely limited. It provided the travelling scholars with significant opportunities to return home with a US education, theoretical knowledge and the ability to attain a certain position in the intellectual community and influence it. Other observers also point this out (S. Zhao 1997; Jianwei Wang 2002). But it is not only the visiting scholarship or the degree that enabled these scholars to define and shape the discipline. It is also how connections they made to important figures in the field during their visits were utilised.

Large parts of Chinese IR scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s were taken up by translation and introduction of Western IR theory (Qin 2007: 316; Yiwei Wang 2009: 106; Johnston 2002: 35; Ren 2008: 296). Several of the most prominent scholars identified in our survey (Wang Yizhou, Qin Yaqing, Ni Shixiong) are often praised as introducers of Western theories (Jisi Wang 2002: 11; Y. Zhang 2002, 2003: 102; Johnston 2002: 35). For example, China’s leading constructivist Qin Yaqing has translated Wendt’s *Social Theory of International Politics*. Wang Jisi, a renowned policy scholar and realist provided the foreword to the Chinese edition of Morgenthau’s *Politics Among Nations* (Johnston 2002).
Translation might seem a straightforward task, which would hardly make anyone prominent, but this was not the case in Chinese IR in the years shortly after China’s opening. These years were characterised by poor language capabilities and little access to international publications. Thus, translations were a way for the few who had access through language and study abroad experience to expose the broader disciplinary community to Western theoretical ideas. It is worth noting in that context that now-prominent scholars such as Ni Shixiong and Qin Yaqing majored in English in their undergraduate education. At the time translation of the works of well-known mainstream scholars could lead to prominence in China. A conversation with a not-yet-prominent associate professor provides an interesting perspective on this:

If a Chinese scholar, a professor or associate professor or doctor, if he would like to become famous firstly he chooses a person who is famous in Western academia. And research and introduce him to the Chinese audience and translate his books into the Chinese language and then invites this professor to China to give lectures to the students. Then he becomes famous. … A Chinese scholar does not have his own theory so he has to research Western theory and introduce this theory into China. If he introduces a theory or a paradigm into Chinese academia he will become the representative of this school … Another who researches neorealism, he invites Robert Gilpin or Kenneth Waltz and translates Waltz’ book into the Chinese language and then invites Waltz to China to give lecture. And then takes part in conferences. This person will become a member of neorealism.

Can you mention any examples of people who have done this?

I cannot mention it because if you publish it those persons will think he is famous based on those foreign scholars. But we have many younger scholars, they become famous by the way of this.

According to this rather controversial representation prominent scholars are capable of utilising their international connections to do translation work. By ‘translation theorising’ they attach their identity to theoretical ideas (neorealism, constructivism, etc.). Since China has not yet produced its own theories, the best alternative is to make friends with US theorists. Western, particularly American, IR theory has thus become a very important intellectual capital that organises the academic community by providing identity-labels.
Building IR on an American foundation

The exchange of people, education and ideas has been supported by changes in the material and organisational base of Chinese IR, more specifically by a massive inflow of American investment. Since normalisation of diplomatic relations in the late 1970s American foundations and IR academies have invested heavily in IR and American studies in China (Y. Zhang 2003) and IR was a particular focus for US–China educational exchange from 1978 to 1984 (Lampton et al. 1986: 7).

The Ford, Asia, Luce, Rockefeller, Fulbright and MacArthur Foundations and a wide number of other ‘culture exchange foundations’ have been significant in funding the scholarly exchanges between the US and China. Their scholarships brought the Chinese scholars to the US, which facilitated the import of US theories to China. Early textbooks were based on such visiting scholarships to the US, and American foundations also financed the publication of the translated IR theory works in the 1980s and early 1990s (Zhang 2003: 101–3). In addition to exchanges, the institutionalisation of networks between Chinese and US associations promoted ‘the U.S.-based scholarship of IR and political science among Chinese scholars’ (Zhang 2003: 101). All this at a time when China had recently opened to outside ideas and scholars were intellectually hungry and very receptive. Moreover, funds for research and education where at a low, thus enhancing the impact of the American investment.

US foundations continue to provide generous funding for academies, elite universities and research institutions. The Ford Foundation still supports IR in China, and ‘state of the art’ studies on how it could be strengthened (e.g. Johnston 2002; Jisi Wang 2002; Shambaugh and Wang 1984). Institutional links are maintained and today the most prominent IR research institutions are led by US-returned scholars. Consequently, these have become the favourite stopping places for visiting US scholars such as Waltz, Gilpin, Krasner, Nye, Keohane and recently Katzenstein, reinforcing the prominence of these institutions. To be sure, not all US funding had the intended or unintended consequence of Americanising Chinese IR, but the immense academic flow of people and ideas between China and the US compared to that between China and Europe or other regions is noteworthy. Whether by design or default, US funding provides a material explanation why US theories and scientism is prized in Chinese IR.

In terms of theory, if we stop our analysis here, it is tempting to conclude that IR, even in China, is an ‘American social science’ (Hoffmann 1977) much of which falls under the typical three paradigms of realism, liberalism and constructivism (cf. Qin 2009: 188). However,
as was stated in the introduction, Chinese IR has recently taken a nativist turn.

**State of the art – the debate on building a Chinese IR theory**

Chinese IR scholars are turning towards an increasingly central opposition line in contemporary Chinese IR – the debate on building Chinese IR theory:

*If you should describe the field of IR in China at the moment, what are the most prevalent ideas?*

In terms of what?

*Theorising I guess.*

The most notable debate in recent years has been whether we need a Chinese school of IR and there are several articles published in the World Economics and Politics. You must have read them already, so that is the most prominent development. The other trend, I think somewhat related, is the attempt to recover ancient Chinese thoughts or practices in international relations.14

This quotation is one of many where Chinese scholars represent the theoretical debate about how to develop a Chinese IR theory as the state of the art.15 Scholars are turning to local resources, especially ancient Chinese philosophy, and are debating how a Chinese theory could be built. This idea is not new. It was originally a project driven by old generation Marxist theorists, by some labelled ‘scientific socialists’ (Hayhoe 1993), who termed it ‘building IR theory with Chinese characteristics’ (Liang 1997). Now the project has been taken over by the young generation of scholars, but it has changed connotation from characteristics to school, from isolation to integration, and from scientific socialism to social scientism. In fact, young generation Chinese IR scholars hesitate to identify themselves with the old generation scholars, whose concepts of ‘Marxist theory of International Relations or the IR theory with Chinese characteristics’ are considered ‘too politicised’.16 They, the young generation, do not practise this kind of politicised science, but political or social science. A young associate professor from Peking University applies the young–old dichotomy in this sense:

The old generation of professors are trained in Marxism, they do not know Hans Morgenthau, they do not know what structural realism is. We learned by ourselves. Today we can teach this to our students.17
Consider also how Qin Yaqing, one of the leading Chinese theorists who strongly promotes the idea of a ‘Chinese school’, reacts when his current work is compared to the ‘characteristics’ debate:

*How would you explain that there has been this debate on ‘building IR with Chinese characteristics’?*

I have never used this term. Because I believe once you set up a school it must have some universal application value. I try to avoid it, simply I use ‘a Chinese school’ to indicate that it is part of the whole international relations theory family.¹⁸

Another scholar, a young associate professor from Peking University, explains the main difference between the ‘characteristics’ debate and the contemporary one:

We have introduced almost all theories of the Western tradition into China and we still have a debate about the theory with Chinese characteristics. It is still going on but the connotation and the form have both changed. So in the 1990s when I came to Beida [ed. Peking University], the discussion was a debate mainly happening between some intellectuals who were trained in China and those scholars coming from overseas. Those scholars who were trained in China tended to support theory with Chinese characteristics. But to some extent their stance was not so supported by the whole Chinese academia. For instance, professor Liang Shoude who was the major representative of the Chinese characteristics school was the dean of our school. Those people are usually much older than those scholars from overseas who were very young. But of course after about 15 years professor Qin Yaqing or professor Wang Yizhou were not so young again. But at that time they were very young. … But after 15 years if we talk about this debate, now the connotation has changed much. Now professor Qin Yaqing has become the major representative of the Chinese school. Of course there are some differences between a Chinese school and a theory with Chinese characteristics … if we talk about Zhongguo tese, theory with Chinese characteristics, that is very strong. It is very strong. So if you say Chinese characteristics that means our theory should be very very different from Western theories. … But in this field, in the international relations discipline, if we talk about a Chinese school actually it is a very very moderate expression. So Chinese school means we are not going to put forward an
independent theory, we just want to provide some Chinese thoughts, provide some Chinese concepts.¹⁹

For more than two decades, Chinese scholars have debated how to put different ideas and elements into the construction of a Chinese theory. But the Chinese IRT project is not unchanged. This presentation shows that theorising a Chinese IRT is a contested project, but nevertheless has been transferred from old generation Marxists to today’s prominent scholars (exemplified by Qin Yaqing) in a more Western-orientated version. The generational opposition towards politicised Marxists stressing Chinese characteristics is important to understand in order to explain the – somewhat paradoxical – revival of a Chinese theory project by its young opponents more than a decade later. The recent Chinese school project stresses scientism and integration into global IR over Marxism and isolation:

We should walk on two legs, not just one leg, two legs. Western and Chinese.

But in the beginning you walked on one leg?

I believe for about ten years. [laughing] With two legs I feel that I walk in a more stable way.

Professor Ni Shixiong

Thus, the Chinese innovational drive is neither a product of Westernisation and globalisation nor Sinicisation and localisation only, but rather a hybridisation of Western and Chinese knowledge resources. This hybridity is exemplified by considering the biographical shift of some prominent scholars. Professor Ni Shixiong, who is cited above, gained a reputation by introducing Western theories recently co-authored a ‘sister book’ on contemporary Chinese IRT. After having been ‘pre-occupied’ with introducing Western theories in 1980s and 1990s he has faced the structural pressure of the attention space and started to do research on Chinese thinking about international relations, to walk on two legs. Another example is Qin Yaqing, known as China’s leading constructivist and one of the country’s leading IR scholars, who has also become the main proponent of a Chinese school. As he described it in an interview, ‘I move the middle way. I think we need to absorb the very good things from Western IR theory, which I think I am quite familiar with and also we need to combine Chinese ideas that are valuable of all Chinese ideas.’²⁰ Yan Xuetong, another leading scholar
known as China’s leading neorealist, is leading a team of researchers to theorise ancient Chinese thoughts in IR (see Yan 2011).

These are but a few examples of prominent scholars who have renewed their position in order to keep it. Mastering Western theories is no longer considered sufficient for doing so. Instead the hybridisation of Western social science and ancient Chinese philosophy, that is, walking on two legs, is viewed as a viable way of doing this. Consider also how another scholar at Renmin University answers the question why some Chinese scholars get famous: ‘He has, Qin Yaqing has very important training of Western education and after he returned to China he integrated the Chinese practice and teaching and research so he knows Chinese traditional culture very deeply, so he knows the Chinese and Western International Relations.’

In order to maintain a prominent position in the Chinese academic attention space both Chinese and Western ideas should be mastered. Or, as another professor puts it, ‘I should say in Chinese academic circles we have two authorities; one is the Chinese ancient ideas and the Western modern ideas. They enjoy a parallel position … It sounds like we have two kinds of shoes and we have gotten used to it.’ Pure applications of Western theory are no longer considered sufficient, but on the other hand this does not necessarily result in the production of a radically different Chinese IR theory. A Western theory with a Chinese interpretation can also be original, as a professor and dean at Renmin University puts it: ‘Generally speaking Chinese scholars of foreign policy will continue to learn and observe the mature IR theories already existing for a long time. But of course, none of the use or application could be a purely original interpretation. Chinese understanding, Chinese interpretation must be attached to it.’ His argument relies on a distinction between theory application and originality. As an intellectual move, it constructs neither ‘translation theorising’ nor ‘theory application’ as enough to be original and instead opens up a space for ‘homegrown theorising’ (cf. Aydinli and Mathews 2009). This change is no great loss for Western IR theories like neorealism or constructivism, but it may be a loss for those Chinese scholars who have achieved prominence based on these theories. Therefore, they have also turned to Chinese ideas – walking on two legs.

This can be interpreted as the structural pressure of the intellectual attention space forcing intellectuals to be innovative. For scholars to achieve or retain attention space they have to present their ideas as new – that is, create new ideas or reconfigure old ones in new ways. But ideas cannot be too new, whatever their creativeness, they must be important in relation to ongoing conversations (Collins 1998: 31). We argue that
this provides a plausible explanation for the innovational dynamic of combining two cultural capitals (Chinese thoughts and experience with Western social science theories) and relating them to past debates (developing IR with Chinese characteristics). As we have argued at length elsewhere, the opposition and debate internally among Chinese IR scholars to a large extent explains why the drive to develop Chinese theory occurs, and we will focus here on the interplay with global influences (Kristensen and Nielsen 2010).

A contender for global attention

The idea of a local IR theory is paradoxically not local, but influenced by international role models such as the English school and the Copenhagen school. The fact that Chinese IR scholars have considered the English School an ‘IR theory with English characteristics’ which is different from American theories (Zhang 2003: 95–96) makes its form a source of inspiration. As several others have stressed, the import of the English school to China raised the question: if there could be an English school, why not a Chinese school? (Ren 2008: 297; Wang 2009: 110). Consider how an associate professor we interviewed in Shanghai makes a similar move:

We Chinese try to argue that we need to have a Chinese school because we have a British school or a Copenhagen school. So why do we not have a Chinese school? So some Chinese try to argue this and also I think it is a good thing for us because Chinese foreign policy is quite different sometimes from the Western countries. The European countries or America, they have a very good theory to explain their foreign behaviour and foreign relations. But their theories sometimes cannot explain Chinese behaviour, Chinese foreign policy and we Chinese try to have a better understanding and better explanations about our own foreign policy.24

This move questions the content of the English and Copenhagen School based on their inability to explain ‘our’ foreign policy but keeps the school formula as an inspiration for a Chinese school. Besides, the label ‘school’ could also be viewed as a specific strategy to carve out a global position for a Chinese IRT. School signifies a non-competitor to the major theories that define the discipline. As Wæver argues, ‘the main theories that are seen as constituting the core debates at the centre of the discipline (i.e. leading circles in the US) are not referred to as “schools”’ (Wæver 2004). But the label school still allows an independent
existence. Usually mainstream IR labels are coined by opponents (Wæver 1998: 715), but here the logic is turned into a prescriptive formula: combining geography (country or city) with the school label may be a pre-emptive move to achieve some level of recognition by mainstream IR – at least as ‘something they do in China’.

The Chinese innovational drive should thus be seen in the dynamic of local and global academic attention spaces. Theorising Chineseness in IR should be interpreted both as a defensive intellectual strategy to renew one’s position in the national academic attention space where the application of Western IR theory alone does not confer the prominence it once did, and also as an offensive strategy to contend for global attention. A conversation with an associate professor at Peking University sheds light on the ‘contender’ move:

*But you cannot think of other reasons why scholars like Yan Xuetong start to dig into ancient thought?*

Yan Xuetong mentioned a very practical reason. He said ‘For Chinese scholars, if you are doing research with American style theory you cannot surpass those American scholars. Because all these theories are rooted in Western culture. So you can only follow up, you cannot surpass that. So if you want to do a real achievement, you need to do something that the Westerners cannot understand.’ [laughing] So Confucius is a good thing.  

This indicates how cultural difference can serve a very practical purpose, namely attract global attention. Qin Yaqing, a prominent scholar and leading proponent of a Chinese school, also presents a very practical reason why *guanxi* (relations) became a core concept in his theorising efforts:

In 2005 my focus began to fall on one thing, I asked many foreigners ‘if you come to China what are the first ten words that come up to your mind?’ Many of them mentioned *guanxi*, relations. And you go back to Confucius, Confucius’ moral argument rests on the management, not of individuals, but of relations. The five key relationships are the most important thing in Confucianism. So I think, for three to four centuries in Europe basically, of course you could go back to the Renaissance but basically you could go back to the Enlightenment, rationality became the dominant word, if we choose one word that forms the foundation of social sciences and
natural sciences. I think the counterpart in Chinese society, not natural science but social science, is relationality.26

By asking foreigners what is most stereotypically Chinese, a very different theoretical core is created. Not Truth, but distinctiveness in the eyes of ‘many foreigners’ drove this scholar to innovate. This attests to the fact that cultural difference, or even exoticism, is useful in the intercultural scholarly encounter. Positioning Chinese relationality as the opposite of Western rationality, this scholar challenges the philosophical core of all Western thinking.

As Randall Collins argues in his global theory of intellectual change, ‘When there is “room” for a new position in the intellectual field, ambitious thinkers will search for those elements in the available corpus of materials that will maximally contradict the existing prominent positions’ (Collins 1998: 134). Confucianism and the concept of guanxi were useful to the abovementioned Chinese scholar. Confucianism and other ancient thoughts are theorised in IR because of their utility to gain attention locally and globally. Intellectual life is about making a difference. Confucianism contributes with a distinct and positively defined Chinese content rather than exclusively negating the West. Confucius can be deployed to provide a theoretical anchorage that defines what China is rather than what it is not.

The contender move represents a transition from the resigned marginality of ‘IR with Chinese characteristics’ towards marginal participation by developing a ‘Chinese school’. The tendency for Chinese IR scholars to import ancient Chinese ideas and classical works into the IR discipline should also be seen in the local academic context, as a way of attaching something Chinese to IR. But in the context of global attention, the argument here is that if cultural scholarship can produce global attention it may feed back into local prominence. Developing a Chinese school that achieves global attention, whether as criticism, praise or repressive tolerance, may translate into local prominence. This leads us to the final section on the prospect for global recognition of Chinese innovations in IR.

**China and global IR**

The attempt to construct a Chinese school of IR is a product of global and local influences. It should be understood in the light of the import of the American IR discipline, its theories and methodologies, which allows Chinese scholars to speak back to the core discipline in the language of ‘theory’ and not least to make moves beyond existing theories.
At the same time, the development and maturity of a local academic space specialised in IR has gradually rewarded Chinese intellectual resources, which have become *comme il faut* to remain or become a prominent scholar. To put it in the language of the globalisation and innovation theme, Chinese scholars are now trying to present an innovative Chinese product to the global discipline. By reversing the process, the hope is that a Chinese theory’s ‘non-European and non-Western perspective may eventually contribute to making IR more of an international discipline than it is now’ (Zhang 2002: 108). A product that is neither ‘like us’ nor radically different. Chinese IR theorising both differs from and resembles the global-Western discipline by combining ancient Chinese resources with Western IR.

Indeed, the project of doing ‘something the Westerners do not understand’ suggests that some scholars use essentialism and radical difference to obtain international recognition. The very idea of constructing a Chinese school seems to promise radical alterity. But, as argued above, even the idea of using the location+school formula to obtain recognition is inspired by other non-US theories (English and Copenhagen schools). So why not use a similar strategy for Chinese IR to become recognised? One problem may be that usually critics, not creators, coin theory labels, and the international IR community has not yet baptised the Chinese school or theory. Another obstacle to recognition is that the concern with the ‘brand name’ will degenerate into academic identity politics and distract attention from theoretical issues. The construction of the Chinese school may turn out problematic if it is monopolised by a certain perspective that expounds romantic nationalism and reifies a closed Chinese culture rather than opening up space for various Chinese perspectives. By appealing to culture and civilisation, one risks giving rise to ‘nativism which reifies conceptual borders of self and other’ (Callahan 2001: 84). As Gayatri Spivak has warned, a strategic essentialism that establishes a collective category of the subaltern can be self-defeating because it forces homogeneity on the subaltern. The construction of one ‘Chinese school’ risks forcing homogeneity on a heterogenous group of people in its search to become recognised in the hegemonic Western IR discourse. In that sense, it does look a lot like ‘a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest’ (Spivak 1996: 214). The problem is how then to speak for those whose voices cannot be heard, those who are written out of the dominant theoretical narrative in IR? How to speak difference to the hegemonic IR discourse, except perhaps as native informants? A Chinese school runs the risk of becoming ‘subaltern speak’ that fails to reach a dialogic level – to establish a relationship between speaker and
listener – but becomes a Chinese school for Chinese researchers, and perhaps a few sinologists. Thus, drawing explicitly on culture could also be seen as a nationalisation rather than internationalisation of IR. In this argument, nationalising IR may lead to a more fragmented, rather than international, discipline. Indeed, to retain a somewhat integrated discipline IR scholars should at a minimum share a basic vocabulary.

In the attempt to manufacture a marketable product, Chinese IR scholars have been conscious about the pitfalls of essentialism and that is one reason why Western–Chinese hybrids rather than radical Chineseness seems a more prevalent formula. Hybrids between social scientific methodology and something distinctly Chinese yield the most prominence in today’s IR in China. The hybrid character of ‘Chinese theorising’ should be seen in the light of Chinese scholars’ quest for recognition in both national and international attention spaces. Chinese IR scholars are involved in self-reflection over how to balance their uniqueness and simultaneously be recognised by the global (US) community. The adoption of US scientific methodology spiced up with a Chinese exoticism ‘the Westerners cannot understand’ is considered a prerequisite for global recognition in the imaginary of many of the Chinese scholars we have interviewed. The recipe may sound simple: take some exotic Chinese context, add scientific methodology, stir and serve the ‘Chinese School’ for an American audience. This may be a Faustian bargain, however, and for a number of reasons.

The Chinese theorising efforts may simply be too focused on the US market. It is obvious that in an ‘American social science’, a Chinese scholar who seeks international standing cannot ignore the US. If market share in the US is the sole criterion of success, prospects seem dire. There could be other ways to recognition. So far, few Americans have waved their flags in the debate on Chinese IR. One who has, does not have ‘confidence in the generalisability of the results when Chinese international relations scholars state that the core theoretical problem of the Chinese school should be “China’s peaceful rise”’ and argues that it misses ‘the point of what is normally called theory’, that is, ‘value-neutral terms that carry across time and space for comparative purposes’ (Snyder 2008: 4–5). Deriving a theory from China’s rise would indeed be parochial. But are the existing theories not generalised primarily from Atlantic experiences and thus parochial themselves? It may be true that a Chinese school must abstract experiences to applicability elsewhere to become recognised in IR. IR scholars in Brazil should be able to take the Chinese school approach. Nevertheless, the American critic exemplifies that despite more than 30 years
of studies confirming the parochialism of the American behavioral-scientific (Hoffmann 1977; Alker and Biersteker 1984; Holsti 1985), rationalist (Wæver 1998), and positivist (Smith 2000) approach to IR, a potential Chinese school is likely to be judged according to such criteria by US peers. It is unclear whether many Americans will pay attention to a Chinese school. Of course, it is possible that American IR will be more receptive to non-US voices as US political and economic predominance falters. But as ‘Americans tend only to read other Americans’ (Biersteker 2009: 319), the chances of being read are probably better elsewhere. This is not to argue for less contact with the US discipline, but for a broadening of audiences and exchanges with the non-US world and its criteria for scholarly recognition.

One could argue that other parts of the global market for IR are more open for a debate about a Chinese school, especially in the light of the ‘cultural turn’ in the IR core (Valbjørn 2008). To these audiences, a hybrid Chinese school that is ‘almost the same but not quite’ (Bilgin 2008) might deliver the much-desired diversity in what critical Western scholars have called an ‘American’, ‘dividing’ and ‘not-so-international’ discipline (Hoffmann 1977; Holsti 1985; Wæver 1998). This hybridity might create a global dialogue between Western and peripheral non-Western IR communities. Hybridity in the sense of acknowledging different geocultural epistemologies and the situatedness of knowledge and experience can indeed be productive for such a dialogue. A caveat about hybrids of Western and Chinese thinking is necessary. A recombination of local and global resources may seem an attractive and productive way to counter Western hegemony but is not necessarily devoid of power relationships. Hybrids write, to borrow Tickner and Wæver’s terms, “away from” and “back to” the center in terms that cannot originate independently of the relationship to the latter. Nor can they be the same’ (Tickner and Wæver 2009: 7). The question is whether a Chinese IR theory can circumvent its Western heritage without always referring back to the West. Can it liberate itself from the negative, the non-Western, from alterity, difference and otherness?

What may seem like radical non-Western moves beyond the West rely on a Western vocabulary. The irony of claims to native authenticity is that their very expression is inauthentic as they are a product of contact with the West. In order to be considered relevant, Chinese theories, as any other contenders for intellectual attention, are staged in terms set by the existing knowledge. Revealing a lacuna in Western IR is a necessary dimension of this dynamic. In their move of instating Chineseness, even ‘nativists’ borrow from non-native sources. Chineseness and exoticism should also be interpreted as an intellectual strategy to stage one’s
knowledge as new. Differences and opposition lines are key ingredients in intellectual life. It is important also to interpret statements that ‘You need to do something that the Westerners cannot understand’ in this perspective where cultural differences become much less fixed and immutable. One should keep in mind that a Chinese school, which may seem ethnocentric and nationalist, could also be seen as ‘frankly ethnocentric’ (Rorty 1991: 168). Rather than developing a universal (anti-ethnocentric) theory, it is professedly aware of its geocultural bias (anti-anti-ethnocentric). Thus, the emergence of multiple voices, a Chinese school being only one, may reveal the parochialism of Western IR and hopefully produce more theoretical reflexivity.

Notes

1 Interview assistant professor, Tsinghua University, February 2010.
2 Interview professor, Tsinghua University, March 2010.
3 Interview professor, Tsinghua University, March 2010.
4 In our survey distributed among 305 Chinese IR scholars at top universities in spring 2010 we asked Chinese IR scholars to characterise themselves and others. Question 9, ‘Which of the following best describes your approach to the study of IR?’, only allows one answer, whereas question 15, ‘What percentage of Chinese IR scholars do you estimate is devoted to each of these paradigms today?’, asks respondents to assign a percentage to all categories (realism, liberalism, constructivism, Marxism, English school, other, non-paradigmatic). Approximately 58% of respondents characterised themselves as realist, liberalist or constructivist, whereas only 5% characterised themselves as Marxist. Similarly, a survey of Chinese journal articles finds the influence of American IRT “clearly discernible” (Qin 2009: 194).
5 Interview professor, Peking University, March 2010.
6 This type of translation theorising is not unique to China, but has been noted in several other “periphery countries” (cf. Aydinli and Mathews 2009; Inoguchi 2009; Sariolghalam 2009).
7 Interview associate professor, Fudan University, March 2010.
8 Educational and scientific relations between the US and China were carried out under ‘The Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology’ signed by Jimmy Carter and Deng Xiaoping in July 1979 (Hayhoe 1989: 124).
9 For a comprehensive list of Sino-US exchange programmes and foundations see the US–China Culture Exchange Foundation website, www.uscn.org/
10 Ni Shixiong’s visit at Harvard and Wang Yizhou’s Fulbright scholarship at Harvard are both examples of visits that resulted in (in their cases very popular) IR textbooks.
11 The MacArthur Foundation recently awarded $120,000 for the establishment of the English language journal Chinese Journal of International Politics at Tsinghua University’s Institute of International Studies and $225,000 more in 2009; $250,000 for the Arms Control Program at Tsinghua University; Peking University’s School of International Studies received
$150,000 for the International Security Program; and $1,400,000 for the Centre for International & Strategic Studies (MacArthur Foundation 2010). Another example is the Ford Foundation’s recent support to establish a centre for Non-Traditional Security Studies at Zhejiang University.

Johnston’s study is characteristic of this literature in its use of “American scholarship” as “a baseline against which Chinese IR can be compared” (Johnston 2002: 3).

Zhang mentions the School of International Studies at Peking University, the School of International Relations and Public Affairs at Fudan University, the Institute of World Economy and Politics of CASS and adds the Institute of American Studies of CASS, the Institute for International Studies at Tsinghua University, and the China Foreign Affairs University (Zhang 2003: 102, 109). Most are still valid, although the current directors of the Institute of American Studies at CASS and the dean of SIRPA at Fudan University received their education at the London School of Economics in the United Kingdom.

Our survey conducted among 305 Chinese IR scholars at top universities in the spring of 2010 also supports these claims.

Interview professor, Tsinghua University, February 2010.

Interview professor, Peking University, March 2010.

Interview associate professor, Peking University, March 2010.

Interview professor Qin Yaqing, China Foreign Affairs University, March 2010.

Interview associate professor, Peking University, March 2010.

Interview professor Qin Yaqing, China Foreign Affairs University, March 2010.

Interview professor, Renmin University, March 2010.

Interview with professor, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, March 2010.

Interview with professor, Renmin University, March 2010.

Interview with associate professor, Fudan University, March 2010.

Interview associate professor, Peking University, March 2010.

Interview professor Qin Yaqing, China Foreign Affairs University, March 2010.

Bibliography


Part III

Innovation in image management
Confucius Institutes as innovative tools of China’s cultural diplomacy

Falk Hartig

This chapter deals with innovation in terms of China’s image management and introduces Confucius Institutes as an innovative tool of China’s cultural diplomacy. I argue that global influences, namely the general negative perception of China in the world (mostly the Western world) have forced China not only to become more active in the field of cultural diplomacy, but furthermore to strive for an innovative form to use its cultural resources for foreign policy purposes. The chapter proceeds with an introduction of the theoretical framework. At first I discuss what I mean by innovation here, followed by the benchmarks against which innovation is measured in order to analyse the innovative character of Confucius Institutes. Following this overview, I will discuss cultural diplomacy and related concepts and explain the various cultural diplomatic tools at a state’s disposal. After setting the theoretical frame, the chapter turns to the actual case study of Confucius Institutes to discuss the innovative nature of this tool of China’s diplomacy.

Introduction: China’s interaction with the world and its image problems

In 1978 the Chinese leadership under Deng Xiaoping initiated the reform and open-up policy and since then China and the world became more and more interwoven not only economically but also in political, social and cultural terms. Two months after he kicked off the reforms, Deng anticipated what this would mean for China and the world: ‘The role we play in international affairs is determined by the extent of our economic growth. If our country becomes more developed and prosperous, we will be in a position to play a great role in international affairs’ (Deng 1984: 174). Since then China not only became the world’s second largest economy in 2010 and the world’s largest exporter in 2009, but it also ‘has increasingly expanded its external influence’ on
the global stage (Wang and Zheng 2008: 3) and thus turned into ‘an economic superpower with global interests and responsibilities’ (Hickey and Guo 2010: 1). China’s rise, or more precisely its re-emergence, is not only brought forward by globalisation, it is increasingly affecting world affairs (Zheng 2010: xiii). This not only leads to the question ‘whether China’s rapid rise will be peaceful or disruptive to the existing international order’ (Zhao and Liu 2009: 3), but also to a mixed global popular perception of China’s rise and a rather negative image of the People’s Republic, especially in the Western world.

In a recent Chatham House survey only 4 per cent of British people felt ‘especially favourable’ towards China while 15 per cent felt ‘especially unfavourable’ towards China (Chatham House 2011: 6–7). The Lowy Institute Poll 2011 found that 65 per cent of the Australian population is of the opinion that China’s aim is to dominate Asia (Hanson 2011: 10), and according to a CNN poll from late 2010 58 per cent of people in the United States saw China’s wealth and economic power as a threat to the USA (CNN Poll 2010: 3). Even though one has to be careful with polls and surveys, nevertheless they show some evidence that China’s image is somewhat struggling. Especially in Europe, public opinion towards China is declining in recent years (Huang 2010; d’Hooghe 2011).

This public perception is echoed and reflected in the academic debate about the so called China Threat theory(s) (zhongguo weixielun). China’s continuous economic growth, its ever increasing accumulation of military power and rising global influence have attracted worldwide attention and concern, which more often than not are articulated in a ‘threat-opportunity paradigm’ (Crookes 2011: 369; see also Roy 1996). These ‘China threat theories’ are ‘essentially foreign attributions to China as having a harmful, destabilizing, and even pernicious international disposition’ (Deng 2008: 97). Yang and Liu (2012) describe three thematic threat dimensions: (1) military/strategic; (2) economic/trade; and (3) political/ideological (Yang and Liu 2012: 697; see also Broomfield 2003). The military/strategic dimension emphasises China’s military build-up and the Taiwan Straits issue. The economic/trade dimension highlights job losses to Chinese manufacturers, the artificially undervalued Chinese currency and Beijing’s increasing global scramble for resources. The political/ideological dimension is primarily concerned with China’s monolithic one-party rule and its efforts to expand soft power worldwide (Yang and Liu 2012: 697). The connection between soft power and the China Threat is also mentioned by Zhou (2008) who explains that Chinese soft power poses a potential threat mainly to the United States as it ‘has suffered a serious
setback in terms of soft power’ since the Iraq war began in 2003 (Zhou 2008: 180).

From the Chinese perspective, ‘China threat theories are simply concocted by hostile forces seeking to threaten China’ (Deng 2008: 110; see also Breslin 2012; for the Chinese understanding see, for example, Lu and Guo 2004). According to Yan Xuetong ‘ordinary Chinese people cannot understand why the people of other countries are so intimidated by the rise of China. … Because the Chinese cannot see how the rise of China poses a threat to others, they regard the allegation of a ‘China threat’ as indicating political hostility and strategic conspiracy’ (Yan 2001: 36). This understanding, which can be linked to what Medeiros calls the Chinese ‘victim mentality’ (Medeiros 2009: 10), coincides with the fact that ‘Chinese rebuttals show little interest in any pretense of dispassionate reasoning’ (Deng 2008: 115). As Deng points out, various assumptions were attacked as simply reflective of Western ‘ignorance’ and ‘bias’. Other views objectionable to Beijing were equated with ‘malicious belittling and slandering statements’ propounded by Western illwishers (Deng 2008: 115). Taken together, ‘Chinese interpretations have lumped together wide-ranging negative attributions from abroad [and] they reveal an acute Chinese sense of insecurity about its international environment’ (Deng 2008: 110).

Precisely because of this perception, some Chinese scholars detect a ‘new victim mentality’ (xinshouhaizhe qingjie) (Yu 2012: 85) in China. It claims that the international community not only misunderstands China’s development, but does not appreciate China’s development. On the contrary, China is always criticised and that is why, as the same-named book indicates, ‘China is unhappy’ (Zhongguo bu gaoxing). As Yu puts it, after China solved the problems of being beaten (by the Western powers, aida) and being poor (ai’e), China currently has to deal with the problem of being insulted and verbally abused (aima) (Yu 2012: 85).

Another Chinese opinion in this regard is the so called conspiracy theory (yingmoulun) which claims that the West with its assumed superior values and discourse sovereignty/prerogative of interpretation deliberately wants to create a media atmosphere to demonise China (yaomohua zhongguo). The alleged aim of this demonisation is to ruin China’s image, thus to damage China’s hard power, especially its economic might, and eventually to prevent China’s development (Yu 2012: 85).

Taken together, China’s image problems are not something new and can be traced back centuries: Herder for instance, referring to China’s cultural and political stagnation, described it as an embalmed mummy
(see, for example, Goebel 1995; Zhang 2008) and Kaiser Wilhelm II infamously railed against the Yellow Peril in his Hun Speech in 1900. What is new however, are China’s attempts to actively shape its image around the world with the help of various diplomatic tools of which Confucius Institutes are seen as the ‘most controversial’ (Barr 2011: 62). Discussing the structure and operation modes of Confucius Institutes, this chapter reveals that China is adapting a Western instrument of cultural diplomacy (culture institute like British Council or Goethe Institute) in an innovative manner to accomplish its goals in the most effective way. The innovative character of Confucius Institutes concerns first and foremost their organisational structure because unlike British Council or Goethe Institutes, Confucius Institutes are mostly set up as joint ventures between Chinese and international partners. By exploring the advantages and disadvantages of this project for both sides, the chapter illustrates how the outside world shapes China and, in turn, China shapes the outside world in the context of cultural exchange and cooperation.

I argue that global influences, namely the described general negative perception of China in the West, have forced China not only to become more active in the field of international cultural relations, but furthermore to strive for an innovative way to be successful.

**Theoretical framework**

First of all it is necessary to explain what innovation means in the context of this chapter and what the benchmarks are to consider Confucius Institutes as something innovative. Second, some clarification about cultural diplomacy and related concepts are necessary to better understand Confucius Institutes and their innovative character.

**Innovation**

Innovation in the broad and original sense means to renew or change something and in everyday understanding it is often related to devices of novelty (Käpplinger 2011: 36). The Austrian economist Joseph Schumpeter (1883–1950), however, points to a twofold meaning of innovation when he defines it as ‘the doing of new things or the doing of things that are already done, in a new way’ (Schumpeter 1947: 151; emphasis added). According to this second part of the definition, innovations are not only new things but also new ways of dealing with the already known. This, as the editors point out in their Introduction to this book, involves a creative act that is often triggered by a particular
problem in an actor’s interaction with its environment. This interpretation of innovation is particularly helpful for the understanding of Confucius Institutes, which from my point of view, first are nothing completely new in the field of cultural diplomacy, but much more an example of doing something that already exists, namely promoting a national image via culture institutes, in a new way. Second, their introduction was triggered by a particular problem in China’s interaction with its environment, that is China’s described rather complicated image in the world and a growing international demand for opportunities to learn about China.

While it seems complicated to measure how innovative something is (which in a way would imply that the object of innovation reaches a new quality in the sense of being better than the original), it is easier to explain in relation to what something is innovative. This, in my understanding, also eliminates the aspect of quality, as not everything innovative is necessarily better than the original object.

The benchmark for the analysis of Confucius Institutes is other culture institutions like the British Council or German Goethe Institute, thus the newness of Confucius Institutes is considered in relation to its long existing foreign counterparts. To be more precise the focus is on the organisation and structure of culture institutes which, as will be demonstrated, have implications for the whole working process of these institutions and thus turn the institutes into something new.

Diplomatic tools to shape a state’s image

Some argue that ‘China’s greatest strategic threat today is its national image’ and ‘how China is perceived by other nations … will determine the future of Chinese development and reform’ (Ramo 2007: 12). Therefore it shouldn’t come as a surprise that the Chinese government ‘has become quite attentive to China’s national image in recent years’ (Wang 2003: 48). As Wang points out, the People’s Republic’s foreign policy ever since has included ‘projecting favorable images of China to the world’ and therefore ‘always had a strong public diplomacy component’ (Wang 2011: 37).

Public diplomacy, broadly understood, is ‘a country’s engagement and communication with foreign publics’ (Wang 2011: 3) which ‘involves the cultivation of public opinion to achieve the desired geopolitical aims of the sponsor’ (Osgood and Etheridge 2010: 5). Others define public diplomacy as ‘an international actor’s attempt to advance the ends of policy by engaging with foreign publics’ (Cowan and Cull 2008: 6). Although there are ‘confusing, incomplete, or problematic definitions
of public diplomacy’ (Gilboa 2008: 57), it is commonly accepted that public diplomacy is the instrument to activate a state’s soft power (Nye 2004; Melissen 2005). Cull defines public diplomacy through a ‘simple taxonomy’ by dividing public diplomacy’s practice into five elements: listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, exchange diplomacy and international broadcasting (Cull 2008a: 31). This definition is of interest for the present study as it incorporates the concept of cultural diplomacy and because for Cull ‘the rapid expansion of the Confucius Institutes is the centrepiece of [China’s] cultural diplomacy’-initiatives’ (Cull 2008b: 131).

Although sometimes sidelined or even neglected, cultural diplomacy is an important component of a state’s diplomatic tool box because ‘culture matters in the way states deal with one another’ (Liland 1993: 5) and therefore the utilisation of culture is ‘an intrinsic aspect of foreign policy’ (Mitchell 1986: 67). In this context, culture\(^2\) can be understood as a concept based on artefacts (Siedschlag et al. 2007: 146). That assumes that there exists the culture of a nation state which is reflected in ‘exportable cultural goods which can be used to make politics’ and which can be used by a certain nation state in terms of power politics via cultural exchange programmes, dialogue forums or the subtle influence of people abroad (ibid.).

The execution of this kind of politics is sometimes described as cultural diplomacy, (international) cultural relations or external/foreign cultural policy with no basically accepted definitions or clear-cut distinctions between these concepts (see, for example, Lending 2000; Meissner 2002; Cummings 2003; Mark 2009, 2010). In a broad understanding cultural diplomacy can be defined as ‘an actor’s attempt to manage the international environment by making its cultural resources and achievements known overseas and/or facilitating cultural transmission abroad’ (Cull 2008a: 33). Mark focuses more on the nation state and defines cultural diplomacy as ‘the development of a state’s culture in support of its foreign policy goals or diplomacy’ and emphasises that it is ‘a diplomatic practice of governments’ (Mark 2010: 64) which has two meanings or layers. On the one hand it is understood as a ‘practice which is undertaken in order to achieve normative, idealistic goals, to enhance “mutual understanding”’ (Mark 2010: 63). On the other hand, it is seen as a means to regulate instrumental objectives, thus advancing national interests (Mark 2010: 64). In his understanding, cultural diplomacy is undertaken not only for idealistic purposes such as enhancing mutual understanding or combating stereotypes, but also for more functional objectives such as advancing a broad range of national interests (Mark 2010: 65).
To realise these objectives, a state has various tools at hand, which include the use of art, sport, music, educational exchanges and exhibitions in cultural diplomacy (see, for example, Buckley 2008; Davidson 2008; Kennedy 2003; Steichen 1955). In the age of globalisation, these forms of culture or cultural expression also cross borders without any involvement by a state. This is especially true for music and film which are distributed via the internet without any governmental plan behind it. Therefore it is necessary to distinguish this free flow of cultural goods – food would be another example here, triggered and boosted through globalisation – from government orchestrated initiatives or activities to use cultural goods for foreign policy purposes. Or as McDowell puts it, for these activities or initiatives ‘to be diplomacy, [they have] to entail a role for the state’ (McDowell 2008: 8).

During the Cold War ‘guided tourism’ (Ratliff 1969: 57) was an often used tool by governments on both sides of the Iron Curtain to introduce a country and its culture to people from abroad by inviting selected individuals and groups of people to visit a host country (for China inviting visitors, see, for example, Passin 1962). While tourism is no longer a tool of state organised cultural diplomacy as most people can travel abroad by themselves, this kind of visitor programme nowadays applies more to exchange programmes in the academic field or for members of various professions or civil society, with a special focus on groups of people who are often referred to as young or emerging leaders. A classic example here is the US organised Fulbright programme.

Another cultural diplomatic tool was libraries and book-related programmes which included book donations, translation and publishing programmes, and the creation of cultural centre libraries (see, for example, Maack 2001). While nowadays most of these book-related programmes are maintained by cultural institutes like the British Council or Goethe Institute, sometimes the libraries still have a special meaning today as a stand-alone component of a state’s cultural diplomacy. One of the more prominent examples was a library in Pyongyang, maintained by the German Goethe Institute (Hartig 2008). It was the first foreign cultural outpost in North Korea, established in 2004, but after a long struggle between the Goethe Institute and the North Korean authorities the library was closed in 2009.

The most prominent tool of a state’s cultural diplomacy is cultural organisations/culture institutes abroad. France started cultural relations after its defeat in the war against Prussia (1870–71) and founded the Alliance Française in 1883 by ‘invoking her cultural patrimony as a means of rehabilitation’ (Mitchell 1986: 23). The British Council was set
up in 1934 as a reaction to the relative success of official cultural institutions of France, Germany and Italy (Cohen 2004: 268), or as Macintyre argues ‘the council came into being specifically to counteract Nazi plans for global cultural hegemony’ (Macintyre 2008; see also Miller and Yudice 2002: 39). And Germany’s most prominent organisation in the field of cultural diplomacy, the Goethe Institute, was set up after World War II with the initial idea to rehabilitate Germany’s reputation in the world (Kathe 2005: 36).

Mitchell identifies three models of cultural organisations or institutes (Mitchell 1986: 70ff.). First, the model of government control in which the government, through a ministry or an official agency, exercises direct control. Examples for this form are France, Italy, the USA (the United States Information Agency existed until 1999) and the developing countries as their culture ‘occupies a sensitive position in their national identity’ (Mitchell 1986: 72). Second, the model of non-governmental, autonomous agencies, in which the government provides money through a ministry but delegates policy control and execution to an independent agency such as the British Council or the Japan Foundation (ibid.). The last model is a mixed system in which the government retains overall control but funds and contracts non-official agencies to operate independently within their competences. The prime example for this system is Germany with its numerous agencies and intermediary organisations (Mittlerorganisationen) (Mitchell 1986: 72).

Case study: Confucius Institutes

In 2002, the Chinese government started to think about setting up institutions to promote Chinese language teaching overseas (Nie 2008: 35; Li 2008: 53). In 2004 the Office of Chinese Language Council International (Hanban), under the authority of the Chinese Ministry of Education, began to set up Confucius Institutes around the world to ‘promote the teaching of Chinese as a foreign language and for different exchanges and co-operations, such as in educational and cultural fields, with the world’ (Hanban.org, no date).

There is no official explanation why this initiative started in the early 2000s and therefore one only can speculate whether the establishment of Confucius Institutes was somehow related to the change of the leadership in 2002/2003 and the emergence of the idea to build a Harmonious World in 2005. Publications in Germany, however, suggest that the initial idea was put forward by the former Chinese Ambassador to Germany, Lu Qiutian (Aust and Geiges 2012: 100). Lu, who was President of the Chinese People’s Institute of Foreign Affairs (zhongguo renmin
waijiao xuehui) from 2003 to 2006, confirmed this during a personal conversation in Beijing. Either way, one has to keep in mind that Hanban itself was already established in 1987. The official explanation why China decided to establish centres of language teaching and cultural promotion – namely that there was a growing request from abroad to learn more about China and Chinese – does not give a proper explanation about the year either.

At the end of 2010, a total of 322 Confucius Institutes and 369 Confucius Classrooms had been put in place in 96 countries and regions (Liu 2010). According to Liu Yandong, Member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party Central Committee, Chinese State Councillor and Chair of the Council of the Confucius Institute Headquarters, the total number of registered students had increased by 56 per cent over the year 2010, amounting up to 360,000 (Liu 2010). The total number of teachers, part-time and full-time, had reached 4,000, with a net increase of 1,000 in 2010. Among them, half were from China, and half from the local countries. Furthermore, nine collections of Chinese language teaching materials and reference books in 45 languages had been published and more than 400,000 books had been donated to Confucius Institutes. Currently, about 104 Confucius Institutes have developed and published 77 local Chinese language-teaching materials (ibid.).

By 2011, 385 Confucius Institutes and 500 Confucius Classrooms have been established in 105 countries and regions. The total number of full-time and part-time faculty and staff reached over 10,000 and the total number of registered students reached 500,000. More than 10,000 cultural events (like karaoke contests, New Year’s celebrations, anniversary celebrations of individual Confucius Institutes and so on) were staged, with audience participation reaching 7.2 million. In China, more than 260 universities and over 500 primary and secondary schools have participated in the joint development of Confucius Institutes and Classrooms (Confucius Institute Headquarters 2011: 1).

Organisation and structure of Confucius Institutes

The proximity between Confucius Institutes and its Western counterparts is obvious as all these institutes promote their national language and culture. Zhao Qizheng notes that Confucius Institutes do exactly the same as the British Council, that is using language teaching as a means of public diplomacy (Zhao 2011: 131–32) and Xu Lin, Chief Executive of the Confucius Institute Headquarters and Director-General of Hanban, notes that the establishment of Confucius Institutes was
mainly based on the experience of Germany’s Goethe Institute (quoted in Liu 2011). Therefore, more often than not Confucius Institutes are understood as the ‘Chinese version of Spain’s Instituto Cervantes, Germany’s Goethe-Institute, the British Council and Alliance Francaise’ (Li 2008). This is not completely wrong, but the unique feature of Confucius Institutes is their structure, which differentiates them from their Western counterparts and makes them an innovative tool of China’s cultural diplomacy.

According to the ‘Constitution of the Confucius Institutes’, a ‘Confucius Institute can be established in various ways, with the flexibility to respond to the specific circumstances and requirements found in different countries’ (Confucius Institute Online 2009). This flexibility implies the innovative character of these institutes. Starr identifies three operation modes: wholly operated by Hanban; with local partners as joint ventures; and ‘wholly locally run offices licensed by the Beijing headquarters’ (Starr 2009: 70). The joint venture or cooperation form seems to be the most common form of organisation for Confucius Institutes in developed countries. They are operated by Chinese universities and foreign local partners, mainly also universities, while Hanban as the umbrella organisation is also involved. The local partner mostly provides local personnel, the premises and parts of the funding, while the Chinese university normally sends a vice director and teachers, and Hanban provides books and financial support.

While not all Confucius Institutes really have a Chinese vice director (I-A1, I-A3 – see Appendix), or the Chinese vice director is based in China (I-G6), the joint venture structure is most notably reflected in the funding of Confucius Institutes. According to Xu Lin the funding for the institutes in 2009 ‘from both China and abroad … has increased to 119,000,000 US dollars in total, showing a 50–50 percent share from both sides’ (Xu 2010: 18), which means China spent almost US$60 million for Confucius Institutes in 2009. To put these numbers into perspective, the annual budget of the British Council is about US$1 billion (Siow 2011: 2) and the budget of Germany’s Goethe Institute in 2010 was about 334 million Euro with roughly 223 million Euro donation from the German Federal Foreign Office (Goethe Institute 2010).

The amount for each individual institute remains somewhat vague. According to Xu Lin the average budget for each institute in 2009 was ‘over 400,000 U.S. dollars’ (Xu 2010: 18). Other reports note that institutes get a ‘starting budget of €850,000 and an operational budget of €200,000 per year’ (Le Corre 2011), while several institutes in Japan have annual budgets of over US$200,000 (Ren 2010: 1). Institutes
in Germany receive US$100,000 (Hartig 2007: 69) on average, and interviews in Australia reveal roughly the same number (I-A2). In addition to this average annual sum, institutes can apply for extra project money (I-G3, I-G5). The general rule, as one manager explains, implies that both partners should contribute roughly half of the money (I-G6).

Although Hanban provides money to foreign local partners, these partners have to invest as well and Confucius Institutes are not really a mechanism for international partners to make money. The biggest amounts of expenditure for international partners are costs for local staff and premises which are provided by the local partner institution. Taking into account the average figure of about US$100,000 a year,\(^5\) it comes as no surprise that institutes around the world are looking for further financial support. In 2007 then-State Councillor in charge of Confucius Institutes, Chen Zhili, indirectly promoted this approach by pointing out that Confucius Institutes should increasingly conform to market mechanisms (Liu 2008: 32). Almost every institute in Germany and Australia has external sponsors, some provide a certain amount of start-up funding (I-G3), others provide support in the form of donated items (I-G6) or still others provide facilities for events that couldn’t be held in the institutes (I-A4).

**Discussion: the innovative structure**

Taken together, I argue that the Chinese approach is not only innovative but also strategic as it is efficient. By utilising the current global fascination with Chinese language and culture, the Chinese government has found willing international partners to co-finance the Confucius Institutes and thus partially fund China’s ‘charm offensive’ (Kurlantzick 2007). According to Xu Lin this cooperative model guarantees that Confucius Institutes are an instrument that helps the Chinese government to obtain huge effects with the least amount of money (quoted in Liu 2008: 33).

Within this joint venture structure both sides are obviously looking for benefits. The international side appreciates the benefits for language courses. The institutes provide non-degree language classes for students of Sinology who want to improve their Chinese (I-G5), for students of non-China related subjects who want to get some China knowledge, or filling the gap for universities without a Chinese department (I-G2). Another manager summarises the advantages upfront: ‘For universities it is interesting for two obvious reasons: it earns money and in general projects with China also earn prestige’ (I-G6).
This matter of prestige is also one benefit for Chinese universities. Cooperation with international universities helps Chinese universities to improve their domestic academic relevance, which is important because ‘international exchange’ is an index for evaluation of Chinese universities and colleges (Guo 2008: 32; I-G6). Another benefit for China results from the cooperation with international universities. This is a huge advantage for Confucius Institutes because they benefit greatly from the credibility and reputation of their host universities.

Yet another advantage of this joint venture for China is worth mentioning: the Chinese government is still restrictive regarding foreign cultural institutions in China. Currently the political principle is ‘one country, one culture institute’ (Ammelburg 2008: 17). China avoids these self-imposed difficulties altogether because Confucius Institutes in Germany or Australia are formally registered associations (in Germany) or parts of the university (in Australia) and therefore formally not Chinese institutions. Therefore China can easily establish more than one culture institute in a certain country, without infringing official cultural treaties and agreements.

However, this structure is not without its weaknesses for both parties involved. As mentioned earlier, Confucius Institutes are not a cash cow for international partners, as they also have to invest a considerable amount of money. As one Australian director puts it: ‘Why do we do this? Why do we Westerns help to establish Confucius Institutes? The Chinese give about 100,000 dollar or 150,000 dollar or so, but international partners have to spend about three times more, so what is the reason for us to do this?’ Furthermore the point of one German director that Confucius Institutes raise prestige for its host institution is not that obvious, as some statements reveal. Another German director for example reveals that before the Confucius Institute was established at his university there were rumours that there would only be one institute in the whole of Germany, which would have led to a competition between universities eager to host such a Confucius Institute (I-G7). However, currently there are 12 Confucius Institutes (and four Confucius Classrooms) in Germany and rumours are there could be another two or so institutes.

A similar case can be found in Australia. One interviewee mentioned that the local Confucius Institute was assumed to be the only one on Australia’s east coast, which would have opened up opportunities to spread the institute’s business in other regions as well, but this also was not the case because after the Confucius Institute was established at this university, other institutes ‘popped up everywhere’ (I-A4). Furthermore, not only the 358 already existing Confucius Institutes around the
world, but also the fact that by the end of 2011 there were applications from almost 300 universities in 60 countries to establish a Confucius Institute, seems to diminish the prestige factor for international partners more and more. Beyond money and prestige, some international partners are too careless and do not do adequate research on whether there is a serious demand for an institute (Guo 2009: 181) and thus ‘haphazardly establish a Confucius Institute’ (Li 2008: 55).

But Chinese universities also lack comprehension and sometimes do not understand the needs of foreign partners and the regional characteristics properly. Furthermore, Li suggests that some Chinese universities want to turn Confucius Institutes mainly into a ‘cash cow’, ‘poster child’ and an ‘opportunity to travel abroad’ (ibid.). Some Chinese scholars are especially critical about the selection process for Chinese universities, particularly the less prestigious ones. While there are rules and regulations for the foreign partner universities, according to Liu, the selection of Chinese universities should follow a stricter policy (Liu 2007: 146; also Guo 2009): the universities should have an institute for education administration, they should already have started to develop international cooperation with some success, they should have a branch or department for teaching Chinese as a foreign language and they should have a department related to Chinese traditional culture, such as CTM, music, architecture, eating or travel/tourism. Furthermore these universities should have a stable contingent of teachers and, last but not least, should have good social prestige (Liu 2007: 146).

Activities of Confucius Institutes

Confucius Institutes provide opportunities for people all over the world to learn about Chinese language and culture. Their target audience is the mainstream public that mostly does not have any special China-knowledge (I-G8). Another group of attendees are students from the host university who practice and improve their Chinese (ibid.) or business people working in or with China (I-A4). Based on the interviews, analysis of institutes’ programmes and The Confucius Institute Conference Reference Materials from 2007, 2008 and 2009, it can be concluded that the main tasks of Confucius Institutes are (fee required) language courses for various levels and target groups (Business Chinese, Tourism Chinese), as well as cultural events like exhibitions, film screenings, readings, concerts and lectures (CIHQ 2008: 187). The schedules differ from institute to institute, but generally all offer more or less the same content.
The emphasis and demands for language and culture\(^8\) varies from institute to institute. In one institute in Germany fewer people attended Chinese classes (in one semester six to eight classes with four to 13 people), but up to 60 people attended the various China lectures. One reason is that the lectures are free of charge (I-G3).\(^9\) This was echoed by another manager: ‘Many people cannot or don’t want to learn Chinese because they have to pay for it, but many people want to know more about various China topics’ (I-G5).

One director explains that ‘language is definitely our main business’ (I-G2). Three hundred and eighty-five people attended 1032 instruction hours at this institute (CIHQ 2009: 232), while 1500 people attended ‘Chinese language and culture promotion activities’ (CIHQ 2009: 233) and 180 visitors came to three talks by ‘distinguished scholars’ (ibid.). Another manager confirms that the focus is on language: ‘Of course language teaching is the essential task. By means of language one gets to know more about culture. And while our resources are limited we can’t do everything’ (quoted in Weigl 2009: 65).

Within the wide range of cultural activities lectures given by distinguished China scholars are one main feature. Most of these scholars – well known academics in their given research area – speak about topics related to their research which are of interest to a broader audience. Such topics include lectures about Traditional Chinese Medicine, The Silk Road, or talks about Chinese literature. Besides teaching Chinese and hosting lectures, two more activities evolved in recent years: education of local Chinese teachers (I-G3; I-G6; CIHQ 2009: 263), and ‘In China programs including summer camps, educator delegation and teacher training’ (CIHQ 2009: 221, 234, 246).

**Discussion: the activities of Confucius Institutes**

All these activities help to make China’s cultural resources and achievements known overseas and therefore fit in the scope of cultural diplomacy. However, the fact that Confucius Institutes are, via Hanban and the Ministry of Education, connected to the Chinese government influences their actual activities. Given the nature of the Chinese political system, more often than not Confucius Institutes are described as propaganda tools of the Chinese Communist Party (for a discussion of the propaganda aspect see, for example, Hartig 2012).

However, all interviewees assured that there was no interference from the Chinese side and no attempts to push topics in a certain direction. ‘We are no executive organ of the Chinese Ministry of Education. … Of course who is giving money may try to have a say, but as far as I
can see none of the institutes connected to a university would allow an intervention in its independence’ (I-G6). ‘Hanban doesn’t impinge on our daily work at all’ (I-G9) is a statement which can be heard from almost any staff member at Confucius Institutes. Hoare-Vance quotes a very similar statement: ‘To be fair to the CI headquarters, they are not telling us how to teach Chinese but only making all kinds of resources available to us’ (Hoare-Vance 2009: 94). Another director reports that she has no problems whatsoever, for example working with a language teacher from Taiwan is not a problem at all (I-A4). Also revealing is the following argumentation: ‘Hanban is much more an administrative body which is not that much interested in questions of content. Besides, there are too many institutes around the world and they cannot have a close look at everyone’ (I-G5).

However, there are limitations for Confucius Institutes. According to their constitution, Confucius Institutes ‘shall abide by the laws and regulations of the countries in which they are located … , and they shall not contravene concerning the laws and regulations of China’ (Confucius Institute Online 2009). Especially the latter part indicates that the critical aspects about Confucius Institutes arise not so much from what they are doing, but much more what they are not doing. Foreign partners are required to adhere to the ‘one China policy’ (Hoare-Vance 2009: 86) and topics that are regarded as sensitive for official China, such as the T-words Taiwan, Tibet and Tian’an’men, are not dealt with.

People in charge of Confucius Institutes are fully aware of the problem. One managing director put it this way: ‘If you sign such a contract, you know where the limits are’ (Hartig 2007: 69). This seems to be the general understanding throughout the institutes. ‘The independence is limited regarding precarious topics in the People’s Republic. If topics like Tibet or Taiwan would be handled too critical, this could be difficult’ (I-G3). Even though it is true that ‘circumstances have changed in China, it’s no more 1976 and there is a bigger openness in the cultural sphere’ (I-G2), nonetheless Confucius Institute staff know ‘of course in which context we act’ (ibid.).

But it is up to every institute to define this context and try to find ways to organise events. ‘If we would do critical topics, it has to ensured that it is balanced and with the necessary respect towards sensitivities of China’ (I-G3). But it seems Hanban doesn’t really trust its international partners. At the Third Confucius Institutes Conference in 2008 there were ‘no direct content-related precepts’ but it came up, ‘that the following topics are not very welcomed: Tibet, Falun Gong and Taiwan’ (Weigl 2009: 36).
Therefore finally it depends on local staff\textsuperscript{10} what happens at Confucius Institutes and what not. ‘I didn’t ask anyone what we can do or not. Insofar I surely square it with my conscience or with what I know about China, what we can do and what we cannot do’ (I-G7). There can’t be any final judgement whether this could lead to some kind of self-censorship, but it can be argued that staff members of Confucius Institutes or members of Confucius Institutes councils – which mostly are recognised scholars – wouldn’t risk their reputation doing active propaganda for the Chinese state. But on the other hand it is also obvious they wouldn’t risk losing the money coming from Hanban by actively promoting anti-Chinese topics or sensitive topics for official China.

**Conclusion**

Nowadays it is a truism that China and the world are interconnected in almost every aspect of international affairs. However, the growing importance and relevance comes along with a rather negative perception of China in parts of the world and it is ‘reasonable to assert that image considerations weigh heavily on the minds of Chinese decision-makers’ (Rabinovitch 2008: 32). In my understanding it is exactly these image considerations that prompted the Chinese government to become more active in the field of cultural diplomacy, as this part of diplomacy is undertaken not only for idealistic purposes, but also for more functional objectives such as advancing a broad range of national interests (Mark 2010: 65). In this context it is not without reason that Li Changchun described Confucius Institutes as ‘an important element of China’s great plan of foreign propaganda’ efforts (quoted in Xinhua 2007). Next to the attempt to shape China’s image globally it is also obvious that, due to the ever increasing interconnection between China and the world, there was (and still is) a growing international need for opportunities to learn about China, its culture and language. Therefore it is very likely that China decided to fulfill this international demand with the establishment of Confucius Institutes.

In relation to the theme of innovation these two reasons illustrate a particular problem in China’s interaction with its environment which led to Confucius Institutes as an innovation of Chinese cultural diplomacy. These institutes are innovative in a Schumpeterian way as they are nothing completely new, but are an example of doing something that already exists in a new way. With the Confucius Institutes, the Chinese government created an innovative tool that draws on a concept that already exists – cultural institutes – but develops it further in a new way. The distinctive feature of this innovative approach is the
described joint venture structure which contains both advantages and disadvantages for both sides involved in this project and indicates that both sides influence each other in one way or the other.

The advantages for the international partners are obviously the increase in capabilities to teach Chinese language and to introduce (parts of the) Chinese culture to a local audience. Furthermore Confucius Institutes might be helpful to establish or strengthen contacts with China. The disadvantages are also rather obvious. International partners see themselves confronted with the accusation that they are a mere propaganda tool of the Chinese Communist Party. And even if this is not the case, nevertheless, international partners are not able to approach all the topics they maybe would like to, or the public audience would be interested in.

The advantages for the Chinese side are obviously the cost effectiveness, the increase in prestige for its institutions due to their association with international (mostly recognised) partner institutions, and the opportunity to presents its language and (parts of its) culture to a global audience. Furthermore Confucius Institutes are a way to meet the international demand for Chinese language learning opportunities and to some extent to set the agenda on what foreigners should learn about China.

A practical disadvantage, especially for the Chinese universities involved in this project, is the lack of directors and teachers who are willing to go abroad. Another disadvantage – even though the Chinese side wouldn’t agree on this – might be the fact that Confucius Institutes have to adapt to local circumstances and therefore possibly have to be somewhat more open and progressive than a totally Chinese run institute would be. This component is especially revealing when taking into account that cultural diplomacy (as a subfield of public diplomacy) is ‘a government’s efforts to conduct foreign policy and promote national interests through direct outreach and communication with the population of a foreign country’ (Nakamura and Weed 2009: summary). In the case of Confucius Institutes, however, it is a number of foreigners who, to a certain degree, promote China’s national interests.

Last but not least, a disadvantage for China might be that Confucius Institutes only have limited influence to shape China’s image. However, this is not so much a flaw of Confucius Institutes, but much more grounded in the authoritarian political system Confucius Institutes represent. Because no matter how many Confucius Institutes are promoting Chinese language and culture in the best possible way, as long as the government in China is still arresting human rights lawyers, censoring journalists and covering up disasters and the like, all efforts by Confucius Institutes,
even though an innovative tool of China’s cultural diplomacy, to shape China’s image can only hit the wall.

Notes

1 Next to Confucius Institutes (kongzi xueyuan) there are also so called Confucius Classrooms (kongzi ketang) with the same goals and aims but a slightly different structure.

2 I am fully aware of the ‘multi-discursive’ character (Hartley 2002: 51) of the ‘notoriously slippery term’ culture (Flew 2007: 3); nevertheless the proposed understanding of culture seems to fit the concept of cultural diplomacy best.

3 Interview in Beijing, 10 June 2012. Lu said that during his work in Europe he realised the huge intercultural misunderstandings between East and West and he wanted to do something about it. He developed the idea of a cultural institution with staff at the University of Leipzig. According to Lu, this group of people also picked Confucius as a possible name. After Lu returned to Beijing in 2001 he mentioned this idea to people at the Foreign Ministry. As Hanban did not reply to questions regarding this matter, it remains somewhat unclear how the idea eventually emerged to set up Confucius Institutes.

4 Conversation with a member of the Chinese embassy in Germany, Hannover, 16 January 2012.

5 Due to the shifting exchange rate from US Dollar to Euro this sum could easily shrink to only 79,000 Euro (I-G5) or even 67,000 Euro (I-G7).

6 Personal conversation with Australian director during the 6th Annual Confucius Institute Conference in Beijing, December 2011.

7 Interview with Xu Lin during the 6th Annual Confucius Institute Conference in Beijing, December 2011.

8 The separation between culture and language follows the practical understanding in the context of the course offerings at Confucius Institutes and not so much academic discussions.

9 In this context it has to be mentioned that there is no tradition to pay for education in Germany. There was intense discussion about tuition fees in Germany and some Länder introduced the fees. However, currently only a handful of Länder charge a maximum of 500 Euro per term.

10 Most of the interviewees are trained China scholars and all managers or directors I talked to have long academic and/or working experience in China.

Appendix: Interviews

I-G2 – Interview in Germany, 7.10.2009.
I-G3 – Interview in Germany, 9.10.2009.
I-A2 – Interview in Australia, 16.4.2011.
I-G5 – Interview in Germany, 26.10.2009.
I-A3 – Interview in Australia, 2.5.2011.
I-G6 – Interview in Germany, 27.10.2009.
I-A4 – Interview in Australia, 12.5.2011.
I-G7 – Interview in Germany, 30.10.2009.
I-G8 – Interview in Germany, 4.11.2009.

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6 Image in transformation
Guangzhou reinventing itself for the Asian Games 2010

Annukka Kinnari

Introduction
China’s rationale for hosting international events has changed over time. After China successfully hosted the 1990 Asian Games, it gained enough confidence to bid for the Olympic Games in 2008. Through these two sporting events, as well as Shanghai being chosen as the host of the World Expo in 2010, China, as a nation, affirmed its membership in the globalised world. It is in this context that Guangzhou, a city in Southern China, sought to promote itself as an international metropolis when it won the bid to host the 2010 Asian Games in 2004.

The Asian Games as well as its predecessor, the Far Eastern Championship Games, have always been explicitly connected to international politics both in the hosting country and among the participating countries (see, for example, Hong 2007a). The Asian Games have also acted as a medium for host countries to display the strength of their nation and have offered an excellent opportunity to promote national capabilities and modernity. In 1990, immediately after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, Beijing hosted the first Asian Games in China and it was extremely important for China to show a new face to the world. This new face was intended to convey that it was a safe and stable place for foreign investors, that the new policy reforms had elevated China’s status, and that it had returned to its dominant role in Asia. The Games were seen as an opportunity to strengthen the self-esteem and identity of the Chinese nation as well as to create a sense of unity through patriotism (Hong 2007b; see also Xu 2006; Short 2012).

With specific reference to Guangzhou’s successful bid to host the 2010 Asian Games, this chapter engages with the key themes of innovation and cities. The idea of innovation in this chapter follows the definition in the Introduction to this book. Innovation is considered here in terms of new ways of solving problems or adding some new elements to
something that already exists. The role of cities here is important. Cities are the places where most innovations happen. The aim of this chapter is thus to find whether there is any novelty and particularity in Guangzhou’s image and the extent to which innovation is significant in its transformation process. The second section briefly introduces the method and approach of this chapter. Using Guangzhou Asian Games promotion material as the main source, the third section will explore some of the reasons why it has become extremely important for Guangzhou to develop its image as an international metropolis. It will also discuss the recent development plans and examine the goals Guangzhou has set itself. The fourth section of this chapter will look at the most common characteristics of successful post-industrial cities and then discuss how these elements are visible in Guangzhou. The section will explore the innovativeness of the development goals of the city. The final substantive section analyses the ways Guangzhou was described in two international newspapers, the *Guardian* and *The New York Times*. Overall, this last section explores the extent to which the city is seen as genuinely innovative or merely borrowing ideas from elsewhere.

**Method and approach**

This chapter will study how Guangzhou has sought to promote itself as a global city to investors, industry visitors and highly educated residents, and in particular the extent to which it has been innovative in achieving this goal. In doing so, it will draw on the bilingual *Guangzhou 2010* magazine, published from December 2007 to October 2010. The purpose of the magazine was to promote the Asian Games as well as the city of Guangzhou. Each issue is divided into three parts. The first part, *Thrilling Games* (*Jiqing Shenghui*), offers insight into preparations for the Games. The second part, *Asian Appeals* (*Yazhou Qinghuai*), introduces the reader to the previous hosts of the Asian Games as well as to other cities in Asia. The last part, *Charming Guangzhou* (*Binfen Huacheng*), covers different aspects of Guangzhou, for example features of Lingnan culture, the life of expatriates in Guangzhou and different districts of Guangzhou.

Although the magazine’s circulation was around 20,000, the audience was very well targeted, to include important international groups such as the International Olympic Committee, the International Sports Federation and Chinese embassies in Asia as well as Asian embassies in China (Shi, 2010e). The magazine provides an official version of the
goals and objectives to be achieved when organising the Games. More concretely, as an official medium of the Guangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee, consisting of high-level Guangdong provincial and Guangzhou city authorities, the magazine offers a comprehensive picture of the ideas that the decision-makers have about the city.

In addition, this chapter will refer to two internationally influential foreign newspapers, the UK based *Guardian* and the US based *New York Times*, to explore their perception of Guangzhou before, during and after the Asian Games, from 2009 to 2010. This period covers the most intense event preparations as well as the time immediately after the Games. These newspapers are useful indicators of Guangzhou’s image in the West. Admittedly, the topics of news stories in these papers will likely reflect the interests of the target readers rather than what is considered newsworthy in the particular place where the news takes place. There are, for example, significant differences between the two newspapers with regard to the number of articles concerning Guangzhou’s auto industry. Hence, for US readers, cars and the auto industry are evidently much more important than for UK readers.

Despite the Asian Games being a regional event, it is still an important international event for the world press. For example the *Economist* in its ‘From the editor’ column mentions Guangzhou Asian Games as one of the noteworthy events of 2010 (Pilkington 2009). Both newspapers paid more attention to sport events organised in Guangzhou that interest their readers than to the Games themselves. The *Guardian*, for example, wrote about cricket giving the clear impression that the Games were not the most important event for this sport (Boone 2010). However, *The New York Times* published two articles from *The Associated Press*, the first one noting that preparations for the Games were almost complete, and the second one stating that the Chinese were so victorious in the Games that other participants were already criticising it (AP 2010a, 2010b).

**The image of a city**

The history of place marketing can be traced back to nineteenth century United States and Britain, specifically to advertisements targeted at would-be settlers or health resorts (see Ward 1998). The kind of active city marketing that is prominent at the moment emerged in the late 1970s, when de-industrialisation profoundly changed the economic structures as well as the physical appearance of many major cities in the capitalist
West. In an increasingly competitive and globalising market, city officials were forced to negotiate with investors in order to survive. This made it essential for cities to create a distinctive, positive and high quality image of themselves (Ward 1998). This was often done, as David Harvey has noted, by creating spectacular urban spaces with extraordinary architectural and urban design, creating difference by using carefully picked elements from history and culture, or promoting the ‘natural advantage’ of a city (Harvey 1989a, 2011; see also Zhu et al. 2011).

Harvey points out that in a similar fashion as cities are competing for footloose capital transnational investors are competing for sites which guarantee them easier access to lucrative markets. Some investments are more sensitive to competitors whereas others gain more if their competitors are located in the same area. Thus, for Harvey, the ‘competition for the monopoly power given by prime locations has always been, and continues to be, an important aspect of capitalism’s dynamic’ (Harvey 2011: 165). However, as Harvey notes, this does not mean that places are constructed only through negotiations between the transnational investors and a city’s political elite. They are also constructed through the acts of the citizens living in the city. Both developers and city officials are aware of this and it has become of growing importance for them to create a feeling of public involvement through ‘deliberate fostering of a sense of local and regional identity’ (Harvey 2011: 192–93).

In China, the government authorities at different levels often play the most significant role in planning and developing cities. However, Zhu et al. (2011) note that there are no grassroots organisations in Guangzhou capable of directly influencing the city’s image. According to Zhu et al., the city promotion usually happens through top-down initiatives. Bearing this in mind, it is not surprising that the Guangzhou Asian Games Organizing Committee’s Executive Board was entirely constituted by high-ranking officials mostly from provincial and city level bureaus as well as members of the Chinese Olympic Committee. Therefore, how much innovation and invention there are in the Games organisation, promotion work and related urban renewal projects depends greatly how open minded the leaders are to new and previously untested ideas.

Predictably then, this top-down approach was also prevalent in the preparations for the Guangzhou Asian Games. The Guangzhou Daily, assessing the legacy of the Games, talked about the inclusiveness between the government and the citizens when preparing for the games. In a slightly shaky translation of the bilingual magazine Investment Focus the Chinese paper wrote: ‘From the preparation to holding the
games, the CPC Guangzhou Committee and the Guangzhou’s people’s government gave full play to the people’s opinion as well as the supervision by public opinion to seek for a sustainable development through discovering and solving problems’ (quoted in Investment Focus, 2010: 9). Overall, citizen participation in the 2010 Games happened mainly through government-controlled volunteer programmes and various public contests. The public was, for example, asked to take part in composing and choosing the theme song for the 2010 Games. Multiple ‘mass cultural activities’ took place to teach English language skills and encourage good manners and smiling. All these activities were intended to arouse public interest towards the Games and make the citizens of Guangzhou feel more involved in the process (see, for example, Lin 2008; Li 2008; Shi 2010a). In reality, however, the initiative remained under the control of the political elite.

Despite official efforts to increase public interest and participation in the Games, Guangzhou residents complained about unnecessary costs for decorative elements. However, these complaints never amounted to organised opposition to the games. In fact, many saw the Games as an opportunity for the city to make itself better known to the world. Several Guangzhou newspapers, quoted in the South China Morning Post, reported that the Games cost the city 120 billion yuan. Zhong Nanshan, a deputy of Guangzhou city congress said that it cost more than 250 billion yuan (USD 1 = CNY 6.5778 at the time the article was written). This was a huge increase on the original 2 billion yuan budget, and thus many citizens were angry. Huang Jianwu, another congress deputy, lambasted the government for failing to listen to the people and demanded that city officials explain to the people’s congress where all the money had gone. In this context Huang Jianwu asked: ‘Can Guangzhou set an example of democratic rule to the rest of the country?’ (quoted in Lau 2011: A4).

Thus, it seems that the people of Guangzhou only participated in the development of their city when participation was initiated by the local government. Furthermore, although they did not stage any protests about the Games, on other issues Guangzhou residents have been very vocal. Guangzhou residents, like those of other cities in China, have organised ‘group strolls’ to show their discontent with the government (see BBC website 2010). For example, in 2009 Guangzhou protesters managed to at least postpone the building of a waste incinerator planned in Panyu (Watts 2009c, 2010a). These protests have a negative impact on Guangzhou’s city image and more often than not they are attributed by the media to misdemeanours committed by city authorities.
Urban development

China’s opening in the late 1970s had an enormous impact on world markets but also on worldwide urban development. After the investment regulations changes in 1992 and especially after China’s membership of the WTO in 2001, many multinational corporations made the decision to move at least part of their production to China. This has led to one of the fastest urbanisation processes in the world but it has also had a major impact on the global economy as China’s expanding cities and growing industry are using rapidly increasing amounts of raw materials (see Harvey 2011). As Zhu et al. (2011) note, this urban development process, especially in the big cities of the East coast, has been tightly connected with global capital, especially foreign direct investment. The entire Pearl River Delta (PRD) has played an important role in China’s joining the world market. From the beginning of the adoption of reform policies it has been the region which has attracted the largest amount of foreign direct investment. The PRD is also the area where intercity competition is most intensive in China. Five out of the ten most economically competitive Chinese cities (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Dongguan, Hong Kong and Macao) are located in the area. This has meant that Guangzhou has been forced to pay more attention to its competitiveness at a much earlier stage than for example Shanghai (Xu and Yeh 2005; see also Wu and Ma 2006).

The last three decades of Guangzhou’s transformation can be viewed through a transition from socialist to post-socialist industrialist city. While the first two decades can be mainly seen through industrialisation processes, the early twenty-first century has brought changes to both the Chinese economy and society that are most likely to transform profoundly the development of Chinese cities but also, again, the global economy. Ngok Kinglun (2010) writes that the poor working conditions, low protection of labour rights and growing inequality have caused a new socio-economic phenomenon in China: since 2003, many factories especially in the Pearl River Delta have experienced a growing shortage of labour (see also Bradsher 2010b). The rising labour costs are also mentioned as one of the main reasons for change. David Barboza from The New York Times writes: ‘Companies here in China’s industrial heartland are toiling to reinvent their businesses, fearing that the low-cost manufacturing that helped propel the nation’s economic ascent is fast becoming obsolete’ (Barboza 2010). Factories have also been forced to close because of tightening environmental protection schemes. Moreover, the continuing economic problems in Europe and the United States have especially affected the export-orientated PRD.
Factories are reinventing themselves, moving to China’s inland or other low-wage countries like Bangladesh (see Barboza 2010). It is evident that Guangzhou is now taking steps to transform itself to an international centre of consumption and service. According to Zhu et al. (2011), in 2006, policies shifted towards encouraging foreign enterprises to establish headquarters or regional headquarters in the city (see also Barboza 2010). The White Paper on Guangzhou Foreign Trade and Economy 2008 mentions, while explaining the city’s ‘Going Global’ strategy, that boosting ‘headquarters economy’, attracting research and development operation, procurement centres as well as public utilities, infrastructure and financial services in Guangzhou are the most important focus points in the direction of the development of the city. These goals are to be achieved by concentrating on projects that strengthen energy conservation and emission reduction targets of the city.

One article in Guangzhou 2010 illustrated these future plans for Guangzhou:

Guangzhou’s blueprint for the future is to become the ‘Very Best Capital City’ of Guangdong province, a regional centre of China, a comprehensive portal city, a regional education and cultural centre and an international metropolis. ... 

Guangzhou’s edge in conglomerating high-level strengths such as technological innovation, cultural leadership and comprehensive service has enabled it to become the Asian hub of logistics, the centre of regional finance where headquarters of major financial institutions are located, the focal point for conventions and exhibitions, the centre of international communication as well as the leading city of innovations in the region.7

(Wang 2010: 111) [Second paragraph translation by author]

These development plans are also reflected in the ‘Guangzhou Asian Games City News Coverage Tours’.8 The factory tours display manufacturers that are either leaders in their fields or environmentally friendly or technologically very advanced. It is worth noting that one of the two tours titled ‘Industrial Enterprises’ included a visit to Nansha Wetland Park, a ‘paradise of birds’, located at the Nansha Development Zone, which is better known as one of the major industrial areas in the whole Pearl River Delta (see News Coverage Guide). The most prominent theme is tourism; 10 out of 15 tours are directly connected to travelling or sightseeing. Even a tour that promotes public welfare projects in Guangzhou emphasises some architectural features of
local communities rather than actual community development in the tour description (see News Coverage Guide). All in all, the tours emphasise transportation and logistics, conventions and exhibitions, eco-friendliness and Guangzhou’s goal of becoming a leading city of innovations.

**Marketing a post-industrial city**

To be able to better attract capital, cities try to convey unique and innovative qualities. This is why many cities in their promotional campaigns concentrate on constructing an image that emphasises the distinctive characteristics of the place rather than similarities with other cities. However, the unique qualities cannot be too different, as then there would be no means to calculate the value of those qualities. (Harvey 2002). For this reason it is possible to find some stereotypical features that help to define the key elements of successful post-industrial cities (Ward 1998). Many researchers discuss these elements in the context of political economy (see, for example, Harvey 1989a; Xu and Yeh 2005) but for the purposes of this chapter Stephen Ward’s historical approach is more appropriate. According to Ward, the nine elements of a unique city include:

1) Employment structure completely dominated by services, especially finance and banking.
2) Significant amount of headquarters are located in the city.
3) Highly valued universities and research institutes.
4) Healthy retail industry, especially downtown shopping areas.
5) Enough exhibition and convention centres to attract business people as well as high rated hotels.
6) Enough cultural capital, i.e. museums, art galleries, theatres, and concert halls. Also enough less ‘highbrow’ leisure activities, such as aquariums and/or sports stadiums.
7) Spectacular architecture and landscape. This refers to both historical quarters and ultra-modern landmark buildings usually designed by famous architects.
8) Lively nightlife: restaurants and clubs for every taste.
9) Accessible and wide-ranging public transport system.

(Ward 1998: 189–90)

In addition I would add a tenth element: environmental consciousness. Today, an increasing number of global cities are promoting eco-consciousness or eco-friendliness. For example London, prior to the
Olympic Games in 2012, had a campaign which aimed to develop London as a sustainable fishing city by 2012 (see Sustainable Fish City website). Similarly, the main theme of the Shanghai Expo 2010 was ‘Better City: Better Life’, speaking directly to a green urban theme (Short 2012).

The articles in Guangzhou 2010 magazine as well as the recent urban development plans show that even though Guangzhou is not a post-industrial city, it is developing an image which aims to fulfil all the above mentioned elements. In addition, a China News Service journalist, Chen Guohua (2011), described Guangzhou’s future plans saying that at the moment the tertiary sector of Guangzhou consists of more than 60 per cent of the City’s total GDP and it is getting closer to 70 per cent, reflecting the figures of developed countries. Chen continued that Guangzhou city has set a target to reach 85 per cent in the near future. When Guangzhou was chosen in 2010 by Forbes China as the best commercial city in the Chinese mainland, Guangzhou’s future as a business centre looked good (Invest Guangzhou, 2010). Moreover, a Guangzhou Daily article stated that the post-Asian Games Guangzhou will become a ‘more confident, charming, famous and harmonious city that steadily steps forward to an international metropolis [sic]’ (quoted in Investment Focus 2010: 10).

From the plans and newspaper articles it is also evident that Guangzhou has adopted the dominant, often understood as neoliberal, discourse of competitive cities. This neoliberal discourse lays down indicators of how competitiveness can be understood and measured. The focus is more on economic development, effectiveness and efficiency of performance than the quality of life of citizens (Harvey 1989a; Peck and Tickell 2002). Inter-urban competition, according to Harvey, operates ‘as an “external coercive power” over individual cities to bring them closer to line with the discipline and logic of capitalist development’ (Harvey 1989b: 10). This is why the large-scale urban (re)development projects, mega-events, jaw-dropping spectacles and magnificent architectural creations are often deemed necessary for the survival of the city by the urban politicians (Harvey 2011; Short 2012). Because of the rather limited ways of defining the success of a city, the possible policy repertoire, methods of institutional (re)structuring and innovativeness are all happening in a narrowly delineated space. As Harvey (1989b) notes, it has become more lucrative to produce transient spectacles than to try to build a more socially just and fairer city (see also Peck and Tickell 2002).

Similarly, according to Xu Jiang and Anthony Yeh (2005), in China, urban development often takes place through large-scale projects which
aim to create better business environments. Xu and Yeh give several reasons why costly mega-projects are so frequent in China.

First, and above all, they point to the financial policy reform which has resulted in greater responsibility and discretion over finances for local governments. There are still some restrictions on local government, for example forbidding them from using direct bank loans or raising capital through bond issuing. City officials have found ways to circumvent these restrictions by establishing urban development corporations. These arrangements have shrunk the state’s ability to monitor local governments. To complicate matters, even though local governments operate these corporations they are not responsible for their debts. The second reason offered by Xu and Yeh relates to land reform in 1988, under which city governments were allowed to trade previously state owned land and retain most of the income generated through land development. As a result of these changes foreign investors have come to be seen as a major source of income. The third reason lies in China’s political structure where the mayor of a city is able to exercise discretion over a great deal of urban development and planning strategies. Because their achievements as mayors are judged in visual terms, that is, through the economic performance and physical appearance of the city, they usually pay less attention to functionality than prestige. Xu and Yeh crystallise this by saying that ‘large projects are city symbols and are meant to impress others’ (Xu and Yeh 2005: 287, 289). Moreover, even if the investments would prove to be unprofitable and the costs of the projects would significantly exceed the proposed ones, the mayor is not held accountable. For these reasons, as Xu and Yeh (2005) note, there is no strong initiative to keep the costs low if funds and land are available.

Chinese city officials are also very brand-conscious. This is particularly visible in projects that are aimed at creating landmark buildings or easily recognisable cityscapes (Xu and Yeh 2005). In Guangzhou one such project is the Opera House, located in Zhujiang New Town. This $200 million facility was designed by Zaha Hadid and it gained international awareness immediately after completion. The New York Times mentions it as one of the places to visit ‘for those who care about Architecture with a capital A’ (Ouroussoff 2010). Another New York Times article states:

Hong Kong has always looked down on Guangzhou as its poor mainland cousin. But while the affluent former British Colony has stalled for years over plans for a massive cultural district, Guangzhou has gone ahead and built one …
This Southern Chinese City surrounded by factory towns opened its new Guangdong Museum and Guangzhou Opera this spring. On tap are public library and Children’s art center.

(Lau 2010)

The Opera House together with the new museum of Guangdong Province, the New TV Tower, Children’s Art Centre, New Library, International Convention and Exhibition Centre, Baiyun Airport and numerous others are mentioned in a Guangzhou 2010 article to bring forth the ‘modern beauty’ of this more than 2,000 year old and still ‘vigorous’ city (Wu 2010).

As with Shanghai in the context of the Expo, Guangzhou considered it important to prove its ecological consciousness when organising the Games. An eco-friendly city was a recurring theme in Guangzhou 2010. One of the goals set for the Asian Games was to improve the urban environment and make Guangzhou a city where ‘the sky is bluer, the water is clearer, the traffic is smoother, the building is [sic] more attractive and the city is more beautiful’ (Shi 2010c: 25). These goals are said to be realised through projects such as the Asian Games Town and ‘face-lift’ projects. Asian Games Town is part of Guangzhou New Town which is a large-scale urban development project (altogether 228 km²) that was also said to include a 40 km² eco-tourism zone (Ye 2008). The ‘face-lift’ projects in older parts of the city used energy saving and eco-friendly materials. The use of inorganic mortar, for example, was said to save 100 million yuan a year spent on electricity for air-conditioning (Luo 2009). Water treatment and sewage projects are also part of these goals – journalists visiting Guangzhou at the time of the Asian Games were taken on a ‘News Coverage Tour’ named ‘Eco-friendly projects’ to see the city’s sewage and water treatment plants (see News Coverage Guide; see also Zong 2009). As Short (2012) notes, eco-friendliness is connected to urban competitiveness and modernity. Pollution and environmental problems are connected with industrial cities, and to the past. To be modern is to be clean.

The last issue of Guangzhou 2010 introduced the city’s pride, Donghao Canal, to its readers. The canal is part of a 34 billion yuan project which has improved the water quality in the city centre enormously. Donghao stream is the only remaining canal that runs across the city proper. The magazine states that the canal ‘makes a very picturesque scene, with newly planted trees swinging [sic] in the wind, flowers blooming along both banks of the canal, and water gushing out and splashing in the little fountains’ (Shi, 2010b: 114). The story is illustrated with a picture of a tourist group taking a photo on the bank of...
the Donghao Canal. What the story and the picture do not tell is that
the canal is almost entirely under a fly-over and it is surrounded
at both ends by two of the city’s main roads, Zhong Shan Lu and
Dong Feng Lu. The heavy traffic surrounds the canal from three
directions, at both ends and above it. This story, besides illustrating
Guangzhou’s goals to become a greener city, also shows the conflicting
pressures of developing the urban experience. Both banks of the
canal are beautiful but it is invisible for most of the people passing by.
It serves people who live in the surrounding area, but because of its
invisibility, for most it is hardly a place they would chance upon. This
example shows that there is definitely room for innovation in
merging the experience of enjoying a green city and ensuring smooth
traffic flow.

Hosting major sports events as well as other mega-events such as
international fairs, festivals, expositions and cultural events are usually
justified by their positive effects on social infrastructure, local and national
economy as well as the nation’s or city’s image. The ability to organise
successful international sports events has also been seen as an indicator
of the host’s capability to act in an international arena. Michael Hall
notes that it is a commonly held belief that mega-events and the
impact that these have on a city’s image help to attract and retain
talent and skill, as well as tourists and visitors. It is seen as necessary
for the cities to host sports mega-events if they wish to become or
remain competitive in the global economy (Hall 2006; see also Short
2012). Thus for Guangzhou city officials the Asian Games, as the
eleventh five-year plan states, were seen as an international event that
demonstrated Guangzhou’s immense economic success and social
development, in the process promoting the modernisation of the
metropolis as a whole (Outline of the eleventh five-year plan).

*Guangzhou 2010* saw the Asian Games as an opportunity to promote
Guangzhou ‘in an all-round manner’ which not only meant economic
development and road construction but also cultural development. The
article continues:

Guangzhou strives to promote further prosperity of its cultural
undertakings and industry, improve the diffusion and influence
of Guangzhou culture, so as to accelerate the construction of
cultural city, create a world-known cultural city, enhance its
cultural soft power as a major Chinese city and make new and
greater contributions to build Guangdong into a strong cultural
province.

(Wu 2010: 131)
Accordingly, the Opening Ceremony of the Guangzhou Asian Games was in many ways an attempt to show Guangzhou as a modern and vigorous city with a long history. It was a celebration of Guangzhou’s maritime history but also with its ultra-modern stage settings it was celebrating the modern Canton. As a China News Service reporter noted, the creative idea of the ceremony was built on water and a sea-faring boat. The show took place on a boat-shaped stage on a boat-shaped sand dune in the middle of the Pearl River. The titles such as ‘Boat on the Ocean’ (Haiyang zhi Zhou) and ‘Sails of Clouds’ (Baiyun zhi Fan) were used for important parts of the performance. The show was meant to demonstrate the characteristics of Lingnan culture and the Cantonese people, who are usually considered to be reserved and reticent, but when needed, are extremely persistent and adventurous, always willing to set sail to explore new lands. These elements also symbolise the long journeys Cantonese people made in the past to South Asia and the West. Kapok flower, the official flower of the city, was seen as symbolising Guangzhou’s role as a birth place for modern and contemporary revolutions in terms of both China’s political and economic transformation (Shen 2010a, 2010b).

The promotion materials discussed in this section, especially *Guangzhou 2010*, use terms such as creativity, revolution, modernity, curiosity – all essential to innovation. They are promoting the idea that Guangzhou is a city where innovative people live and prosper. This is in line with the widely accepted, although somewhat contested, idea that certain urban amenities are important for creating an environment that attracts talents believed to be essential for the economic development of the city. Regardless of these views, it appears that cities which wish to reinvent themselves need to produce an image of creativity and innovation especially in those sectors where there is a possibility to achieve agglomeration economies (see Musterd and Murie 2010, for a good discussion about the differing ideas of the importance of the ‘creative class’ to the city economy). In this respect, the small-scale innovations associated with organising the Games and the creative Opening Ceremony may not be enough to promote Guangzhou.

The scientific language that is nowadays widely present in Chinese political discourse was also strongly visible in the *Guangzhou 2010* magazine. The city development projects were said to be planned carefully and it was often emphasised that the decisions were based on many studies. Control, planning and management were often used to describe these projects. Control brings along ideas of security and stability but at the same time it produces ideas of rigidity and inflexibility. A good example of this kind of controlled urban planning is the construction of the
‘new axis of the city’ which extends from the CITIC plaza in the North to the New TV Tower in the South of Guangzhou. This is envisaged as a future new ‘tourist city’ featuring dining, recreation, sightseeing and shopping facilities (Shi 2010d, online). In comparison, The New York Times focused on a more innovative aspect of these city developments in Guangzhou, writing in particular about the area around Taojin Lu, where many restaurants and nightclubs were seen as a sign of Guangzhou’s slowly changing image from industrial city to a ‘tourist draw’. The NYT article described this area as a ‘popular oasis for expats and artsy Chinese with disposable income’ (Beehner 2009). This area which just a few years ago ‘used to be more down and filthy, with vegetables rotting in the streets’ (Beehner 2009) now represents a more organic city, where the citizens have taken over the city and are developing it upwards from a number of grassroots initiatives. All in all, this district of Guangzhou also represents a more innovative side of the city than the well planned but rather sterile looking ‘tourist traps’ that can be found also elsewhere in the world.

External images of Guangzhou

For centuries Guangzhou has been known as the place to make money, but at least until the end of the nineteenth century it was also the place where foreign tourists came to see all the curiosities they had seen merchants bring from China, and experience personally the fabulous life they had heard and read about. However, for today’s Western imagination Guangzhou is more a place to do business or a manufacturing hub; it is generally not understood to be a particular magnet for tourism. Indeed Valerie Garret notes that for tourists Guangzhou is a ‘place to avoid’ (Garret 2002: ix–x).

Especially in the early days of opening up and reform in the 1980s many saw Guangzhou as a unique place in China because of its close relationship with Hong Kong and overseas Chinese communities all over the world. People in Guangzhou used to build ‘fishtail’ antennas to watch Hong Kong TV, so they were seen as more exposed to Western capitalist ideology (Ikels 1996; see also Wren 1982). Charlotte Ikels describes early 1990s Cantonese stubbornly resisting central government’s policies of making Putonghua the only language used in education and media. However, Ikels describes Guangzhou mainly in negative terms. She writes: ‘all [people living in Guangzhou] must cope with a city in the midst of a construction boom, a dense population, an inadequate transportation system, and high crime rate’ (Ikels 1996: 27). The image of Guangzhou
is that of an extremely dirty city, with streets used as dumps. In some parts of the city there was even human excrement on the streets. Sidewalks were used as public toilets, people were spitting everywhere, and farting and belching were ‘viewed as natural and inevitable’ (Ikels 1996: 28). She also saw Guangzhou as a dangerous place where it was easy to get cheated, mugged or sexually harassed (Ikels 1996).

In their respective reports on Guangzhou, the Guardian and The New York Times hardly ever describe the city. Geographical descriptions only go so far, typically depicting the city as a ‘Metropolis in southeastern China’ (see, for example, Bradsher 2009c), or ‘Southern city of Canton’ (see, for example, Wright 2010). Additionally, true to its image as a manufacturing centre, it is said in these papers that Guangzhou is ‘the sprawling commercial hub of southeastern China’ (Bradsher, 2010d), a ‘Southern coastal manufacturing centre’ (see, for example, Bradsher 2010a), and ‘Workshop of the World’ (see, for example, Watts 2009b), sometimes even a ‘Microwave capital of the world’ (Joe Public Blog 2009). Another way used to describe Guangzhou is to compare it with other Chinese cities. For example, Guangzhou has been said to be the ‘third largest city’ in China (see, for example, Glusac 2010), or one of the ‘Big Four’ Chinese cities (McMillan 2009).

Many of the articles describe particular phenomena in China, notably protests, censorship issues, corruption, environmental protection and pollution. In these articles Guangzhou is usually mentioned as one of many locations where these kinds of incident happen. For example, the Guardian writes about declining forest coverage in China’s northeastern province Heilongjiang and in the Russian vast Taiga. Said article states that: ‘As buildings go up in Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Chongqing, the vast Taiga boreal forests of Siberia are being flattened’ (Watts 2009a). Essentially, Guangzhou is presented as an example of a more general phenomenon in China. Another example of this can be found in The New York Times in 2010 on the subject of China’s high-speed trains. The article in question discussed the recently opened Guangzhou-Wuhan high-speed rail line but instead of placing Guangzhou in the headline it read ‘China Sees Growth Engine in a Web of Fast Trains’ (Bradsher 2010a).

Guangzhou is also often mentioned in foreign reports on the Chinese economy, particularly in the aftermath of the global financial crisis in 2009 and 2010. Chinese New Year 2009 looked particularly gloomy in economic terms, with the export-orientated south bearing the brunt of the global downturn for China. The articles described how many ‘penniless migrants’ were forced to return to their homes or were not returning to the factories after the Spring Festival in China. The
situation worried both migrants and the Chinese government (Bradsher 2009a; Jacobs 2009). *The New York Times* also used the Canton Fair as a meter to measure the Chinese economy. When in April 2009 the NYT article stated, ‘Faint Signs of Uptick in China Trade’ (Bradsher 2009a), in October it already declared, ‘Chinese Export Boom in Evidence at Trade Show’ (Bradsher 2009b) and by early 2010 Guangzhou factories were suffering from a labour shortage (Bradsher 2010b).

Unlike *The New York Times*, the *Guardian* did not publish that many articles on Guangzhou in connection with the world economic situation. This may be because of the increasing importance of the Chinese economy for the US and because of the growing trade deficit between the two countries. This makes the export orientated south of more interest to US readers, rather than the UK audience. These articles mainly reinforce the image of Guangzhou as one of the cities in the world’s manufacturing hub. There are a few exceptions though, for example in 2010 the *Observer* article about China’s booming luxury items market described Guangzhou as a place with ‘fantastic potential’ (Gould-Simon 2010).

Elsewhere, a number of stories in the foreign press emphasise environmental problems in China and point to Guangzhou as a pioneer city in this regard, but note that these changes are foreign inspired and examples of imitation. In a story about the Pearl River Tower, the most energy-efficient skyscraper ever built, it is noted that ‘[a]s the workshop of the world, the city [Guangzhou] has a reputation as a humid, heavily polluted sprawl. But it is trying to change this by building taller structures as well as improving the infrastructure for service industries’ (Watts 2009b). The article continues with an interview with a South China University of Technology professor, who notes that city officials have been paying too much attention to the end product and not so much to the problems that the production of these new forms of energy may cause (Watts 2009b). Crucially, in these foreign news reports environmental consciousness and activism in Guangzhou are seen as a result of growing outside influence. For example, climate campaigners who stripped down to their underwear and travelled in Guangzhou metro in order to promote a low-carbon lifestyle were inspired by earlier events in the UK and the US (Watts 2010b). The eco-friendly skyscraper, while presented as very innovative by city officials in Guangzhou, was actually designed by the US architectural firm Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (Watts 2009b).

Foreign reports have also focused on the issue of protests, but of particular interest here are reports on Africans living, legally or illegally, in the city. In these reports, Guangzhou is portrayed not as a cosmopolitan
city of tolerance but one that struggles to deal with different ethnic communities. In 2009, it was reported that one Nigerian died in the city after jumping from a second floor shop window during an immigration raid by city authorities (Branigan 2009). Then, in 2010, with the approaching Asian Games in Guangzhou, China tightened its immigration rules and many of the Africans living in the city complained that local officials were treating them unfairly. A Guardian article on this topic notes that many African migrants were already leaving the city to go to other locations ‘with more sympathetic officials’ (Branigan 2010b). One of the interviewees in the news report complained that Guangzhou was worse than other cities. However, the article also quotes a study by the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology which found that a greater number of Guangzhou citizens had neutral or positive impressions of the African community than the number who had negative ones (Branigan 2010b). Before the Games, Guangzhou tried to create an image of itself as an international city. In the Guangzhou 2010 magazine the foreign community was visible in many of the articles about different sports clubs. These clubs were seen as a way to ‘bring foreigners and Chinese people together’ (Li 2007: 114). If Guangzhou was to build up an image as an international city, it needed to reinvent itself as a foreigner-friendly place – news reports on these protests and treatment of its African residents, legal or otherwise, did not help build such an image.

Protests over language in the city have also been covered in reports by the Guardian as well as The New York Times. As in the early 1990s, in 2010 people in the city were protesting over a local politician’s proposal to change the standard broadcasting language to Putonghua instead of Cantonese (Branigan 2010a; Wong 2010). There are many kinds of local art forms that are all performed using Cantonese and in which the language plays an important role, for instance the local form of Chinese opera, Canto-pop and Hong Kong movies. Celebrating Cantonese language along with the other features of Lingnan culture would be a way to emphasise the unique features of the local culture, and of the city. It would be an obvious source of local creativity and therefore an obvious source of innovation.

Guangzhou’s art scene is another issue that emerges in foreign reports. A number of New York Times articles focused on the developing art life in Guangzhou, especially Guangzhou’s Opera House, which had already gained some international reputation as a landmark building. The NYT articles present China’s art scene as rather undeveloped, however. For instance, behind-the-scenes professionals do not seem to understand that orchestras plan their touring schedules years in
advance. Also, the local audience is used to receiving tickets for free. Moreover, going to a concert is not seen as a way to spend the evening, and different to going out for dinner with friends. The museums and the Opera House are said to be extraordinary. However, the articles remind the reader that they are all designed by architects from outside mainland China (Kolesnikov-Jessop 2010; Lau 2010). The *Guardian* even has an article which claims that many Chinese architectural companies hire students to scan images of famous international buildings which are then built afresh in China. According to the article, the result is comic-book versions of European and American buildings which are scattered ‘across the new map of capitalist China’ (Glancey 2010). These articles create a picture of Guangzhou as a city which is trying to create an image other than that of a factory hub but which has not quite succeeded in doing so. Moreover, in these articles the innovation at play, if any, comes from outside and the Chinese are seen as merely adopting or even copying the ideas of others. This however does not mean that there is no innovation in the city. News reporters are also influenced by the prevailing images of countries and places. Instead of Guangzhou actually lacking any innovation, it may be that journalists fail to notice some inventions and innovations at play in Guangzhou because they see China as a source of counterfeit products and highly skilled copies.

In this respect Guangzhou’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system is one good example of how international media do not necessarily notice some of the micro-level innovations that happen inside the city. The BRT system is a system where buses run in corridors designated only for them. This is to avoid buses having to be held up by traffic congestions. They usually function in a similar manner to the metro or light rail system. In Guangzhou passengers buy the ticket from the station before entering the platform. Changing buses within the corridor is free. The BRT system received the 2011 Sustainable Transport Award from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy, an international non-profit organisation that cooperates with cities all over the world in projects that aim to reduce greenhouse gases (see Garthwaite 2011 (online)). Guangzhou BRT has developed some of the solutions introduced in other cities but they have also invented completely new answers to some of the problems. Despite the peak hour passenger traffic of more than 25,000 passengers per hour, the Guangzhou BRT is still applying a ‘direct service system’ where the buses operate both inside and outside the corridor. The BRT system in Guangzhou is also the first in China that combines bike parking and bike stations with 5,000 public bicycles. It is also the first BRT system in China which is
operated by three large corporate groups instead of one state-owned bus operator. In addition, the Guangzhou BRT system is the first in the world closely connected with other transportation systems in the city (TheCityFix (online); Garthwaite 2011 (online); Design with the other 90% (online); gzbrt (online)). The system was widely discussed in the local newspapers before its implementation (see for example SouFun, 2007 (online)), but nonetheless largely failed to draw the attention of international media. It is thus a case in point where an innovation that would be of potential interest to Western readers goes largely unnoticed by Western media. This again may not be the result of bad publicity by the city officials but a result of newspapers’ need to satisfy their readers interests. Guangzhou’s BRT system is not necessarily the kind of news that would be read by the UK or the US audience.

Conclusion

In recent years it has become evident that the industrial structure of China’s manufacturing heartland is changing. This has happened partly because of external factors but also partly through local initiatives. In its reinvention process Guangzhou has set itself clear new goals. It wants to become the regional centre of finance, transportation, exhibitions, research and development as well as an international metropolis. It is evident that Guangzhou is promoting many of the characteristics found to be common for successful post-industrial cities. Adopting the neoliberalist discourse of competitive cities has made Guangzhou concentrate more on promoting the hard tangibles, such as constructing a cultural centre, and building an eco-tourism zone, than soft tangibles. From the examples discussed in the first two sections it is evident that Guangzhou is mainly following the path paved by many successful post-industrialised cities around the world and in China. On the other hand, the features that Ward presents are the kind that are widely believed to be what investors are seeking. In that sense is it surprising that Guangzhou does not want to step aside from this path? The soft tangibles that Guangzhou is promoting, such as a status as an eco-friendly city and regional cultural centre, also fit the prevalent neoliberal ideology of the qualities of competitive cities. Both of them are understood as features of successful global cities. However, the example of the Donghao Canal shows that it is not always easy to combine green ideology and other functions of the city. This is an area where Guangzhou could improve its image by creating innovative solutions for problems that concern cities worldwide.
Most of the newspaper articles that were analysed reinforced Guangzhou’s image as a manufacturing city and a place of heavy pollution. However, articles that described some campaigns of green activists as well as the article that introduced the energy-efficient skyscraper in Guangzhou show the city as a forerunner in environmental matters in China. However, in Guangzhou’s case, openness to new technological innovations and new ideas was not linked with ideas of innovation. These articles did show the growing influence of external influences and ideas especially among young people. This image is reinforced by articles about Guangzhou’s art scene. Openness to new ideas can be seen as something that will lead to innovations in the long run. However, it can also be interpreted as reinforcing the reputation the Chinese have for copying and faking. This was evident in the article that described Chinese architectural companies copying the images of European and American buildings and then redesigning them.

Perhaps small-scale innovations are more important than large-scale ones but these are the kinds of innovation that are often ignored by the international media. The Guangzhou Bus Rapid Transit system may be changing the lives of the ordinary citizens much more than the large-scale spectacles or landmark buildings. These small and often hidden developments are extremely important for the people who live in the city but they do not necessarily have any impact on the city’s international image.

In the search for distinctiveness, it is the Cantonese culture and language which offer a great stepping stone in the creation of a unique set of qualities with which to sell the city. This particular Chinese culture could be used innovatively as the basis of a distinctive city identity and thriving local culture. It could provide a varied repertoire to produce a city image that would resonate internationally. However, in China, where the Central Government is promoting unity and harmony of the nation, these kinds of difference are often seen as politically contentious. Cities are not always able to make full use of their capacities. There may be specific local constraints which hinder a city from fully utilising its competitive advantages.

Notes

1 Before the successful bid for the 2008 Olympic Games, China bid to host the 2000 Olympic Games in 1993. It was already clear that China was going to bid for the 2000 Games before the 1990 Asian Games (see, for example, Trip 1988).

2 The participating countries/regions are all members of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), one of the five continental associations recognised by IOC. The number of
participating countries has varied greatly during the years. In 2010 there were 45 participants reaching from Kazakhstan and North Korea in the North to Yemen and Indonesia in the South, from Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia in the West to Timor Leste in the East (more information see OCA website: http://www.ocasia.org).

3 I use the English version of the articles unless I have not understood what is meant, in which case I have checked the Chinese version. When quoting, I note when the translation is mine.

4 Lingnan culture refers to a rather distinct cultural area from the northern part of China comprising Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan provinces. It includes the Chaoshan, Hakka and Cantonese culture.

5 The Guardian had one article whereas The New York Times had 16.

6 The President of GAGOC was Liu Peng, the Minister of The General Administration of Sport in China; Executive President was the Governor of Guangdong Province, Mr Huang Huahua. Unlike in many other places where big international events are often initiated by business groups or groups containing both business and political elite of the city, Guangzhou Asian Games was initiated by its political leaders (see for example Rutheiser 1996, about organising the Atlanta 1996 Olympic Games).

7 Similar goals are already stated in development plans which cover the period from 1998 to 2010 (see Xu and Yeh 2005).

8 Altogether there were 15 tours: Industrial Enterprises I and II, Major Urban Infrastructures, Public Welfare, Eco-Friendly Projects, Gardens & Parks, Scientific Outlook on Development, History and Culture 1 and 2, Modern History, Religion and Culture, Folk Culture 1 and 2, Folk Customs, and Art and Culture.

9 In October 2011, Chinese central government launched a pilot programme where Guangdong and Zhejiang provinces as well as cities of Shanghai and Shenzhen were allowed to issue bonds as a way to solve local governments’ debt issues (see for example China Daily (website)).

10 Guangzhou Opera House was for example shortlisted for the 2011 RIBA Lubetkin Prize (see http://www.zaha-hadid.com/2011/08/guangzhou-opera-house-shortlisted-for-the-riba-lubetkin-prize/, last accessed 13 October 2012).

11 Methods used for searching and choosing the articles are explained in Appendix 1.

12 Geographical descriptions are used in only 24 articles out of 227.

13 Altogether nine articles have descriptions that fit this category.

14 A number of other articles discuss protests and strikes by Chinese factory workers (see, for example, Bradsher 2010c; Tabuchi 2010).

15 It is worth noting that even though Guangzhou 2010 had plenty of stories about the unique characteristics of Lingnan culture, they never mentioned the Cantonese language.

16 A blog on The New York Times website mentioned Guangzhou’s BRT system as one of the ways the city is trying to cut emissions (see Rosenthal 2010).

Appendix 1

The section titled ‘External images of Guangzhou’ studies the Western perception of Guangzhou in 2009 and 2010 through The New York
I searched articles with key words ‘Guangzhou’ and ‘Canton AND China’ from www.nytimes.com/ and www.guardian.co.uk/. The search results can be seen from Table 6.1.

I further excluded some articles that were not useful for this subject, for example, articles about quarantined Mexicans in China were only mentioning that the Mexican consul general in Guangzhou had been held for checks after returning from Cambodian vacation, the actual quarantine happened elsewhere in China and also in Hong Kong. On the websites of the newspapers there sometimes are articles that are more or less the same, only the title is different. Those articles I have treated as the same and only counted them once.

I went through all the articles and categorised them according to their topics. One article can have several topics, for example Honda factory strikes have been included in ‘auto industry’ and ‘worker issues’. I also added the descriptions of Guangzhou as separate topics; therefore the same Honda strike article may also have been included under another the title such as ‘Southern manufacturing hub’. Each of these topics is then divided into main categories.

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Part IV

Innovation in resistance
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Un-innovative censorship, innovative resistance

The Internet, forbidden words and the humorous homonyms of *egao*

*Astrid Nordin*

One of the most important influences of globalisation in China has come in the form of the Internet. Today, China has the largest online population in the world and Internet usage is increasing steadily. Some have hailed the Internet as a force that liberates through the globalisation of information flows. Others have taken a more cautious view noting how the Internet is not only becoming a space for dissidence, but also for the government to control, surveil and manipulate public opinion at a time of increasingly harsh clamp-downs on popular dissidence in China. What is clear from earlier debates is that the Internet in China is quickly emerging as one of the most important spaces for negotiating globalisation, governance and resistance. This chapter examines some of the specific forms of control and resistance that have emerged in this process of negotiation. It contrasts the un-innovative censorship mechanisms deployed on the Chinese Internet with the innovative and creative forms of resistance that have come about as a way of simultaneously avoiding and criticising that censorship. There are numerous forms of resistance taking place on the Chinese Internet. So called ‘independent candidates’ have run for election with the help of social media, sometimes successfully so. When official media have refused to report on certain events, the Internet has become a way of sharing information refused by official channels, for example in the 2011 high-speed railway crash. The web has also become a space for petitioning government and supporting petitioners through complaints against official abuse. All these practices could be considered online resistance with some innovative aspects.

This chapter, however, examines one particular form of online resistance, what has become known as *egao*, and the specific part of it that builds on humorous wordplay. *Egao* consists of the characters *e*, meaning bad or evil, and *gao*, meaning to change or to deal with. Together, they have been translated as ‘reckless doings’ (Meng Bingchun 2009: 52),
‘evil jokes’ (Li Hongmei 2011: 71) or ‘spoofing’ (Lagerkvist 2010: 150). It is a form of online culture that has grown popular and received international attention since around 2006.\(^1\) *Egao* uses dark humour, irony and satire, often to mock and ridicule power holders in potentially subversive ways. A significant part of this culture draws on puns and wordplay in the Chinese language to simultaneously criticise and escape the censorship regime.\(^2\)

This form of online resistance is distinctive as a particularly Chinese form of resistance, making its innovation an especially interesting case. This chapter follows the Introduction to this volume in taking innovation to indicate a creative process that makes changes to something already established, resulting in something distinctively new and particular. It is the traces of this creativity and the distinctively new that is explored in this chapter. Moreover, the focus here on *egao* culture highlights Chinese innovation beyond the country’s academic and political elites, especially that of the young ‘post-eighties’ generation. It shows how the challenges and opportunities brought about by globalisation of information, and particularly the growth of the Chinese Internet, has urged a wave of creative and innovative resistance particular to this generation of young Chinese ‘netizens’.

The argument is organised in two principal parts. The first part sketches an outline of censorship practices in Chinese history and compares these to current attempts at Internet control. It argues that the key principles according to which the government attempts to control the Chinese Internet at various levels are very similar to control of other media, and that what is particular about the technologies of Internet censorship has largely been imported, supported and/or copied. The relative success of the Chinese Internet censorship regime is achievable largely by copying and borrowing from abroad, most notably from the US and Japan. The second part contrasts the uninnovative government regime of Internet censorship with the innovative response to it that has emerged in the form of *egao* wordplay. It outlines one early example of *egao* wordplay, the Ten Mythical Creatures that appeared on the Chinese Internet in early 2009, and compares it to similar practices in Chinese history and abroad. Through this example it argues that the contemporary deployment of humorous homonyms online to simultaneously criticise and evade online censorship is innovative both in relation to similar practices in China’s own past, and in relation to comparable ironic practices abroad. The chapter concludes with a note on the significance of the innovation concept for understanding Chinese online governance and resistance under globalisation.
Un-innovative censorship

An evaluation of the level of innovation in Chinese Internet control should start from an understanding of historical forms of censorship and information control, particularly in China’s negotiation of global influences. In China, like in most other places, those with the might and interest to control flows of information have attempted to do so since ancient times. Chinese history (and, it should be said, that of most other empires) reads as a veritable smorgasbord of efforts at censorship. By censorship I mean efforts that have in one way or another aimed to make uncomfortable words and speech-acts disappear or stop them from appearing in the first place. Throughout Chinese history, such censorship has taken many forms at what I refer to as macro-, mid- and micro-levels. I discuss them here in turn.

Macro-level censorship in China

One level of control has been the macro-level control of infrastructure – the (attempted) removal of the ‘hardware’ of communication, or whole genres of publication. One pre-modern historical example was the illegalisation of xiaobao, which by the Northern Song dynasty (AD 960–1127) had emerged as an alternative and unofficial source of political information to rival that of the dibao, a semi-official publication of imperial edicts, records, memorials and notices that can be traced to the Tang dynasty (AD 618–907) (Zhou Yongming 2006: 42; Wilkinson 2000: 537; Guan Shishen and Ding Junhui 1987: 1–8; Fang Hanqi 1981: 1–3).

Under China’s last officially imperial dynasty, the Qing (AD 1644–1911), the effort to control communication and enforce edicts against forbidden words was complicated by the introduction of new information technologies by global actors, most importantly perhaps the telegraph. One way that the telegraph was managed at the macro-level, particularly in its early days, was the simple removal and shutting down of the possibility to use it. Research by Zhou Yongming has shown that the pulling down of telegraph poles by locals, for example in 1865 on the line between Shanghai and Wusong, was secretly orchestrated by government officials, in that particular case the district intendant (Zhou Yongming 2006: 19). Local officials similarly incited locals to pull down poles in Fujian in 1875 (Zhou Yongming 2006: 25). Other means of communication suffered the same treatment. An early railroad constructed in 1865 outside Xuanwumen in Beijing was dismantled by order of the Office of the Gendarmerie (Bujun tongling...
Similarly, after an attempted coup against Empress Dowager Cixi in 1898, she tried to gain control over the distribution of information by issuing edicts prohibiting the publishing of newspapers (Zhou Yongming 2006: 70). After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, the nationalist Guomindang government continued to enforce strict media censorship, applying it also to the recently developed channels of radio and film (McAleavy 1967: 274; for some accounts of such censorship at the time, see Hu Shi 2001 [1929]: 133; China League for the Protection of Civil Rights 2001 [1933]). However, with the victory of the communists and the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 came a previously unrivalled level of censorship. Indeed, strict censorship has been key to communist rule since its inception.

As with previous censorship regimes, the PRC government removed whole genres of possible communication at the macro-level. With regards to the telegraph, it was from the beginning put under rigid macro-level government control. Thus, under communist rule, ‘it was simply impossible for anyone to use the telegraph to express political opinions publicly without official sanction’ (Zhou Yongming 2006: 132). This control, of course, was not restricted to the telegraph, but as under the Guomindang it extended to information on the screen, radio and the print press, albeit to a heightened degree. As one commentator notes:

> With liberation, everything was changed, and news, as we understand the word, was banished overnight from the press, which from that time on had space only for messages from Communist leaders, resolutions of conferences, and statistics about the production of pig-iron.

(McAleavy 1967: 330)

In later years, new means of communication, especially those that permit private international access such as satellite dishes and fax machines, have been controlled at the macro-level prohibiting private or unauthorised use (Shanor and Shanor 1995: 26, 160).

Today, the Chinese censorship apparatus continues to control communication at the macro-level, and the Internet is no exception. The Internet came to China in 1994, and the Chinese blogosphere, an important space for popular expression and dissidence, grew exponentially in 2005 (MacKinnon 2007: 34–35). Twelve government agencies are involved in Internet censorship to varying degrees and in different
capacities. In terms of infrastructure, all major networks are state-owned. The Telecommunication Regulations state that at least 51 per cent of a joint venture in telecommunications infrastructure should be owned by a Chinese partner. What is more, all Chinese computer networks have to pass through Chinanet, the national public information network, to connect to the Internet. This makes it impossible to connect to the Internet independently (Zhou Yongming 2006: 142–43). At the same time the PRC government has deployed stronger ‘removal’ tactics at the macro-level. Most infamously, it has set up layers of blocks that have become collectively known as the Great Fire Wall (GFW). This ‘wall’ works to block many sites based outside China from being accessed from within China (including Google+, Facebook, Twitter and other social media). Areas of China, such as the Xinjiang region, have also been cut off from the Internet during periods of unrest (Blanchard 2009; AFP 2011).

**Mid-level censorship in China**

Another level at which uncomfortable words have been made to disappear has been the mid-level control of services and the removal of specific publications. This has been executed for example through government co-optation of and interference in publishing services and the destruction or illegalisation of circulation of specific pieces. According to Endymion Wilkinson, banned books (jinshu) have been a feature of Chinese life since the Warring States period (475–221 BC) (Wilkinson 2000: 286). One infamous example is the 213 BC ‘burning of the books’ by which the first emperor tried to eradicate oppositional expression (Ostergård Petersen 1995). Another is the greatest single censorship movement, the ‘Literary Inquisition’ of the Qianlong Emperor in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, when thousands of works were destroyed together with the blocks that were used to print them. These, and other less famous purges were accompanied by the persecution of many thousands of writers (Wilkinson 2000: 274).

Where the complete removal of the infrastructure of new technologies turned out to be unsustainable under the Qing, and effective only for short periods if at all, a somewhat more successful way of removing unwanted expression took place at the mid-level. With regards to the telegraph, the Qing government after 1881 developed a model where the previously government-owned Imperial Telegraph Administration (ITA) was converted to a shareholder company, but remained a joint operation between government and enterprise, described as...
commercial management under official supervision’ (Youdian bianjisij 1984: 64; cited in Zhou Yongming 2006: 71). This meant that if something was considered an emergency, the government could instruct the ITA to stop providing services to certain individuals or groups, such as receiving coded telegrams for the French during the Sino–Franco War (Zhou Yongming 2006: 71). This mid-level control was also exercised through the attempt at removing specific publications from circulation. For example, after the Qing court failed in its attempt to remove all newspapers and allowed official newspapers to be published in both Beijing and the provinces after 1902, it still attempted to prohibit individual publications, such as the pro-revolutionary Su Bao in 1903 (Zhou Yongming 2006: 117). Again, a way of enforcing the control of communication, and particularly its content, was the persecution of individuals who were caught using it as a means to spread ideas unfavourable to the rulers. For example, Jing Yuanshen, who at the time was chief (zhongban) of the Shanghai Telegraph Administration, lead an appeal in a 1900 public telegram to the Zongli Yamen against Empress Dowager Cixi’s attempt to dethrone Emperor Guangxu. Subsequent to the appeal he fled to Macau, then under Portuguese rule, where he was arrested and imprisoned for one and a half years after a request from the Qing court (Zhou Yongming 2006: 59–60).

As in previous regimes, the PRC censors books, TV, films and music at the mid-level, and there are regular crack-downs on publishers and broadcasters that fail to live up to the expectations of self-censorship. There have been instances that repeat earlier book-burning forms of censorship (Thurston 1984: 605). Although particularly intense purges have ignited in periods like the 1957 ‘anti-rightist’ campaign and the Cultural Revolution from 1964, the destruction of unwanted works and the management through self-censorship has prevailed throughout the lifespan of the PRC. Throughout China’s news, information and entertainment industries businesses are allowed to operate on the condition that they build censorship into their business processes (MacKinnon, 2007: 35). In the words of the official news agency Xinhua: ‘the industry could otherwise become a mere money-making machine rather than something serving to improve the moral standards of people’ (Xinhua 1999; cited in Becker 2000: 263).

Moreover, as under previous regimes, the PRC set up a mid-level ‘wall’ of sorts to block information coming into China from outside. It strictly limited the number of books, films and other forms of communication that was allowed into China from other countries. On this logic, some argue that booksellers since the 1990s worry little about getting in trouble with authorities for selling works by authors that are
condemned – censorship takes place at publishing houses and customs control, anything let through the barrier is safe to sell (Shanor and Shanor 1995: 175). Another ‘wall’ was built through jamming foreign broadcasts, such as the Voice of America, the BBC, Radio Free Asia, and broadcasters in Taiwan, Hong Kong and elsewhere (Shanor and Shanor 1995: 26, 160). Again, the Internet follows the pattern of previous censorship. When it comes to services, a first level of control is established through the license system for Internet service providers (ISPs). A series of regulations were issued in 2000–2001 outlining what services are permitted and not with regards to online news publishing, BBS (Bulletin Board Systems) and Internet cafés. There is a strict limit on who may publish news online, in effect limiting such possibilities to central and provincial-level news organisations (Zhou Yongming 2006: 143). In the case of blog-hosting services and other companies operating online, building censorship into business processes includes the route of software tools (MacKinnon 2007: 35). In order to avoid being shut down due to displaying inappropriate content, many web pages implement an increasing number of censorship technologies such as IP tracking and blocking. The use of monitors to screen BBS is also common, and webpages that tend to have heated political debates have often opted to close down on politically sensitive dates (Zhou Yongming 2006: 151; Shen 2007: 35). This self-censorship is pervasive (Zhou Yongming 2006: 179; Pang Cuiming 2008), and may reflect a resignation to or endorsement of government censorship practices (Lagerkvist 2010: 146). From the mid-1990s the government has made several attempts at selective blocking of individual web pages or publications. One target of such attempted blockage were Western news sites perceived to be critical of China, such as Time Magazine, The New York Times or the Washington Post. Pages associated with anti-government propaganda were also targeted, as were sites promoting the independence of Tibet, Taiwan or other parts of China, or advocating religious practices not sanctioned by the government, such as those associated with the Falungong. To this list can also be added sites for pornography and gambling (Harwit 2008: 98–99).

**Micro-level censorship in China**

Finally, I wish to pay special attention to a third level of censorship that is of particular importance to my argument here: the micro-level content-control that consists in forbidding the use of specific words or Chinese characters. The practice of placing a taboo on the writing or
uttering of certain phrases or sounds has been observed in different parts of the world in various historical periods. Indeed, most readers will be able to think of words in their own language(s) that are considered too provocative or inappropriate to utter, which means they are avoided completely or replaced by a euphemism.

However, the formal institutionalisation of this practice has been particularly strong in China. Most famously perhaps, it was long taboo to utter the name of one’s seniors, like a father or grandfather, or to take the same name as an ancestor (Wilkinson 2000: 86). B. J. Mansvelt Beck thus quotes Zheng Xuan’s definition of the character hui, usually translated as ‘taboo’, in a commentary on the ancient texts Zhouli and Liji as: ‘the personal name of a deceased king’ (cited in Beck 1987: 75). It was forbidden to use the name of the (deceased) emperor, or homophones for that name.4

The practice of forbidding words was not, however, restricted to the names of emperors and the use of homonyms for sensitive words could also land one in trouble. Whole sets of homonyms have been sensitive topics in China for millennia, and the accompanying censorship practices have been known to academics in the Anglophone world for decades at least. As an example we may mention one 1935 article, which argues that literary persecution was especially cruel during the Qing dynasty (AD 1644–1911) (Ku Chieh-Kang 1938 [1935]: 254), and describes the effect it had on those at the time who expressed themselves in public debate:

under the circumstances they could do nothing but resort to veiled satire. This being the situation, their words and writings were spied on and scrutinized; if they did not use every care they suffered the severest punishments.

(Ku Chieh-Kang 1938 [1935]: 254)

But, the author continues, although the Qing were the worst offenders, similar practices of harsh censorship had taken place since the Qin (221–206 BC) and Han (202 BC–AD 220), the first two dynasties of what is typically considered imperial China. The article goes on to list numerous death sentences during the Ming dynasty (AD 1368–1644), occasioned by the ‘homophonic nature of certain words employed’ (1938 [1935]: 262).

There is still scholarly debate over what precise characters were forbidden during what precise period and according to what precise logic. However, it is clear that texts, even private letters, that violated
such taboos risked destruction, and the authors of such pieces risked fines, demotion, imprisonment or death (Beck 1987: 71; Ku Chieh-Kang 1938 [1935]: 254–55; Durand 1992). This debate, moreover, only goes to underline further the prevalent institutionalisation and importance of forbidding words as an intimate part of political and governmental power.

Similarly, a way in which the Qing rulers attempted to control information flows at the micro-level was through blocking specific words and categories of content. For example, when overseas Chinese in 1899 sent telegrams protesting against the attempt by Empress Dowager Cixi to dethrone Emperor Guangxu, the ITA refused to accept these. In the following year, again, it was reported that Cixi’s actions led to waves of telegrams of protest, after the first of which the STA was instructed by Beijing to cease the sending and receiving of telegrams with such protesting content. When efforts to send protests were directed via actors abroad, the ITA refused to deliver them within China. This practice of the ITA to instruct its local branches to block specific words or kinds of messages from being sent or received continued until the fall of the Qing (Zhou Yongming 2006: 72).

Finally, the specific words and formulations that can be used in the various media has been strictly controlled at the micro-level of individual texts throughout the lifespan of the PRC. As in many other places, personal communications across national boundaries were also closely monitored and censored – for years, international calls were monitored and letters going to or coming from overseas were opened and scrutinised (Becker 2000: 198). This control has also taken the form of micro-managing the expressions used in texts – indeed, detailed scholarly accounts exist about the specifics of this micro-management, from Mao’s China until contemporary times (see Schoenhals 1992 for an example of the former and Vuori 2011 for an example of the former as well as the latter). Today, various levels of the PRC government regularly give directives on topics and specific expressions that are not to be ‘hyped’ or even mentioned by regular media. Where one formulation is considered inappropriate, the directives may sometimes demand it be completely banned, sometimes suggest the appropriate formulation, or euphemism, that must be used in its place.5

On the micro-level, a form of Internet censorship that is of particular interest to the discussion here is the ISP-enforced blacklisting of specific words or phrases. As indicated above, one form of Internet blockage happens behind the GFW, where individual blog posts are removed and specific accounts are blocked on Sina Weibo (a popular
microblogging website similar to Facebook or Twitter, in use by more than a third of China’s Internet users; Rapoza 2011), or whole websites are shut down on a regular basis. A key censorship mechanism at work on the Internet can be said to take the form of self-censorship by the owners or managers of webpages, in order not to be shut down. There is also most likely a government practice of directly deleting posts, but as Simon Shen points out, this is near impossible to prove unless admitted by the state or authors (Shen 2007: 35).

Behind the GFW and throughout China, in the everyday life of the younger online generation, Internet censorship is pervasive. Censorship programmes scan the Internet for what at any particular point in time is considered inappropriate content, and can immediately delete a post that contains a designated ‘sensitive word’. Search engines like Baidu block specific words as unsearchable, resulting only in an error message. Thousands of Chinese characters are believed to be subject to this form of censorship. Some characters are permanently placed on lists of censored words, whereas others are added or taken off in conjunction with the rise and fall of different issues on the (political) agenda. For example, in October 2011, as the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ movement went global, it was reported that a long list of keywords containing the Chinese term for ‘occupy’ (zhanling), followed by place names of provincial capitals, developed regions and symbolic local areas, were blocked on Sina Weibo (Hernandez 2011). The level of specificity of censored words also varies. For example, China Digital Times reported that as of 10 April 2013 newly censored search terms on Sina Weibo included ‘Masanjia Women’s Labor Re-education Camp’ (masanjia nuzi laojiaosuo) as well as various homonyms of the term ‘chairman’ (zhuxi, meaning bamboo mat, pig Xi, pig mat, lord Xi and zhu mat respectively) (Henochowicz 2013). It is often unclear where precisely the line between acceptable and unacceptable expression is drawn at any particular moment (Breslin and Shen 2010: 266).

Moreover, this censorship is not confined to words, but also covers pictures. Most famously, the government has promoted a piece of content-control software for Windows called the Green Dam Youth Escort (lvba huaji huhang). The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) reportedly had plans to make its installation mandatory on all new computers from July 2009, but has since postponed such imposition indefinitely (China Digital Space 2011). According to a 2009 MIIT directive, the purpose of the software was to build a healthy and harmonious online environment that does not poison young people’s minds (Bristow 2009).
Contemporary Chinese Internet censorship: an un-innovative practice

The above outline of historical and contemporary censorship practices can provide but a brief sketch of historical forms of Chinese censorship. Nonetheless, this brief historical survey has been able to point towards some consistent patterns and practices of China’s censorship regime. Throughout these accounts, it is indeed hard to detect any innovative aspects of Chinese censorship of the Internet.

To begin with, the patterns of censorship are the same as in the past. As with the Qing practices of information control with regards to the telegraph, contemporary Chinese Internet control takes place at the levels of infrastructure, service and contents (Zhou Yongming 2006: 142), or what I have called the macro-, mid- and micro-levels. At all these levels, the regime has consistently attempted to remove uncomfortable words from circulation. At the macro-level, Chinese rulers have attempted to remove whole genres of publication, from the xiaobao of the Northern Song to the telegraph lines of the Qing to Internet-access in Xinjiang under president Hu Jintao. The tactic has been to make certain means of communication completely unavailable, or otherwise forced to direct through government-owned and controlled ‘hardware’. At the mid-level the government has removed specific publications from access, from ancient Chinese book-burnings to the blocking of broadcasts like the BBC to the shutting down of critical blogs. One way of doing this has been through the control of services, where the self-censorship of publishers and broadcasters has been a requirement for operation. Finally, and most importantly for the discussion in the next section, the current Chinese government has maintained the ancient Chinese practice of censoring content at the micro-level of taboo topics and forbidden words. Throughout history and at all these levels of censorship, those who challenge the censorship and (intentionally or not) violate its complicated and often vague taboos have often paid a heavy price. With regards to historical precedent, what stands out about contemporary Chinese Internet censorship is thus its remarkable level of continuity with past practices against which the party-state often wishes to distinguish itself.

Furthermore, we have seen that the ways in which the Internet is regulated in China is very similar to the way the PRC state has regulated services in other parts of Chinese society. To begin with, the type of content that the state attempts to censor is similar to that in other areas of Chinese societal politics. As Eric Harwit has argued:
The national government had long put restrictions on such activities as the spread of pornography, gambling, and publication of ‘counter revolutionary’ materials. The policies the government adopted for the data network therefore mirrored the security concerns over traditional media and communications.

(Harwit 2008: 95)

Furthermore, China’s news, information and entertainment industries are allowed to operate on the condition that they build censorship into their business processes, a stance which has been repeated for online publication, often in the form of built-in censorship software. In this way, as Zhou Yongming states, ‘even though the Chinese policy makers have realized that the Internet could bring potential political changes to the regime, they do not regard it as fundamentally different from newspapers, radio, and TV’ (2006: 138). The same holds for their censorship of the Internet in comparison to other media. I thus conclude with Zhou:

Besides the specific technological means used to control the Internet, the control mechanism used by the state is in essence no different from that which controls newspapers, journals, press, radios, television, and satellite TV. The control of the Internet is an integral part of a censorship system that functions to ensure that the power of the communist party is not challenged.

(2006: 145)

What, then, of this ‘besides’ that marks ‘the specific technological means used to control the Internet’ in the above passage? Could these specific means not represent an innovation by the party-state?

Any such proposition seems implausible if the origins of the censorship software are taken into consideration. The relative success of the Chinese Internet censorship regime is achieveable largely by copying and borrowing from abroad. First of all, the censorship regime is possible because of the cooperation of domestic and foreign business (MacKinnon 2007: 38–41). Software companies like Google, Yahoo and Microsoft began to cooperate with the Chinese governments’ censorship fairly early on, to filter out sensitive information (Harwit 2008: 100). According to a report by Human Rights Watch the routers of hardware companies such as Cisco, Nortel, Juniper and others have also been critical to the building of China’s Internet infrastructure and censorship (Human Rights Watch 2006: 4, fn. 1). Moreover, key pieces of software that are promoted by the government to create a harmonious online
environment behind the great wall were developed outside China or accused of being copied from it. For example, the Green Dam Youth Escort mentioned above led to a court case where US software firm Cybersitter LLC, or Solid Oak Software, sued the Chinese government, two Chinese software firms and seven computer makers for illegally copying more than 3000 lines of its code. A Guardian article from the time quotes Gregory Fayer, a lawyer representing the US firm saying: ‘I don’t think I have ever seen such clearcut stealing’ (Branigan, 2010), and the suit refers to the incident as ‘one of the largest cases of software piracy in history’ (Hachman 2011). Cybersitter’s suit also included Japanese manufacturers Sony and Toshiba, accused of distributing the Green Dam software through computers sold in China, which again indicates the involvement of foreign companies in enabling the Chinese censorship regime.

To summarise, we can say that the introduction of the Internet and the accompanying globalisation of information flows has led to certain change, evolution, development or even modernisation of the Chinese censorship regime, in that it has adopted new forms of censorship specific to the new digital and virtual form of communication. We cannot, however, speak of a significant Chinese innovation in this regard, since the new technologies have to a significant extent been imported or copied from abroad. Most importantly, what stands out about the Chinese regime of Internet control and online censorship is not newness. Rather, what is remarkable is its continuity with censorship of other contemporary forms of communication as well as with the practices of censorship and control by earlier Chinese regimes. Simply put, the contemporary regime of Internet control and censorship is an outstandingly un-innovative practice. Moreover, the extent to which censorship is (or was ever) effective is debatable (Whitfield 1999: 138), and it is to this issue of evasion and resistance that I turn in the next section.

Innovative resistance

My argument in this chapter is that resistance to contemporary Internet censorship is significantly innovative, whereas government censorship is not. Before I embark on making the former part of this argument, I want to make clear that it is not one of simple technological determinism. As Zhou Yongming has argued with reference to the introduction of the telegraph and the Internet in China: ‘it was human beings who used these technologies in creative ways and under special historical circumstances that have made modern Chinese politics more public, not the technologies alone’ (2006: 9).
Of course, there are many ways in which people in China evade online censorship, some of which have clear parallels with past forms of evasion of government information control, and many of which have been well established since the early days of the Chinese Internet (for two early accounts, see Lynch 1999; Chase and Mulvenon 2002). For example, although the establishment by Qing authorities of the ITA was meant to force all telegrams to pass through Chinese-controlled landlines, it was relatively easy for the well-connected to send messages via foreign-owned undersea cables from Shanghai (Zhou Yongming 2006: 71). In current parallel, the computer-savvy in today’s China use Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and proxy servers located abroad to circumnavigate the GFW and access blocked sites located outside China (Harwit 2008: 99). Similarly, when the ITA as described above refused to carry critical telegrams from abroad once they reached Chinese territory, these were nonetheless reported in newspapers, showing that critical groups and individuals found ways of getting around the censorship and the attempts to block out political information from Chinese space were often unsuccessful (Zhou Yongming 2006: 72). This too has direct parallels in contemporary China, where political information about and criticism of issues from the 2011 high-speed train crash to the numerous contaminated milk scandals around the same time were leaked and escaped the attempts at total denial. People in China have used telephones, fax machines and satellite dishes with varying degrees of legality to ‘jump’ the various barriers to communication set up by the government (Harwit 2008: 99–100). Many studies of various forms of censorship throughout Chinese history point out the ultimate failure of governmental censorship regimes (Chan 1983: 23; Wakeman 1998: 176; Chow 2004).

As varied as the resistance to and evasion of Internet censorship is, it would be surprising if some of these practices were not un-innovative in repeating past forms of censorship evasion – indeed, some of the tactics used to circumvent government control in the past are bound to work today. However, I want to highlight in the remainder of this chapter a particular kind of contemporary online resistance to censorship at the micro-level that I argue is particularly innovative: the humorous homonyms of egao, and the example of the Ten Mythical Creatures.

A case of egao humorous homonyms: the Ten Mythical Creatures

In early 2009 a list of Ten Mythical Creatures appeared on Baidu Baike, a Chinese equivalent of Wikipedia that can be edited by its
The page listed ten innocuous animals popular on the Chinese Internet. The first animal, which has become the most famous and received international attention in both academic writing and news media, was the grassmud horse (caonima). The characters for this animal are pronounced almost exactly the same as the common curse ‘fuck your mother’ (caonima), but written with characters that look completely different. The grassmud horse is an example of a broader type of play with humorous homonyms that is part of egao culture and that has become hugely popular online since around 2006. The grassmud horse makes fun of the government’s censorship online, symbolically sticking up two fingers at the authorities. The grassmud horse was originally visually represented by a zebra, before taking on the comically ugly guise of an alpaca that has since become popularised and commercialised in online music videos, mockumentaries, T-shirts and toys. The grassmud horse is a good example of how creative netizens are in mocking and poking fun at the censorship regime. When pronounced it sounds like a rude insult, but who can seriously complain about a funny-looking fluffy alpaca? What is more, the homonymity of the grassmud horse simultaneously makes it function as a form of code that lets one evade online censorship. Because of this trait, if an online commentator is blocked by censorship software from writing the characters for the rude expletive ‘caonima’, he or she can replace the term with the similar sounding grassmud horse version of ‘caonima’. There are numerous words that carry such a doubly mocking and evasive function on the Chinese Internet and a whole punning zoology has developed with the grassmud horse at its core.

In 2009 the grassmud horse was accompanied by nine other animals in the list of Mythical Creatures, most of which were puns on curse words and genitalia. There was the Dafei chicken (dafeiji), which sounds the same as slang for masturbation and is described as a strange bird that likes exercise. Another was the midge butterfly (yamiedie), described as a rare animal only found on the Tibetan plateau, and with a name derived from the Japanese for ‘stop it’ (yamete), familiar to Chinese netizens by way of imported pornography. A third was the lucky journey cat (jibamao), an animal that sounds like slang for ‘pubic hair’ (jibamao) and is said to live in a dark, damp environment and to have flourished during the Zhengde Emperor’s reign. The list also included a chrysanthemum silkworm (juhuacan, which sounds like another insult which means something like ‘bugger’); the stretch-tailed whale (weishenjing, sounding like ‘menstrual pads’); the Qianlie crab (qianliexie, which sounds like ‘prostate’); the singing field goose (yindaoyan, which sounds like ‘vaginal infection’); the Franco-Croatian
squid (*fakeyou*, which sounds like English ‘fuck you’); the puremen (*change*, which derives from the nickname of celebrity Li Yuchun who is famous for her androgynous appearance) and finally the stork-cat ape (*guanliyuan*, which pokes fun at the Baidu administrators that take part in the cat and mouse censorship practices on the site and who finally deleted the entry of the Ten Mythical Creatures).6

**Egao is innovative vis-à-vis parody and humour as resistance elsewhere**

Before going on to argue that this form of resistance by humorous homonyms is particularly innovative, it should be acknowledged that *egao* also continues themes found in practices elsewhere. Most analysts of *egao* culture understand it as parody, and emphasise its carnivalesque significance, a form that can be found in many different cultures. For example, Meng Bingchun argues:

> In terms of artistic tradition, *egao* is nothing ground-breaking. In literature, parody as a genre can be dated back to ancient Greece … In visual art, Dadaism, Surrealism and Situationism all used innovative techniques in an attempt to attribute new meaning to existing objects or artistic expression. … In contemporary pop culture, culture jamming attempts to ‘reverse and transgress the meaning of cultural codes’ … by disrupting mainstream cultural institutions and corporate advertising

(Meng Bingchun 2011: 37–38)

To Meng, *egao* continues the anti-establishment spirit and the technique of critiquing through parody that these cultural forms deployed. As such, Meng also notes how the term *egao* has been traced to the Japanese term *kuso*, meaning ‘damned’, ‘funny’, ‘nonsense’, ‘idioty’ or ‘farces’, terms that all emphasise the parodic side of *egao* (Meng Bingchun 2011: 37).

Though sympathetic with Meng’s observation, I argue that there is also something significantly different about the particular Chinese form of parodic critique that is *egao*. This difference consists in the particular form of punnery that is made possible by the Chinese script and that is not possible in the alphabetic languages of the parodic forms of expression identified elsewhere. Although noted in passing by other authors, this aspect of *egao* has not been given due attention in academic analyses so far. As a consequence, although the creativity of *egao* is oft-noted, some of its profoundly innovative aspects have been
underplayed. Vis-à-vis forms of parody elsewhere the humorous homonyms of egao that are expressed in the Ten Mythical Creatures are innovative in that they not only mock and critique, but also evade the censorship regime. In writing ‘grassmud horse’ rather than ‘fuck your mother’, for example, you parody and mock the censorship regime, but you simultaneously evade its micro-level operation.

I am not claiming here that parody is new to egao. Nor am I claiming that evading censorship through clever and creative tactics is something new. Indeed, one of the reasons why content-based censorship of the telegraph was not more successful was the widespread practice of coding messages. This made it very difficult for the ITA to screen messages for illicit content and block those considered unacceptable (Zhou Yongming 2006: 72–73). Yet, the combination of humorous critique and evasion into one move seems new and different in relation to forms of parody elsewhere, and the particular form it takes is predicated on the possibility to write homonymous or near-homonymous words with completely different meanings in completely different characters, as seen in the Ten Mythical Creatures.

**Egao is innovative vis-à-vis earlier Chinese forms of satire and wordplay**

Of course, as in other parts of the world, parody and satire have also been a part of Chinese storytelling throughout history. Daria Berg has examined at length how the Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan, a traditional Chinese novel without known author, portrays provincial life in seventeenth-century China as a dystopian satire (Berg 2002). A famous modern example is Lu Xun’s powerfully satirical short story *The True Story of Ah Q*. The 1930s and 1940s saw a wave of modern humorous satire in the work of the likes of Lao She and Qian Zhongshu (for an analysis of these two authors highlighting the aspect of satirical humour, see Mo Lijun 2009). Johan Lagerkvist has also pointed to historian Wu Han as a precursor of egao. Wu Han used Ming dynasty characters ambiguously to mount a subtle critique of the 1940s Guomindang nationalist Party-state, and later used allegory to criticise the 1950s and 1960s Communist Party-state under Mao (Lagerkvist 2010: 128). More recent examples include Gu Hua’s *A Small Town Called Hibiscus*, a satire of officialdom that was so sharp that a film based on the novel was held for weeks by censors before its release (Shanor and Shanor 1995: 176).

Lagerkvist also identifies ironic avant-garde art in the 1980s as a fore-runner of egao (Lagerkvist 2010: 151). He especially mentions
Wang Keping’s 1978 wood sculpture *Idol* as an early attempt to deconstruct the personality-cult surrounding Mao (see also Jiang Jiehong 2008: 54). The humorous art of the 1980s and 1990s is also identified as a way of subtly critiquing recent history (see also Vine 2008: 18). A parallel is furthermore detected by many commentators on *egao* in the posting of subversive ‘doorway couplets’ (*menlian*) described by Patricia Thornton (Thornton 2002: 662; see Lagerkvist 2010: 155 for the connection to humorous homonyms online). To such examples of Chinese precedents to the parodic, satirical or ambiguous artistic form of *egao* we can add the literary practice of recycling textual fragments from one genre to another, such as letting non-fictional material appear in novels to produce ironic, humorous or subversive effects (for example Shang Wei 2003: 193–94 documents this practice in the late Ming).

*Egao*, as form, is innovative vis-à-vis these Chinese ironic and satirical forms in the same way that it is so in relation to parody elsewhere – it combines critique and evasion of censorship in a way that prior forms did not. What is more, it is innovative in relation to similar puns and language play in Chinese history, because its articulation in the online context of virtual censorship makes for new forms of deployment. Meng has referred to *egao* as a new form of speech enabled by digital technology and communication networks (Meng Bingchun 2011: 48). She moreover argues that ‘*egao* is distinct from other popular discourses in the analogue era in its direct appropriation of official media content’ (Meng Bingchun 2011: 48). Certainly, but I would also like to re-emphasise the efficiency of *egao* as a response to the censorship regime. The fluid adoption of online memes means that governmental censorship software is always playing catch-up with the evasion of its pre-programmed censorship, and even highly computer-literate human censors can struggle to keep up with innovative memes (or choose not to) (Garafola 2010). Finally, this is not to say that *egao* is unequivocally ‘good’ or that it will end Chinese online censorship. Like any language game, it includes certain subject positions and excludes others. That is to say, it is political. As such, it should be a welcome addition on the Chinese Internet.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has contrasted the un-innovative tools of the Chinese online censorship regime with the creative, humorous and innovative ways in which it is being negotiated and resisted online. To some extent this discussion has been polemic – innovation is rarely if ever a
question of either/or, presence/absence, but it is in the nature of the innovative/un-innovative to be neither one or the other, yet simultaneously both. Indeed, the grounding in something already established can be said to be that which differentiates innovation from a pure invention of the completely new, the uninventable or impossible (Wortham 2010: 77–78; Derrida 2007). Nonetheless, discussing online censorship and resistance to it in terms of innovation can enable us to observe levels or degrees of innovation, where the former is marked by its low level of innovation and the latter stands out as distinctly innovative.

The wave of innovation discussed in this chapter is brought about by the globalisation of information and the government’s efforts to curb it. It can be said that globalisation, or increasing contact with and information flows from the outside world, has been met with censorship at various points in Chinese history. The current Internet censorship regime shows that this is certainly the case today. What is more, however, evidence of resistance to such censorship can be traced far back in Chinese history and may well be considered a force supportive of increasing globalisation and flows of information.

Furthermore, through these processes of Chinese innovation, competing Chinas are being innovated. On the one hand the regime is working for a sanitised and regulated China, on the other its netizens are responding to such sanitisation with dirty humour and evasion. Where the regime is working increasingly hard for a censored version of China, netizens are innovating ways to slip through that censorship and to mockingly display its evasion. The cat and mouse game between the competing versions of China continues online, and has spread offline around the globe through redeployment of its Internet memes in offline art (Hung 2011), through news reporting (Shang Qing 2009) and through academic discussions like this one.

We have thus seen that the Chinese online censorship regime is marked by the continuation of censorship practices in other times and other media, rather than by innovation and creativity. Where there has been change to the already established censorship regime it has consisted largely in buying and copying technologies invented elsewhere, as opposed to the indigenous innovation that the regime has tried to promote in recent years. By contrast, what is clear from previous scholarship and from the brief engagement with the Ten Mythical Creatures here is that online resistance in the form of egao is marked by creativity and innovation. Although parallels can be made to parody in other times and places, as something already existing, egao culture has creatively transformed this form into something distinctly new. It combines its mockery of authority and censorship with the
evasion thereof. In doing so, it is not only artistically creative, it is also innovative in terms of form and function. The double function of *egao* wordplay is arguably innovative and its particular form of punnery is definitely a *Chinese* innovation, intimately tied to the potential inherent in Chinese language and script. This distinguishes it as a form of ‘indigenous innovation’ from the copying, catching up or socialisation that one may otherwise have expected under globalisation. A focus on innovation can therefore help us better understand the real newness of *egao* as cultural form and as a tactic of resistance. It also helps us see the extent to which Chinese netizens are innovative in their negotiation of global influences, where the censorship regime is largely not.

**Notes**

1. The emergence in 2006 is most likely a result of Internet control growing stronger in the years leading up to it.
2. I follow the vast majority of previous literatures on the *egao* phenomenon in referring to it as ‘resistance’ (see, for example, Meng Bingchun 2011; Li Hongmei 2011; Tang Lijun and Yang Peidong 2011). For a problematisation of this conceptualisation vis-à-vis the distinction of politics from the political, with special attention to the type of wordplay discussed here and the way it is perceived by young people in China, see Nordin and Richaud (2012).
3. See An Pingqiu and Zhang Peiheng (1991) for an introduction to the issue of book banning that covers the Qin to Qing dynasties (221 BC–AD 1911) and includes a list of 4000 titles that the editors claim is exhaustive of books banned in the eras covered. A good discussion that also covers the PRC is found in Chan (1983).
4. There are several convenient listings of taboo characters of various periods (Wang Yankun 2009).
5. A portion of these directives are regularly leaked and published by China Digital Times.
6. The entry for the Ten Mythical Creatures has now been removed from *Baidu*, but a description of the original entry still exists in English on the blog *Danwei* (Martinsen 2009), and these and other *egao* homonyms are collected and described in English in the China Digital Spaces’ *Grass-Mud Horse Lexicon* (China Digital Space 2012). For academic commentary on the Ten Mythical Creatures, see Li Hongmei (2011: 79) and Nordin (forthcoming 2014).

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