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Is there a distinctive Chinese University'?



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Is there a distinctive Chinese University'?

1. The European-American research university
2. China's dynamism in higher education
3. 'China is China'
4. Similarities and differences between Western and Chinese universities
5. China's governance in universities, based on effective integration of devolved autonomous universities into state policy and strategy
6. To what extent and in what ways is the university distinctive in China?

How we mostly understand higher education

The European-American research University

- Wilhelm von Humboldt and the University of Berlin (1809)
- The American research university
- Triple helix: Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff (1995)





Wilhelm von Humboldt



Clark Kerr

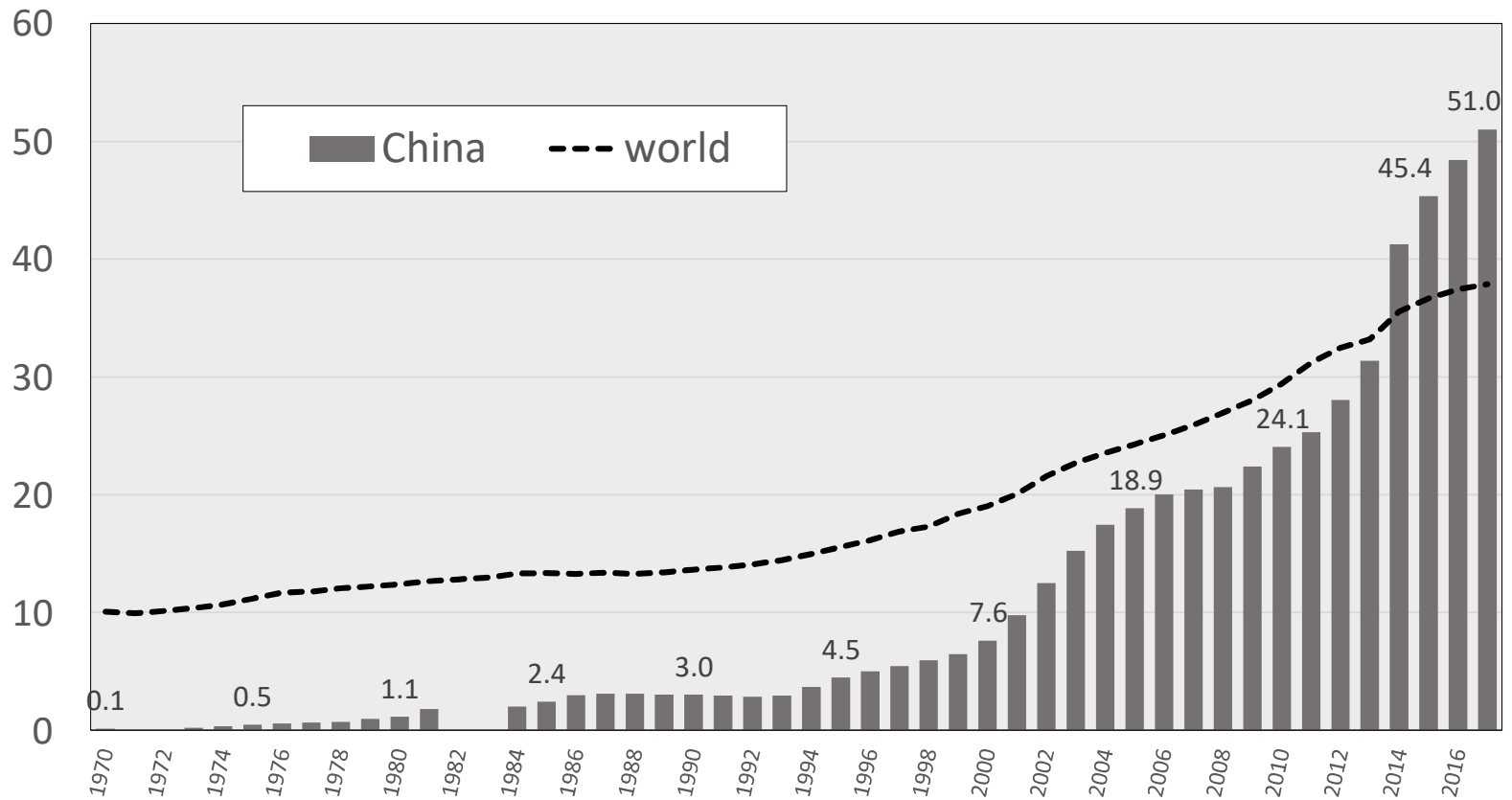




Triple helix of university, industry, government
Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff

Accelerated achievement in China

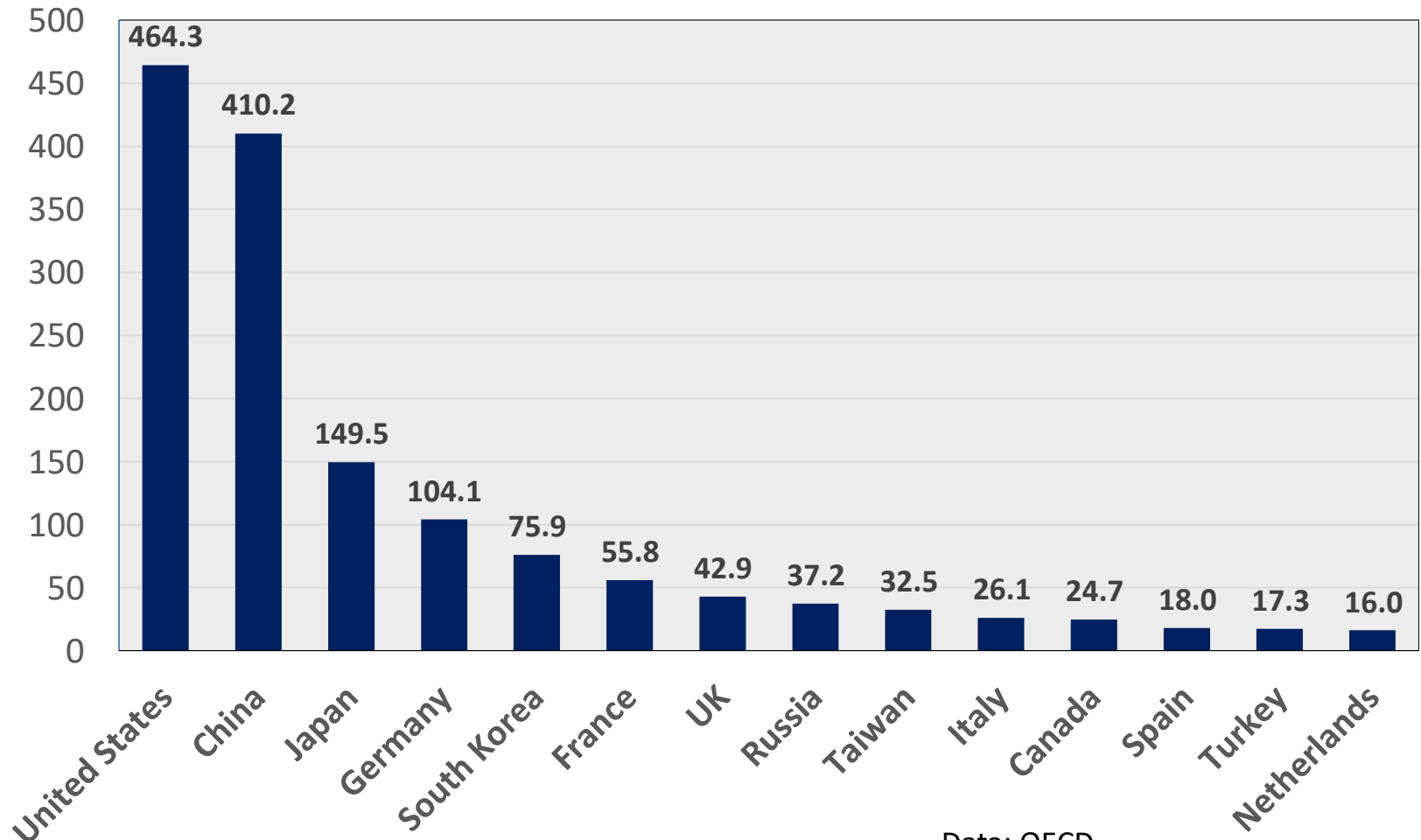
Gross Enrolment Ratio (%): 1970-2017



Data: UNESCO

National investment in R&D, 2016

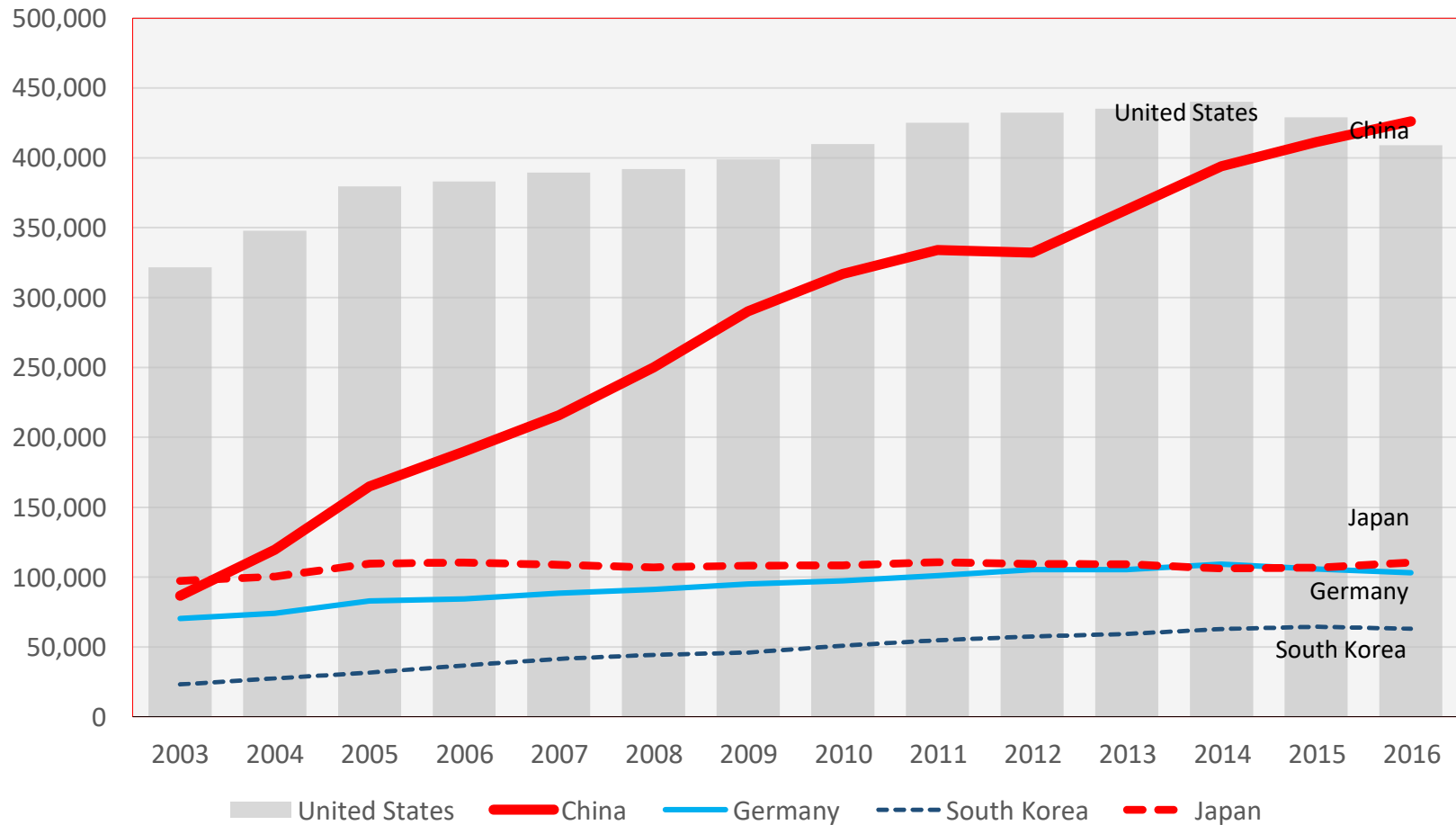
OECD data, \$s billion, constant 2010 USD PPP



Data: OECD

Annual number of published papers

US, China, Germany, Japan, South Korea: 2003-2016



Data: US National Science Board

Top universities in STEM research

(1) physical sciences and engineering, and (2) mathematics and complex computing, Papers in top 5 per cent of their field by citation rate, World: 2014-2017

University	System	Physical sciences & engineering
Tsinghua U	CHINA	776
MIT	USA	691
Stanford U	USA	598
UC, Berkeley	USA	580
Harvard U	USA	552
Zhejiang U	CHINA	509
Nanyang TU	SINGAPORE	503
U Science & T.	CHINA	452
U Cambridge	UK	449
Shanghai JTU	CHINA	398
ETH Zurich	SWITZERLAND	394
Peking U	CHINA	389
Imperial CL	UK	388
NU Singapore	SINGAPORE	384

University	System	Maths & computing
Tsinghua U	CHINA	236
Harbin IT	CHINA	182
Zhejiang U	CHINA	155
Huazhong U S&T	CHINA	153
U Electronic S&T	CHINA	143
Xidian U	CHINA	142
Beihang U	CHINA	141
MIT	USA	138
Nanyang TU	SINGAPORE	137
NU Singapore	SINGAPORE	137
Shanghai JTU	CHINA	130
City U HK	HK SAR	124
South East U	CHINA	123
Stanford U	USA	119

Top universities in Biomedical and Life/Earth

University	System	Top 5% papers in Biomedical and Health Sciences		University	System	Top 5% papers in Life and Earth Sciences
Harvard U	USA	2935		Harvard U	USA	261
Johns Hopkins U	USA	1085		Wageningen U	NETHERLANDS	253
U Toronto	CANADA	1071		U Washington Se.	USA	231
UC San Francisco	USA	967		ETH Zurich	SWITZERLAND	227
Stanford U	USA	915		UC Davis	USA	227
U College London	UK	850		UC Berkeley	USA	223
U Pennsylvania	USA	782		Cornell U	USA	206
U Michigan	USA	766		U Oxford	UK	200
U Washington Se.	USA	719		U Queensland	AUSTRALIA	187
U Oxford	UK	718		Stanford U	USA	187
Columbia U	USA	689		U Wisconsin-Madd.	USA	180
U Texas HSC Hou.	USA	667		U British Columbia	CANADA	170
Yale U	USA	661		MIT	USA	162
UC San Diego	USA	635		Ghent U	BELGIUM	161
UC Los Angeles	USA	602		Zhejiang U	CHINA	160

China's accelerated success in universities

is because of, not despite, the governance system

- It is repeatedly argued in the West that China's successful development in universities and science has occurred despite the political culture - and China must hit a 'glass ceiling' because of lack of Western forms of university autonomy and academic freedom. This is a fundamental misunderstanding
- We cannot understand China's higher education and success without understanding China's political culture in which the governance of higher education is nested. In this state-dominated system, governance is integral to higher education and its outcomes, more in China than in most other countries. This does not make sense in terms of Western political culture but does make sense in terms of China's culture

Are Western traditions wholly sufficient to understand the university in China?

- After a year in China in 1921-22 John Dewey concluded China could only be understood in terms of China's history, social relations, intellectual frameworks. On his return he called on Americans to discard their habitual Euroamerican-centrism!
- The question of perspective is crucial. It is not just a matter of adopting one or another theory or belief system. Perspective determines what we can and can't understand. Euroamerican-centrism confuses perceptions. For example, in the United States it was long expected that China would become more 'Western' after the opening up under Deng Xiaoping ...



'China is China'

- ... but it hasn't quite worked out that way.
- As Martin Jacques has repeatedly argued, 'China is China', and as China becomes stronger it becomes more distinctive
- It is now increasingly recognised in the US that China is not going to become 'like us'. It will not be a liberal democracy. This growing disillusionment has fed the perceptions in the United States, and to an extent in UK, that 'China has changed'. But while it is true China's policy is pushing harder against US containment, for the most part what has changed is the American perceptions of China, not China itself

Comparing East and West traditions in governance and higher education

	East (China)	West (e.g. France and England)
State	Centralising, comprehensive, always the strongest element	Episodically centralising but more contested. Division of powers
Other social elements	Subordinated to the state, which intervened at will	Church, nobles, merchants, towns had independent authority
State strategies	Managed decentralisation, meritocratic caste of officials	Manage the aristocracy, negotiate within division of powers
Knowledge	Partial truths. Practical. From time to time, synthesising	Universalising, specialist. High status theory often separate from practice
Higher education	State sponsored training of officials in academies	Incorporated universities partially independent of church and state

Foundations: strategic assumptions in 1978

- Deng Xiaoping “considered science to be the most crucial of the four modernizations, the one that would drive the other three (industry, agriculture and national defense).” (Vogel, 2011, p. 197)
- Depoliticisation: “Deng said that science had no class character; it could be used by all classes and all countries despite their different political and economic systems” (Vogel, 2011, p. 201). It was enough that scientists were loyal to country and party (p. 202)
- China needed original and basic science: Deng saw internationalization not as a source of borrowed science but a guide to building China’s own capacity.



A centrally controlled depoliticisation

and installation of the dual authority system in science

- “Deng responded to the continuing complaints of scientists that their professional work should be directed by someone familiar with the content. He directed that scientific institutes be reorganized with three top leaders at each institute. The party leader would manage overall policy, but the basic work of the institute would be under the direction of a leader trained in science. A third leader would be in charge of ‘rear services’, responsible for improving the living conditions and for ensuring that the scientists had adequate supplies to carry on their work. Aware that intellectuals were upset that they had to spend so much time engaged in physical labor and political education, Deng established a new rule that at least five-sixths of the scientists’ work week was to be spent on basic research.”

- Vogel, E. (2011). *Deng Xiaoping and the transformation of China*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press (p. 208).



Regulated devolution

- Deng's managed devolution in science, using the dual leadership system, enabled the state to combine regulated academic freedom and open global connections with top-down control. This paralleled the approach in the new economic zones
- Within this tradition the Leninist party-state has achieved an unprecedented capacity for developing universities and science: Investment tailored to performance targets; control systems (New Public Management + state Leninism) that secure the targets; neoliberal competition, incentives, hyper performance



Evolving governance of universities, science

- Since 1980s shift from state leadership/control to state facilitation/supervision. Growing autonomy of university leaders
- Universities remain nested in government policy and strategies. State control has grown along with corporate autonomy
- Also subject to traditional Chinese oscillation, within and outside the state, between liberalisation and tighter control
- Dual authority system secures working relations between party-state and university. Facilitates state-driven outcomes of autonomous university, state political control of university personnel outside university. Some party secretaries are state agents, others are university agents in state, some are both
- Relatively liberal discussion within universities - but academic critics in civil society are always vulnerable to suppression

Chinese and Euro-American universities

	East (China)	West (e.g. USA, UK, Germany)
External governance	Integration of autonomous institutions into state strategies and policies via dual governance	Similar level of institutional autonomy as in China with a lesser level of integration into the state
Internal governance	Increasingly takes corporate forms, strong authority of leaders	Corporate and strong leaders in US/UK, more faculty-based in Europe
Academic freedom	Emphasis on responsibility of and respect for faculty. High anxiety	Emphasis on freedom from interference. High anxiety
Knowledge	Western not traditional Chinese epistemology, high priority STEM	Western disciplines, more focus on non-STEM disciplines than in China
Curriculum, pedagogy	Western curricula, underpinned by Confucian self-cultivation	Western curricula, weaker learning tradition with less student work
Social relations	Focus on relations with industry and provincial cities/authorities	US outreach tradition, shift in most countries to industry/external links
International	High internationalisation: language, benchmarking, research, students	Internationalisation varies: language in Europe not US/UK, students in UK

RED = features distinctive to China

Conclusions

- China is comparatively dynamic in higher education development.
- The modern Chinese university is still pursuing its foundational (late Imperial/Republic) project of a force for modernisation partly external to China. Leading universities are very internationalised.
- The traditional role of faculty, and Confucian self-cultivation in learning, continue. However, orthodox Western disciplines frame knowledge, synergies with Chinese tradition are under-developed.
- International benchmarking, corporate universities may weaken potential for synergy with scholarly tradition. Faculty are the key.
- China has a very distinctive University in one area, *governance* of higher education. Focused state, combined with autonomous disciplinary science in corporate universities, regulated by dual university/state authority, delivers very strong outcomes. This model may appeal to emerging countries but is hard to import.