Shaping Ecological Research Cultures for Sino-US Humanities and Social Sciences International Research Collaboration

"Chinese-characteristic" knowledge diplomacy in geopolitical negotiations

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Introduction

1. US & China

Timeline & Story Arch:

2009-2017
Obama government encourages knowledge exchange activities; **In 2015,** cultural exchanges between China and the US reached a **climax;**
2011: China: 'going out' educational policy for cross-border collaboration

Since 2017
Trump elected as President of the U.S.: liberal international order decline, Sino-US **New Cold War**, populism, nationalism
Sino-US Trade War reduces collaborative research funding

1979:
China and US formally established diplomatic relations and **start research collaborations**

2020 and 2021 (COVID-19):
- 2020 Trump **suspends the Fulbright Program between China and the US**, cutting off people-to-people and cultural exchanges between the two countries
- **Decline in mobility** from China to the US for 'visa wars';
- **No longer fund Chinese-language programs** at US universities that host Confucius Institute

Scale:

- the world's total research and development expenditures: the US and China **each account for about 25%** (Lee and Haupt, 2021)

- internationally co-authored article volume: the US and China **are the top collaborators** with each other (Nature Index, 2019)

2.China: an emerging centre in global science system

- In 2016, it became **the largest country producer of English research outputs**, surpassing the US (Lee and Haupt, 2020).

- In 2020, China was **the second largest producer of internationally co-authored Scopus publications**, only after the US (NSB 2022, Figure 24).

- Aim at becoming **an international education hub** to attract **cross-border research collaboration** and increase **research capacity** (Knight, 2011; Lee, 2015)

Methods

Foucauldian-informed critical discourse analysis:
knowledge and power discourse
Foucault: "Regimes of truth" how particular understandings are accepted; note **the shifting period**

Fairclough's framework:
Step1: 'textual analysis' (all texts)
Step2: 'discursive practice' (exaggeration, irony, rhetoric)
Step3: 'political context' (power relations and structures)

Tool: NVivo 14 and AntConc (corpus-assisted analysis)

Data Source: 180 **(**130,000+ words) policy documents on Sino-US Humanities and Social Sciences Collaboration launched by the Ministry of Education of China from the year 2008 to 2023

Data Analysis

Analytical focus:
Research culture (Royal Society, 2017):
shaping career trajectories, research design, and communicative norms, involving researchers' research-activity behaviours, values, aspirations, and attitudes
Analytical scale:
Knowledge diplomacy (Knight, 2021):

Table 1. Conceptual framework for knowledge diplomacy

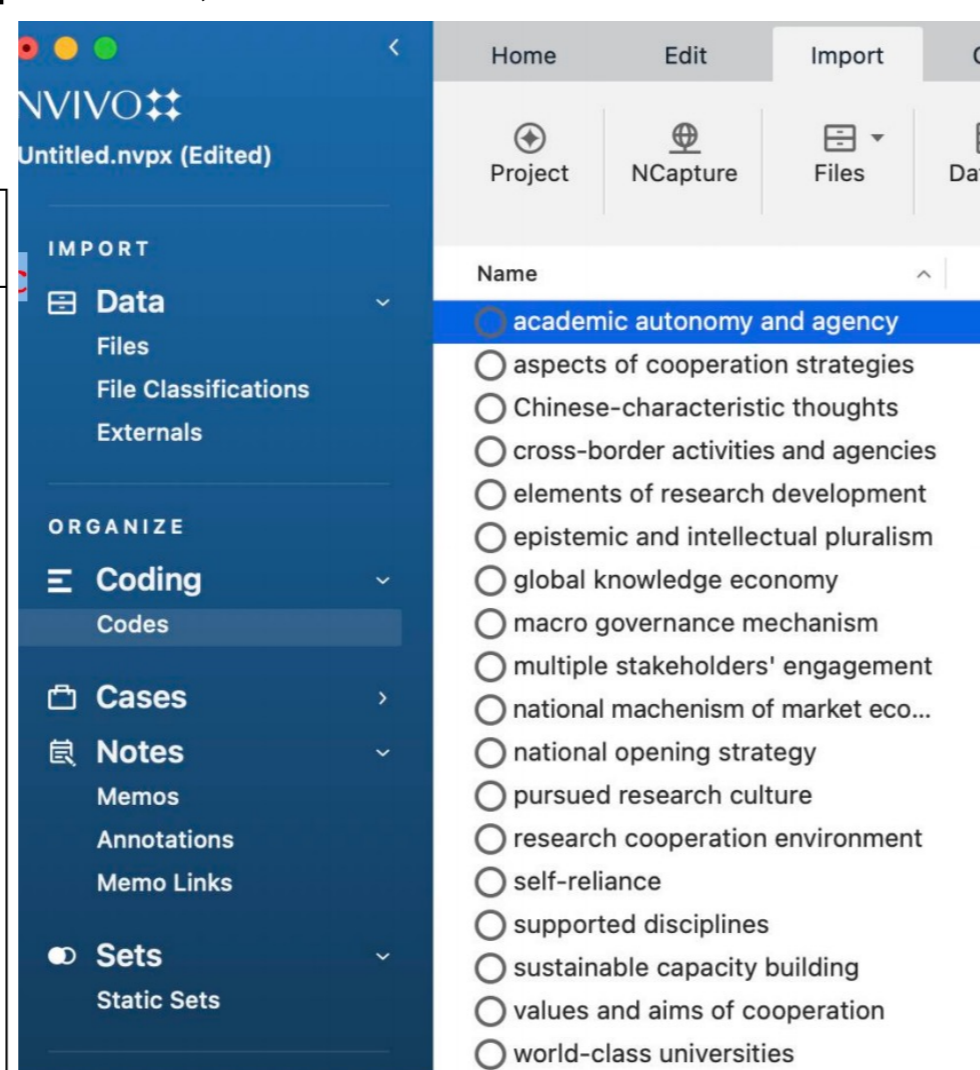| Intentions, Purpose, Rationales 1	Actors, Partners 2	Principles, Values 3	Modes, Approaches 4	Activities, Instruments 5
To build/ strengthen relations between and among countries through international higher education, research and innovation (IHERI) To use IHERI to help address global challenges and promote peace and prosperity To strengthen IHERI through enhanced relations between and among countries	Government departments and agencies related to education, science, technology, innovation at all levels Intergovernmental agencies related to IHERI NGOs related to IHERI HEIs Research centres Think Tanks Centres of Excellence Research Networks Foundations Innovation Centres Experts Private sector - Multi-national Corp	Reciprocity Mutuality Cooperation Common ground Exchange Commonality Partnership Common good Inter-disciplinary Multi-sector Transparency	Negotiation Communication Representation Conflict Resolution Compromise Collaboration Mediation Conciliation Building trust Dialogue	*Generic:* Networks Joint projects Conferences Summits Coalitions Track Two Agreements Working Groups Institution building *IHERI specific:* Intl joint universities Student/scholar exchanges Research networks Education/ Knowledge Hubs Scholarships ODA projects Twinning and Joint Degree Programs

Source: (Knight, 2021)

Figure 1. NVivo 14 Code List

Results

'Chinese-characteristic' dual strategy /'two-legs walking' strategy:
adopts **neither methodological nationalism nor methodological globalism**; harmonizing:
(1) 'reform and opening up' policy and 'going out' goals **beyond the 'national container' without cultural superiority**
(2) **building autonomous national science system** through self-reliance and self-sufficiency
(3) joining international collaborations with **'Chinese characteristics' rather than** being a **Euro-American-dependent 'subaltern agent'**
China's overall policy features:
(1) Support **Double First-Class University**
(2) **Epistemic independence:** encourage domestic-journal publication, SSCI-dematrixization (MOE 2020, MST, 2020)
China's knowledge-diplomacy discursive strategy:
- **Imaginary of research collaboration as positive-sum knowledge diplomacy** (Knight, 2022) treasuring **plural knowledges rather than zero-sum competitive 'soft power'** (Nye, 2004) through persuasion, attraction and compliance for national selfinterest
- Sino-US research collaboration **benefits both the US nation-state and the global science**
China's leading role:
China leads US-China research collaboration in terms of first authorship and Chinese governmental funding initiatives
Research culture: managerial VS. inclusive
- **US liberal managerialism, neo-nationalism and new managerial reform:**
- high-stakes research cultures generate metricisation through assessments;
- competitive funding schemes, promotion incentives, and global league tables strengthen academic-capital productivity (Bourdieu, 1986) solidifying market-logic academic capitalism under audit-culture governance;
- politicise knowledge exchange
- **Chinese inclusive research culture:**
wisely use the Western-centred English-mediated journal index as research impact evaluation; encouraging Chinese-theory and cultural rooted research collaboration on Chinese issues

Implications

1. self-organizing nature of global science:
autonomous Sino-US research **collaboration could overcome geopolitical tensions to some extent** by encouraging scientist-level agency for collaboration
2. 'The rise of China': scientific nationalism by imagining research collaboration as **arm race** for economic competitiveness and nation-building or **'global common good' as critical geopolitics beyond nation states?**

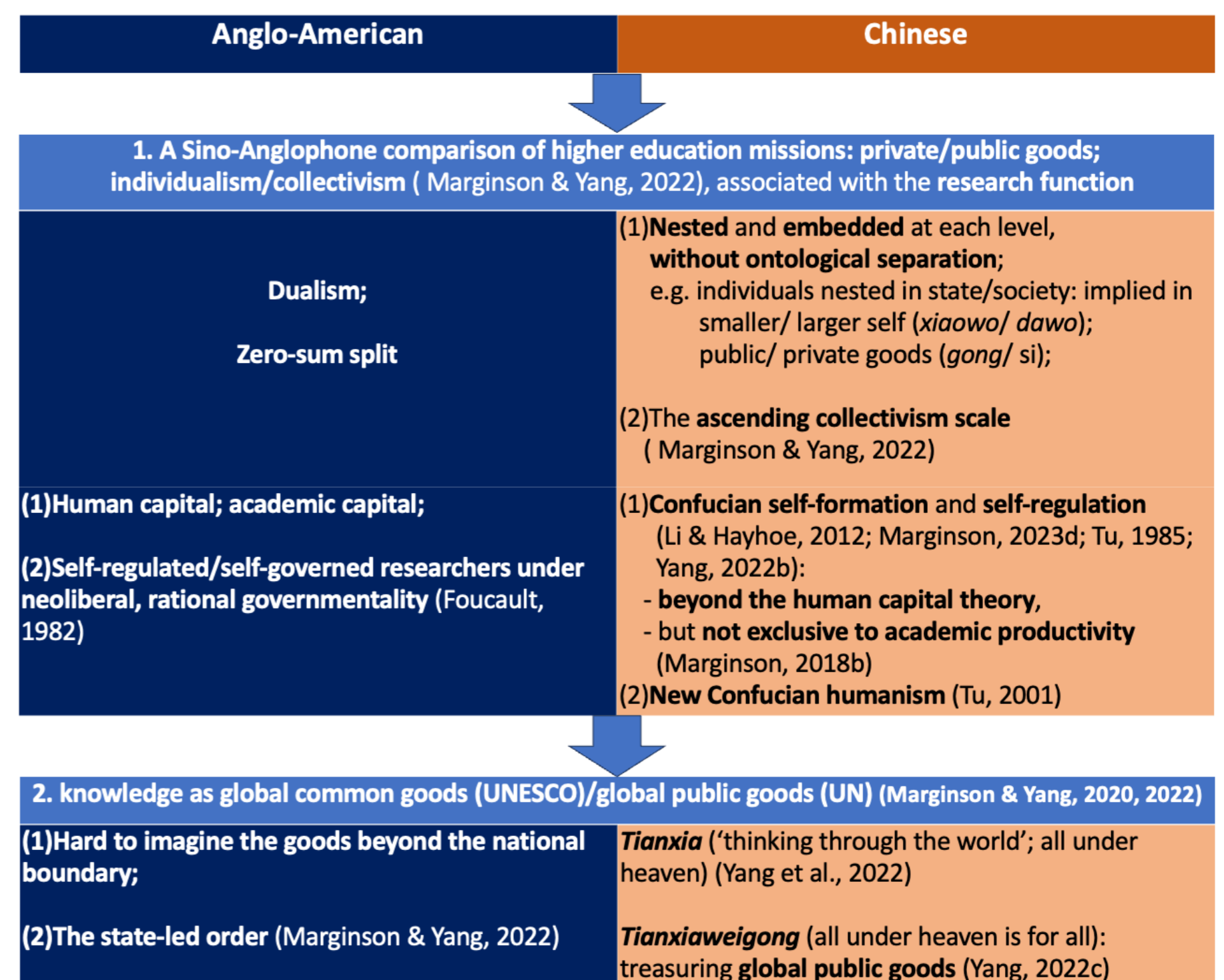| Anglo-American	Chinese
1. A Sino-Anglophone comparison of higher education missions: private/public goods; individualism/collectivism (Marginson & Yang, 2022), associated with the research function	
Dualism; **Zero-sum split**	(1)**Nested** and **embedded** at each level, **without ontological separation;** e.g. individuals nested in state/society: implied in smaller/ larger self (*xiaowo/ dawo*); public/ private goods (*gong/ si*); (2)The **ascending collectivism scale** (Marginson & Yang, 2022)
(1)Human capital; academic capital; (2)Self-regulated/self-governed researchers under neoliberal, rational governmentality (Foucault, 1982)	(1)**Confucian self-formation** and **self-regulation** (Li & Hayhoe, 2012; Marginson, 2023d; Tu, 1985; Yang, 2022b): - **beyond the human capital theory,** - but **not exclusive to academic productivity** (Marginson, 2018b) (2)**New Confucian humanism** (Tu, 2001)
2. knowledge as global common goods (UNESCO)/global public goods (UN) (Marginson & Yang, 2020, 2022)	
(1)Hard to imagine the goods beyond the national boundary; (2)The state-led order (Marginson & Yang, 2022)	*Tianxia* ('thinking through the world'; all under heaven) (Yang et al., 2022) *Tianxiaweigong* (all under heaven is for all): treasuring **global public goods** (Yang, 2022c)

Figure 2. a trans-positional comparative analysis **of spatial imaginaries and geopolitical imaginaries** in terms of Chinese and American **political cultures**

Conclusion

- **Collaboration for scientific globalism as global common goods**

  Open science of co-authorships concerning global grand challenge

- **China's further challenges in open science:**

  Support non-WCUs international collaboration;

  unaffordability of journal subscriptions

  as 'information famine'; academic internet surveillance

- **Bretton Wood's relation ≠ academic dependency**

- **Realism (International relations) of multi-polarization: mutual benefits>ideologies**

Competition

Collaboration

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