



**Resisting Neoliberalisation in
Global Knowledge Capitalism:
How should China's Outward-
oriented Higher Education (OHE)
via the Belt and Road progress?**

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Outline

China's outward-oriented higher education (OHE)

Delinking as a trans-dimensional concept

Discussion and reflection

China's outward-oriented higher education (OHE)

- ❑ China's universities and their initiatives
- ❑ Chinese higher education (practice and policy) and its evolution and internationalization
- ❑ Changing China and its implications for the China's higher education sector

Two main contributions:

- (I) The theoretical development of the transformation of China's higher education system;
- (II) The discussion around China's growing international role and its implications for "center-periphery" and internationalization

Three dimensions before and under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

1. The founding of the Confucius Institutes (CIs) and Confucius Classrooms (CCs)
2. The establishing of university branch campuses in Global South countries
3. The increasing intake of international students from Global South countries to Chinese universities

However, the reality has pushed studies to bridge debates in China's international relations (IR) and OHE.

- ❑ The results of the panel dataset (2006-2017) measuring the impact of Confucius Institutes (CIs) in 66 BRI and 75 non-BRI countries (Wang *et al.*, 2021) are as follows.
 - CIs producing an overall positive effect
 - Stronger positive effect after the launch of the BRI
 - The earlier host countries joining the BRI, the stronger the interactive effect of CI and BRI
- ❑ CIs' image being twisted
 - 'Chinese Trojan Horse'
 - 'China's foreign propagandists'

- ❑ Wu Hantian's theoretical framework consisting of
 - Neo-Marxist;
 - Joseph Nye's *soft power*;
 - Jane Knight's *knowledge diplomacy*;
 - Ruth Hayhoe's *HE's based civilisational dialogue*;

- ❑ China's strengths: Splendid ancient civilization + Confucianism or different civilizations connected based on some commonly shared positives [和而不同 *he er bu tong*].

- ❑ Wu's suggestions:
 - Integrating three pathways: CIs, development aid, and international student recruitment
 - Providing 'neutral' rather than 'ideological' assessment of China's transformation
 - Introducing China's real situation to different political systems and ideologies
 - Resisting the zero-sum game of 'soft power competition'
 - Providing alternative (non-Western) higher education models

- ❑ Critique of Wu
 - Leaving the ideological matters to the neoliberals and safeguarding global knowledge capitalism.
 - Undermining CIs' potential to be anti-capitalist and anti-neoliberal

□ Narrative synthesis of BRI's higher education studies (2015-2020) (Yue *et al.*, 2022)

1. HE development in countries along the route

- Uneven, small-scale, and of low quality
- Exceeding expectations are the number + scale of higher education institutions (HEIs) and the total enrolment rate of the right-age population in some areas.
- Better performance in university rankings
- Medium and long-term planning
- Encouraging private capital participation

2. HE cooperation between countries

- The sense of community coming from thousands of years of harmony culture.
- Pivoting on the ancient historical stops: Xi'an, Dunhuang, and Urumqi
- CIs relaxed the qualification of joining alliances (e.g., University of Alliance of the Silk Road [UASR]; China-Central Asian University of Alliance CCAUC).

3. Internationalization of HE

- Culture – people's beliefs, values, rules, norms, and customs (Yue, 2020)
- A multicultural ecological community of world citizens with international consciousness
- Speeding up the process of internationalization and meet the demand for talents
- The strength of engineering disciplines

4. Functions of HE

- Talent education, **service trade**, and voice
- China's OHE expansion (except for Cis) < China's own development in higher education
- Urgent need for cultural literacy and professional skills

5. Education of international students

- Demand, cost, convenience, and the conditions for communication
- China's International projects: 39 (mostly low-income developing countries) are in the early stages of development; 4 (countries of relatively higher economic levels) are in the middle of development. Overall, 93% are still in the pre-intermediate level economies.
- As of 2022, six Chinese universities became 'magnet institutions' for BRI developing countries (Yue et al., 2022: 104).

□ Yue's team called for the continuing commitment to building **world-class universities** with inclusive, supportive and trustworthy research environment.

BUT: What are world class universities? Whose criteria do we follow? How can we distinguish China's OHE from the internationalization of capital and the ideology of the ruling elites/class, the foundation of the discourse of Western higher education?

Delinking as a trans-dimensional concept

- ❑ General: “subjecting **the mutual relations between the various nations and regions of the whole of the planet** to the varying imperatives of their own internal development” (Amin 1985, xii).
- ❑ Decolonising: “**unilateral adjustment of the weakest to the strong**” (Amin 1985 xii), a situation in which *any* government is influenced, dictated, and impoverished by rules devised elsewhere, rules that benefit **the old colonial powers**.
- ❑ Epistemic (Decolonial): critical awareness and practices to change ‘**the terms not just the content** of the conversation’ dominated epistemically by Western-European institutions of knowledge’ (Mignolo, 2007, 458-459)

Discussion and Reflection

❑ BRI's principles and development and education (Peters, 2020)

1. Combining “hard” and “soft” infrastructures: (i) roads, railways, ports and transportation; (ii) learning networks, technology transfer and services; (iii) people-to -people (educations and ideologies)
2. Embracing open philosophy: (i) society (education and science), (ii) philosophy (interculturalism and global diplomacy), which is characterized by open access, open knowledge, and open education;
3. Building model communities, civilized dialogue and education, and the future of humanity;

❑ Conflicting ideologies of higher education (Lee, Lo and Abdrasheva, 2020)

- Unitarianism
- Kazakhstan regards BRI NOT as ties with participants defined by geographical location, a common history, and the unity emphasized by Chinese discourse.

❖ Non-sequential trans-dimensional delinking

- Identifying neoliberal tendencies that breed unitarianism
- Making transition from an anti-neoliberal, anti-capitalist delinking towards socialistic and socialist ends
- Decolonising economic, cultural, politically, and epistemologically (not in succession but inter-dimensionally to reach a trans-dimensional state)

❑ Further 'non-Marxist' (but potentially delinking) suggestions:

- 1) Take measures specific to **local conditions in BRI countries**
- 2) **Train corresponding experts**
- 3) **Promote culture as the most important means in higher education under the BRI**
- 4) Provide resources for universities in the central and western regions to reduce the gap in the internationalization of eastern and western universities
- 5) **Raise the voice of academics, culture, and universities**
- 6) **Develop the education for foreign students in China**

- ❑ ‘China can learn from Yale National University Corporation: professional selection and course structure, registration methods, and strengthen quality assurance’
- Expand alliances and cooperate with first-class universities in countries along the route
- Promote the integration of admissions and examination mechanisms and expand the scope of mutual recognition of degrees
- Attach importance to undergraduate education and teaching, and jointly build the College of Humanities
- Comprehensively strengthen the construction of the quality assurance system and improve the relevant legal mechanism

- ❖ Delinking by ditching indicatorist and modelist approaches
- BUT it does not mean ‘anything goes’;
- Arts and Humanities and Social Science must be about reconnecting our civilisation roots once interconnected (e.g., how ‘Chinese’ is a bowl of chili oil noodles?);
- Learn from the impoverished and ‘developing’ Global South countries and its colonial history to deneoliberalise China’s higher education;
- Are the double first-class universities role models? No!

Adebayo Olukoshi and Paul T. Zeleza (2004: 3) provided the most precise summary of the consequences and challenges of corporatisation and globalisation for African universities:

How to balance autonomy and viability, expansion and excellence, equity and efficiency, access and quality, authority and accountability, representation and responsibility, diversification and differentiation, internationalization and indigenization, global presence/visibility and local anchorage, academic freedom and professional ethics, privatization and the public purpose, teaching and research, community service/social responsibility and consultancy, diversity and uniformity, the preservation of local knowledge systems and the adoption of global knowledge systems, knowledge production and knowledge dissemination, the knowledge economy and the knowledge society?

However:

We need to develop a broader understanding of 'colonization.' Knowledge systems worldwide are still underpinned by the logic of value extraction. In fact, knowledge as such is increasingly designed as the principal means of value extraction. Colonization is going on when we throw out of the window the role of critical reason and theoretical thinking, and we reduce knowledge to the mere collection of data, its analysis and its use by governments, military bureaucracies and corporations. Colonization is going on when we are surrounded by so-called smart devices that constantly watch us and record us harvesting vast quantities of data, or when activity is captured by sensors and cameras embedded within them.

(Mbembe, 2019: 19)

Embrace the Vision of Globalectics

(Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2012: 8)

On its surface, there is no centre; any point is equally a centre. As for the internal centre of the globe, all points on the surface are equidistant to it—like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that meet at the hub. Globalectics combines the global and the dialectical to describe a mutually affecting dialogue, or multi-logue, in the phenomena of nature and nurture in a global space that is rapidly transcending that of the artificially bounded, as nation and region. The global is that which human in spaceships or on the international space station see: the dialectical is the internal dynamics that they do not see. Globalectics embraces wholeness, interconnectedness, equality of potentiality of parts, tension, and motion. It is a way of thinking and relating to the world, particularly in the era of globalism and globalization.

To achieve this...

Inconclusive conclusion?

From 'Another World Is Possible' to *Socialism Is Necessary* (Prashad, 2022: 24)

Fostering 'Socialist higher education' for *Socialist Integral State-Societies* (Lin, 2023)