China's Belt and Road Initiative: Reordering the Region and Regionalising Higher Education

Bowen Xu

Downing College, University of Cambridge

January 2022

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Declaration

- This thesis is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.
- It is not substantially the same as any work that has already been submitted before for any degree or other qualification except as declared in the preface and specified in the text.
- It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the Degree Committee.

China's Belt and Road Initiative: Reordering the Region and Regionalising Higher Education

Bowen Xu

Abstract

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) unveiled by the Chinese Government in 2013 is an important geo-political, and geo-economic strategy aimed at reconnecting the ancient Silk Road for enhancing Eurasian development and prosperity. Economically, the BRI is a new development strategy for China aimed at resolving internal accumulation challenges. Geopolitically, the BRI reconnects China to Eurasia by mobilising the old Silk Road metaphor to drive a land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and extend southward to Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Africa through a new 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. Politically, the BRI emerges out of China's global resurgence as part of a grand national development and policy strategy, thus repositioning China on the global stage.

Revitalising the Silk Road has the potential to reshape much of the region's commerce, politics and culture. While extensive analysis concentrates on the political and economic aspects of the initiative, to date there is little knowledge on how higher education (HE) as a policy area, and a cultural infrastructure, has been incorporated into the BRI design. This in turn raises the question of how HE is bringing about a transformation in the wider Belt and Road region. This thesis explores two internally related dynamics.

Taking higher education as a strategically selective policy mechanism for constructing the 21st century Silk Road, this study explores the relationship between higher education policy, its institutional development, and the BRI as a region-building project. It conceptualises the unfolding of the Chinese-led BRI as an emergent regionalising initiative and discusses its implications for realising a nascent regional higher education space. Theoretically, the study draws upon a cultural political economy approach to transnational region building to focus attention on: (i) the ways in which new structuring projects are advanced and meanings negotiated, through (ii) its endogenous and exogenous dynamics. Methodologically, this study draws on multiple methods: the analysis of policies driving the BRI beginning in 2013; semi-structured interviews with key commentators on the BRI; media coverage; and a growing secondary literature tracking the development of the BRI.

Findings reveal the BRI has not only incorporated higher education in its blueprint, but also facilitates higher education regional cooperation and development as part of China's quest for building Belt and Road Educational Community. Specifically, I argue that this initiative can also be understood as a nascent regional higher education space in East Asia/Eurasia that is currently under construction. As the BRI and higher education developments in this transnationalising space are relatively new, experimental, and not institutionally embedded, it is difficult to predict its final form. Nevertheless, the BRI is helping reposition Chinese universities as regional and global actors.

Keywords: China; Belt and Road Initiative; Region-Building; Higher Education; Cultural Political Economy; Education Policy.

Acknowledgements

Throughout my PhD journey, there has been ups and downs as I struggled to navigate my path. I could not have completed this thesis without the help and support of my family. I am beyond blessed and grateful to my parents and my grandmother for their unconditional love and support. Words are inadequate to express my gratitude for everything that my family have given to me, the sacrifices they made, the confidence they had in me, and their tolerance and patience. Thank you for being my greatest supporters.

I am very grateful to my supervisor Professor Susan L. Robertson for her unwavering support and guidance throughout my studies. I have known Susan since I was a postgraduate student studying at the University of Bristol. I had such a privilege to have worked with her and Prof. Roger Dale at Bristol. Susan has been the key in granting me the opportunity of a lifetime, to study with her at one of the very best universities in the world. For that, I am eternally grateful. Susan has also been a great source of inspiration and support over my PhD studies at Cambridge where she stimulated my interests in world politics, region studies and higher education and gave me the freedom to pursue knowledge in my own way. Her academic influence on me goes far beyond this PhD.

A heartfelt thanks also to my alma mater the University of Bristol, and some great minds I met over there. Although my stay in Bristol was very brief as a result of completing a one-year Master course, Bristol academics have nevertheless influenced me significantly. I thank Professor Michael Crossley, and many other Bristol colleagues for a transformative year learning experience and the time spent there in developing my passion for research.

I would like to express my gratitude to many teachers and colleagues who have supported me alongside my academic journey. Dr. Ashley Yoon Mooi Ng, who have

generously shared her wisdom, knowledge, and life philosophy with me over years. Ashley is a role model and life-long academic friend. Sincere thanks to Dr. Eva Hartmann, Prof. Anna Vignoles and Prof. Jo-Anne Dillabough for giving me various kinds of support over my studies in Cambridge; and Prof. Marijk van der Wende, who has kindly involved me in her Academic Silk Road Project based in the Netherlands that enriched my knowledge and learning through two Summer Schools and an international conference.

Last, I am lucky enough to have met many good friends who have been so kind and helpful along the way. I thank Jian Wu, Dora Zhao, Hannah Moscovitz, Emma Sabzalieva, Ana Mocanu, Ran Qi, Dini Jiang, Elyse Ding, and Lili Yang and many others for your much-valued friendship. I also like to recognise my fieldwork participants and correspondents who have shared their time, thoughts and insights with me as I conducted my research.

List of Abbreviations

APEC: Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
APT: ASEAN Plus Three
ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM: Asia-Europe Meeting
AUA: Asian Universities Alliance
BERA: British Educational Research Association
BREC: Belt and Road educational community
BRI: Belt and Road Initiative
CCPEE: Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education
CDA: Critical Discourse Analysis
CPE: Cultural Political Economy
CR: Critical Realism
CRBC: China Road and Bridge Corporation
EAEC: East Asian Economic Caucus
EHEA: European Higher Education Area
EU: European Union
FOCAC: The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation
FTAs: Free Trade Agreements
IMF: International Monetary Fund
MOE: Ministry of Education
NRT: New Regionalism Theory
OBOR: One Belt One Road
PUUIAS: The Institute of Area Studies, Peking University
RECP: Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership
TNHE: Transnational Higher Education
TPP: TRANS-Pacific Partnership
UASR: University Alliance of the Silk Road

Table of Contents

List of Tables, Figures and Appendices

Tables

Figure

Appendices

A Note on Publication

The thesis contains two single-authored papers I have published. To avoid 'self-plagiarism' I state here these papers which are an integral part of the thesis.

Xu, B. (2021). Understanding Education on China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Cultural Political Economy Approach. *Beijing International Review of Education, 3*(1), 56-71. https://brill.com/view/journals/bire/3/1/article-p56_56.xml

Xu, B. (2022). Constructing China's Belt and Road Educational Community: Policies, Processes and Prospects. *Globalisation, Societies and Education.* Special Issue: "The New Geopolitics of International Higher Education" (Accept, February 2, 2022)

Chapter 1: Introduction

> The Silk Roads were no exotic series of connections, but networks that linked continents and oceans together. They were - and still are - the world's central nervous system. This is where empires were won - and where they were lost. As a new era emerges, the patterns of exchange are mirroring those that have crisis-crossed Asia for millennia. The Silk Road are rising again.
>
> - *Peter Frankopan, The Silk Roads* (2016).

1.1 Background

For over 2000 years, the lifeline of the trade from east to west was the historical route known as the Silk Road. The Silk Road refers to a network of ancient trade routes linking the capitals of Rome Empire and Imperial China, from the 2nd century BCE to the 18th century CE. It is a road that carried not only merchandise and commodities, but also culture, philosophy, religion, and ideas, flowing across the vast landmass in Eurasia, Mediterranean and Middle East. Thus, it has been instrumental to the economic, cultural, political, and religious interactions between these regions (Frankopan, 2015). As a concept, the Silk Road was coined by the German geographer and archaeologist Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877 - to mainly refer to an overland route between Asia and Europe that went through deserts, including the Gobi (Waugh, 2007). In the early 20th century, the French sociologist, Edouard Chavannes (1903), extended the meaning of the Silk Road to also include historically existing maritime trade routes that reached deep into the Indonesian archipelago, followed along the coast of India, and stretched into the lands of Persia, Arabia and the Mediterranean. In fact, the Silk Road was never a single road, but a series of paths and tracks along which people and goods travelled (UNESCO, 2021). The ancient Silk Road is a history we must understand while exploring its contemporary version – what is now known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

In 2014, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan jointly employed the shared historical and cultural heritage to gain recognition of the 5000 km Silk Road corridor (Chang'an to Tianshan Mountains) from United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site, officially referred to as "Silk Roads: The Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor". This UNESCO recognised Silk Road network is home to 33 important historical and cultural sites, including ancient capital cities, palace complexes and Buddhist cave temples, mountain passes and fortifications, sections of the Great Wall, and religious buildings (UNESCO, 2014). And as President of China, Xi Jinping stated in 2013 at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan:

> As I stand here and look back to that episode of history, I could almost hear the camel bells echoing in the mountains and see the wisp of smoke rising from the desert.

The rebirth of the Silk Road followed the President Xi Jinping's speech to Central Asian leaders. President Xi noted that for 2000 years, the Silk Road "had proved that countries with differences in race, belief and cultural background can absolutely share peace and development as long as they persist in unity and mutual trust, equality and mutual benefit, mutual tolerance and learning from each other, as well as cooperation and win-win outcomes" (Xi, 2013). In his speech Xi indicated that China would like to work together with people from Central Asia to strengthen development and prosperity in the region, and this would be accompanied by the rapid development of China's relations with Asian and European countries in the next 20 years, which will give the ancient Silk Road a "new vitality". One month later, during his state visit in Indonesia and his attendance of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Bali, President Xi addressed the historical relations and friendship between China and Southeast Asia (Xi, 2013). He referenced Admiral Zheng He, his naval expeditions made in the 15th century on the Maritime Silk Road, and how that had linked China, Indonesia, and Southeast region together. This has been further extended to the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a whole, with a call for partnerships and friendship to build a community of shared destiny, shared

prosperity and security between China, ASEAN and East Asia community. These two speeches jointly signalled the inauguration of the One Belt One Road, a grand policy initiative of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

As the contemporary version of the Silk Road, the One Belt One Road (OBOR for short) is viewed as China's global infrastructure development strategy aimed at revitalising Eurasian economic development and promoting inter-regional connectivity. It has thus been placed at the heart of China's global and domestic policy agenda. OBOR was later renamed the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) to refer to jointly building the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt and the oceangoing 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. These land routes link China with Europe via Central and Western Asia, whilst the maritime Silk Road connects China with Southeast Asian countries, parts of East and North Africa and the Mediterranean Sea in Europe. The initiative covers more than an initial sixty-five, and growing, number of countries whose total population amounts to more than 4 billion, and whose market accounts for approximately one-third of the global Gross Domestic Production (GDP). It can be argued that the implications of the BRI is both huge and multifaceted. Indeed, the BRI is the largest overseas investment drive ever launched by a single country.

The BRI, despite being a relatively new and novel development strategy, has attracted wider scholarly attention since its release. This is in part because the BRI coincides with China's rise as a competitive economy. As such it is viewed as one of the most important geopolitical events characterising the 21st century with the potential to reshape the global political economy and rewrite the international trade rules in the upcoming era. Scholarly interest in the topic have therefore been growing in recent years. Much attention has been devoted to examining the motivations and effects of the BRI, its component projects as well as project implementations, with scholars approaching these questions from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds, including from economics (Huang, 2016; Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016; Beeson, 2018), the political sciences (in particular, its subdiscipline international relations) (Ye, 2015;

Casarini, 2016; Ferdinand; 2016 Wang, 2016; Zhang, 2017), geography (both economic and political) (Blanchard & Flint, 2017; Summers, 2016), development studies (Liu & Dunford, 2016; Ploberger, 2017), area studies (Gong, 2019; Kaczmarski, 2017; Reeves, 2018) and cultural studies (Dellios, 2017; Winter, 2021). So, what part does higher education play in this?

1.2 The BRI and Higher Education

Higher education scholars have recognised not only the growing importance of the BRI, but also its implications for global higher education both within and beyond China. Within China, selected universities have been encouraged to engage with the BRI and transnationalise some of their activities, whilst universities located in other territorial spaces across the BRI region have been invited to engage with China's grand initiative through various kinds of educational endeavours. Given this, it is fair to say that the "BRI-education nexus" has also become an urgent topic of study in the social sciences. Although some recent work has emerged focused on education on the BRI, studies remain limited (see van der Wende et al, 2020; Peters, 2019; Kirby & van der Wende, 2019). The existing body of research provides a preliminary account of the BRI-HE nexus, it has not yet provided theoretically robust analytical tools for examining and understanding the emergent patterns of international higher education development across the BRI region as a socio-spatial political project. Whilst some of the existing research provides important insights into China's rise in global science and specifically the emerging opportunities and tensions this has caused for China-EU relations from a more international perspective, the relationship between BRI development and education planning has not been well articulated from an endogenous or national point of view. The insights of how the Chinese state views this BRI-education nexus from a policy-making viewpoint is lacking. Accordingly, researchers have yet to offer a detailed analysis of the role higher education is both imagined to play or is playing in shaping the BRI development. It is therefore important to ask questions regarding the implications of the BRI for regional higher education cooperation, on the one hand, and

for integration into the overlapping East Asian and Eurasian regional contexts, on the other.

At the same time, with the BRI moving forward, there is a need to consider the BRI and its potential effects in "breaking" up old regional blocs or in "making" and "ordering" new regional alliances and identities. This raises the question of whether and how the development of the BRI might result in new associations or rearrangements of territorial space in line with China's vision and interest for a revitalised East Asian/Eurasian future (Mitchell, 2021). China's growing prominence in global and regional politics and economy necessitates a renewed understanding of the reconfiguration of regions and processes of East Asian regionalisation. In addition to the ongoing debates on the formation, rationales, and processes of East Asian regionalism (Ravenhill 2009; 2010; Stubbs, 2002; Dent, 2008), the emergence of the BRI raises the question as to whether it can be conceptualised as a new kind of regionalising project. So far there is a lack of research on this front. Less clear too is the BRI's potential impact on shaping a Sino-centric Asian regional order. The BRI-education-region nexus therefore remains a timely topic of urgent concern within the fields of both higher education and regional studies.

1.3 Research Questions, Rationales, Significance and Contributions

In light of the paucity of studies on the BRI as a regionalising project and how HE is implicated in the production of this initiative, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How can we describe and understand China's Belt and Road Initiative?
2. How, in what ways, and with what consequences, is higher education being incorporated into the Belt and Road Initiative?
3. How is China's education policy and strategy within the context of the Belt and Road playing out in regional, national and institutional settings? And what impact it is likely to have?

To answer the above research questions, this study focuses on two important yet under-explored dimensions of the BRI, its regionalising features, and its connection to education. It does so by: (1) employing region-related theories in the theorisation of an emerging BRI, Sino-centric regionalism; (2) analysing BRI-related education policy via a cultural political economy theoretical lens, showing policy formation and its wider interaction with social change; and (3) examining the policies, processes and prospects of the nascent Chinese-led Belt and Road educational community using extensive fieldwork data.

In doing so, this study seeks to make an original contribution in the following ways. First, it hopes to facilitate an understanding of the BRI as a region-building project from a political and economic perspective, relating it to the ongoing East Asian regionalisation process. Second, by mapping the emergent terrain of the BRI education landscape, it hopes to elucidate the relationship between the state, higher education and the BRI from a policy perspective, highlighting the specific features of the cultural political economy that substantiate these developments. And third, it aims to contribute to the scholarly literature on higher education regionalism by illustrating how China's project of building the Belt and Road educational community is being slowly transformed into an East Asian/Eurasian-centric higher education region-building project.

In addition, this research brings additional value to studies of higher education and China's BRI development strategy. It will be one of a small number of emerging pieces of work focusing on education and the BRI. It draws from a handful of policy documents on the BRI and China's educational development initiatives in President Xi' era. This is supplemented by interviews of selected policymakers and stakeholders responsible for the BRI education planning and development. Its purpose is to illuminate how and in what ways institutions, scholars, and students are pursuing different strategies and approaches variously framed as international education, transnational education, intercultural educational partnerships and mobility schemes in

the BRI context. Through these findings, this study aims to enhance institutional understanding of higher education internationalisation and transnational higher education at meso- and micro- levels in addition to the macro level policy analysis. The practical implications of this research might assist policy makers, education ministers and university managers to find new and innovative ways to promote educational collaboration and exchanges in the New Silk Road space.

Third, this research is contextualised in relation to the rapidly changing world politics and international relations, as well as China's rise and re-emergence as a world power. Against the backdrop of profound global geopolitical and economic reconfiguration, it is urgent and timely to devote our attention to the constructive role higher education might play in constructing China's BRI project. Given the increasingly fragile and unstable international environments, maximining the value of education research is of paramount importance to promoting regional peace, stabilising cross-border cooperation, and boosting mutual trust and understandings among members within the international communities.

1.4 Organisation of the Thesis

The structure of the rest of the thesis is as follows. Having briefly outlined the contextual background and research questions, Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive review of the literature on the BRI, examining its origins, formation, and statutes. It sketches out the important geo-economic and geopolitical factors that have shaped the BRI development and elaborates on the existing perspectives and understandings of the BRI from multiple angles. In so doing, it lays the foundation upon which this study is further built.

Chapter 3 introduces the conceptual and theoretical frameworks drawn from the literatures on regionalism, globalisation, and higher education internationalisation. I draw upon theories from both higher education and international relations traditions,

with an attempt to explain how these concepts are both interrelated and valuable for analysing higher education regionalism research. In particular, the chapter overviews New Regionalism Theory and highlights the concept of 'regionness' and its relevance to the process of developing regional entities and higher education region-building in the multi-polar world order/knowledge economies.

Chapter 4 discusses the philosophical framings and methodological approaches adopted in this research. It reviews the ontological positioning of Critical Realism as a meta-theory and combines with Cultural Political Economy to form the key theoretical and analytical constructs for this study. This will be followed by an explanation and justification of specific research methods, the selection of documentary sources, and the collection of empirical data. The methods of data analysis are critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis. This chapter also include reflections on the researcher's positionality and concludes with discussion on trustworthiness and ethics.

Chapter 5 focuses on the shifting world politics and the role of a reviving East Asia within this change. It explores the developmental trajectory of East Asian regionalism by surveying the existing scholarship, demonstrating that the pathway for an Asian regional community has largely been an economically-driven project based on increasing intraregional trade and commerce. Yet politically, East Asian regionalism has been a rather bumpy road due to the conflicts between internal and external power rivalries. Acknowledging this, the second half of this chapter theorises the BRI as an emergent, or nascent, form of East Asian region-building, highlighting its endogenous and exogenous dimensions, and its functionality in producing a Sino-centric regional order.

Chapter 6 and 7 investigates the role of higher education in the BRI regionalising processes. Specially, it applies the critical cultural political economy framework to analyse BRI-related education policies, offering perspectives as to how we might understand education and policymaking beyond an educationalist point, on the one hand, and in relation to the wider changing global and regional realities, on the other.

To this end, this chapter reviews critical educational policy studies, and contextualises what critical policy studies might look like in a non-western context before presenting the relevant educational policy directives during this period.

Chapter 8 examines China's aspiration for building a Belt and Road educational community. Taking higher education as a strategically selective policy mechanism for reconstructing the 21st Silk Road, this chapter reviews the range of strategies adopted by the Chinese government and related institutions to construct a BRI knowledge space. It does so by providing a review of the various policy outcomes and examines the prospects and challenges this new knowledge space will face. This chapter aims to contribute to the literature on higher education regionalisms.

Chapter 9 concludes this thesis. I summarise the findings, highlight their significance and contribution, as well as draw implications and recommendations for the directions of future research.

Chapter 2: A Review of the Literature on China's Belt and Road Initiative

2.1 Introduction

In recent years, China's unprecedented visibility and high-profile involvement in a number of initiatives in the international arena has generated debates globally, and a proliferation of different forms of analysis. The One Belt One Road is certainly marked as one such grand initiative that has attracted a global audience and international debate. Understanding China's One Belt One Road will provide a necessary context to further exploring the Initiative's connection to education. There is therefore a need to delineate the broader global dynamics so as to understand how these processes are giving rise to the re-emergence and remaking of the Silk Road, and more importantly, how higher is becoming increasingly involved in the New Silk Road project. Charting the dynamics of higher education development against the backdrop of China's resurgence as a major world power requires an interdisciplinary reading that incorporates education studies, public policy, international relations, international political economy, and political science. Thus, this literature review extends beyond the disciplines of educational science. As such, the aim of this chapter is to introduce and review the literature of the topic of this research, focusing on the wider international scholarship on the One Belt One Road. To this end, the chapter is divided into three sections. It starts with a brief introduction of the One Belt One Road initiative, and develops understandings of it from geopolitical, geoeconomic, and cultural perspectives, illuminating the contextual background in which this thesis is to be situated.

2.2 Historicising the evolution of Chinese higher education

The intersections of higher education, the BRI, and national/regional development remains the focus of this study. Yet it is important so as to facilitate the understanding

of this intersection to review the history and development of higher education in contemporary China, including its evolutionary trajectory and more recent reforms. In this section I will sketch out a broader framing to enable us to develop a greater understanding how higher education has been restructured in China over time in relation to the wider changing national political, socio-economic, and cultural contexts over time.

When the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the Communist Party of China had built a special relationship with the Soviet Communist party, based on mutual support and respect. This tie with Soviet Union can be traced back to the 1930s; the result was that the emergent socialist China was closely aligned with Soviet's specific geo-political situation. During the Cold War, the divide between the socialist and capitalist camps was intensified and that relationship eventually became deadlocked, China as part of the socialist regime was isolated by the West as a result. "Leaning to one side" means that China was heavily relied upon by the Soviets for international aid and development assistance. Soviet patterns of higher education were then taken as an exemplary model and transplanted in China. Bernstein (2010) notes the Soviet experiences and practices were intensively emulated by China in a wide variety of fields, including a centralised economic planning model that places much emphasis on industrialisation. Before 1949, the Chinese higher education system had been influenced by the American model, with its commitment to public and private systems, on the one hand, and by both German and French models in different periods, on the other (Hayhoe, 1996). This nation-wide learning from the Soviet Union led to a process of Sovietisation, including the higher education sector.

Zheng and Kapoor (2021) note that higher education development can be understood as part of an ongoing process of state formation in relation to national and global developments, and can be particularly related to Marxist-Leninist socialist nationalism, patriotism and proletarian internationalism during the period 1949-1976. Thus, higher

education was regarded as a key institution to support nation-building in turn functioning as an ideological state apparatus. A key dimension of the newly established higher education system was to educate scientists and technologists for the construction of a new socialist China (Law, 1995). Scholars also used the concept "soft power" to examine international higher education development and collaboration by reflecting on various international educational scenarios (Lomer, 2017; Yang, 2010; Wu, 2018). Given the special political, historical, and socio-cultural connections, it is argued that the early Chinese higher education system was shaped by China's domestic needs and its relationship with the outside world, and as a result of its special relationship with the socialist camp and Soviets.

During the "Great Leap Forward" (1958-1960), the Chinese government launched a series of social and economic campaigns to promote mass education. As a result, a large number of higher education institutions were founded during this period leading to a significant increase in student enrolment (Hayhoe, 1995). Although this generated an increase in the quantity of higher education institutions, some problems were observed, such as a declining quality in teaching staff, and the lack of academic ability of students. This was followed by the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) which destroyed much of China's effort aimed at re-organising its educational system in the 1960s. Universities were closed, and teaching and learning were suspended; the result was that higher learning and university enrolment was almost non-existent during that time. The Cultural Revolution is believed to have had a detrimental impact on Chinese higher education development, affecting both the graduate and labour market relationships for decades.

From 1978 when China announced its economic reforms and opening-up policies, higher education developments began to enter a new phase. In 1976, soon after the Cultural Revolution, higher education was brought back on to the national development agenda as an engine for revitalising the economy and in promoting national

modernisation. The leader of China at that time, Deng Xiaoping, began to adopt a more pragmatic approach towards state development by embracing market reforms and its associated neoliberal free-market principles instead of focusing on political conflicts (Deng, 1980). However, gradual neo-liberalization then contributed to processes such as privatisation, commercialisation, and decentralisation of the Chinese higher education system. In short, the relationship between higher education and the state was recalibrated as private providers entered the system, and the state loosened its regulation on the higher education sector (Mok, 1999).

Tertiary education was free in China from 1950s to early 1990s. The government even subsidised students who qualified and assigned jobs for them upon graduation (Zha, 2009). However, from the early 1990s onwards, a selected number of universities were allowed to introduce a moderate fee scheme. China's free fee policy was terminated in 1997 when all tertiary institutions began to charge tuition and accommodation fees, and the fee level has been increasing ever since (Liu, 2012). During this period, higher education experienced a de facto 'great leap forward'; the result was that student participation, enrolment rates and the numbers of higher learning institutions all dramatically increasing. From the late 1990s to 2019, the gross enrolment rate grew from about 10 per cent to over 50 per cent, in turn transforming an elite system to a massified one within two decades. While the rapid expansion has brought many benefits to both the state and individuals, it has also caused a series problems related to employment and equity, and new frictions in the economy-labour market relationships; this has raised emerging questions for governance (Xu, 2021).

Meanwhile, the Chinese government launched the "211" and "985" projects in 1995 and 1998, respectively. These projects were initiated to facilitate domestic higher education development; the former scheme aimed at building 100 national key universities by the 21st century whilst the later was designed to elevate some elite institutions to achieve world-class status in the 21st century. "985" and "211" are the

key milestones in China's quest for building world class universities. They have significantly improved teaching, learning, research, and infrastructures in Chinese HE. In 2002, the Centre for World-Class University was established at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, the first of its kind in China dedicated to the study of university rankings. Publishing the Academic Ranking of World Universities, Shanghai Jiao Tong University has provided internationally comparable indicators to quantitatively compare and analyse China's position and pathway towards excellence. Over time, the Shanghai Ranking has gradually become one of the most influential global academic league tables for higher education institutions around the world, and has also significantly shaped the policy directions of higher education development in China. In 2015, the Chinese government revisited these policies and unveiled an updated and comprehensive plan, known as Double First-Class University Plan (World First-Class University and First-Class Academic Discipline Construction Plan). Under this initiative, a total of 42 universities and 465 disciplines were included, and with the support of the state, to aspire for world class status (Peters & Besley, 2018).

In is within this context that higher education has been positioned on the BRI agenda. Although this is a relatively new development, scholars are beginning to analyse its implications. Ma and Zhao (2018) studied the BRI, talent cultivation and the potential impact of the BRI on international student mobility to China and in the BRI countries, particularly in China's neighbouring countries. They found that the BRI countries, including Thailand, India, Russia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, and Vietnam, have become some of top sources for China's international students and this trend is likely to continue in the future. Cheng and Koh (2022) focus on transnational education acting as a component for the BRI, with a specific geographic focus in Southeast Asia, and how students manage to negotiate and perform their roles as cultural ambassadors within this emerging BRI space. Kirby and van der Wende (2019) explore the rise of China and the BRI and their implications for higher education development, research collaboration for China and the West.

2.3 One Belt One Road

One Belt One Road (OBOR) (一带一路) refers to the land-based Silk Road Economic Belt （丝绸之路经济带）and the oceangoing 21st century Maritime Silk Road (21 世纪海上丝绸之路) ; it was later renamed the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI). The BRI is also interpreted as the New Silk Road (NSR) and as argued earlier, it is a rejuvenation of the historical concept of the Silk Road that flourished as a result of trade and cultural exchanges between the East and the West for centuries. This modern-day Silk Road aims to promote economic connections and new modes of cooperation across three continents; that of Asia, Europe and Africa. The Belt is viewed as a trans Eurasia corridor that links China with Mongolia, Russia, Central Asia, Iran, Turkey, the Balkans, Central and Eastern Europe, and ultimately Germany and the Netherlands. The Road traces the historical maritime trading route from the southeast costal China to Southeast Asia through the South China sea; it also crosses the Indian Ocean linking East Africa to the Mediterranean via important geostrategic points, such as the Malacca Strait and the Suez Canal (See Figure 1).

These two initiatives, together, comprise a series of overlapping projects, including an upgraded transcontinental railway, highways, port facilities, energy pipelines, the construction of bridges, industrial zones, the development of real estate, power grids, and iron and steel. The BRI covers over 65 countries whose total population amounts to 4 billion, and whose markets currently account for approximately one-third of global GDP (Lim, 2016; Ferdinard, 2016; Huang, 2016). The objectives of the BRI are to promote regional connectivity, infrastructure building, economic cooperation among countries that reside along the route, and strengthen cultural exchanges and mutual learning between civilisations of Asia, Europe and Africa. It is both a foreign policy and development strategy that underlines China's push for taking a bigger role in international affairs and global governance and serving as a channel to export China's technologies and production capacity in industries such as infrastructure (highways and high-speed trains), building materials (steel and cement) and logistics (ports and

airports). It has become a central focus of China's economic development and foreign policy in recent years.

In its early years, the BRI did not attract a great deal of attention from both either the international community or the Chinese media. Xi's proposal was only taken as a gentle reminder to strengthen bilateral commercial ties with Kazakhstan along the historical Silk Road route. In essence it was seen as a typical speech made on a diplomatic occasion. However, the last few years have witnessed the dramatic development of the BRI, not only rhetorically as a feature in many meetings and conferences, but also a wide range of BRI-related projects advanced across the world. From 2013-2014, the initiative has been driven by a top-level consensus within the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. It was not only incorporated into policy documents, such as the comprehensive reform blueprint by the Party leadership as a key policy priority, but also has been actively promoted by China in various regional gatherings, including the Boao Forum for Asia (博鳌亚洲论坛), and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) (上海合作组织) annual meetings, as China's contribution and selling points to the regional development.

On 28th March 2015, during the Boao Forum for Asia, with the authorisation of the State Council, three Chinese Government Departments (National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce) jointly released the official guidelines of the 'Belt and Road' initiative named "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road and Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" 《推动共建丝绸之路经济带和 21 世纪海上丝绸之路的愿景与行动》 ('Vision and Action' hereafter, 2015). Within this policy document, China set out a vision in which infrastructure constructions, reduced tariffs, and simplified customs administration would facilitate trade to flow seamlessly across the Belt and Road region via both rail and cargo ship, with China being the hub. Since then, the BRI has become the popular buzz-word and attracted global attention. It was made the centrepiece of

China' foreign policy and international economic strategy under Xi' leadership (Du, 2016). After a brief introduction, one might ask why does China formulate this initiative? Under what conditions was it created? What are Chinese policy maker's intentions? What impact might it have on the regional or even global political economic order? And most importantly, how does it relate to the education? The following sections attempt to address some of these questions through a comprehensive literature review that will guide this research project.

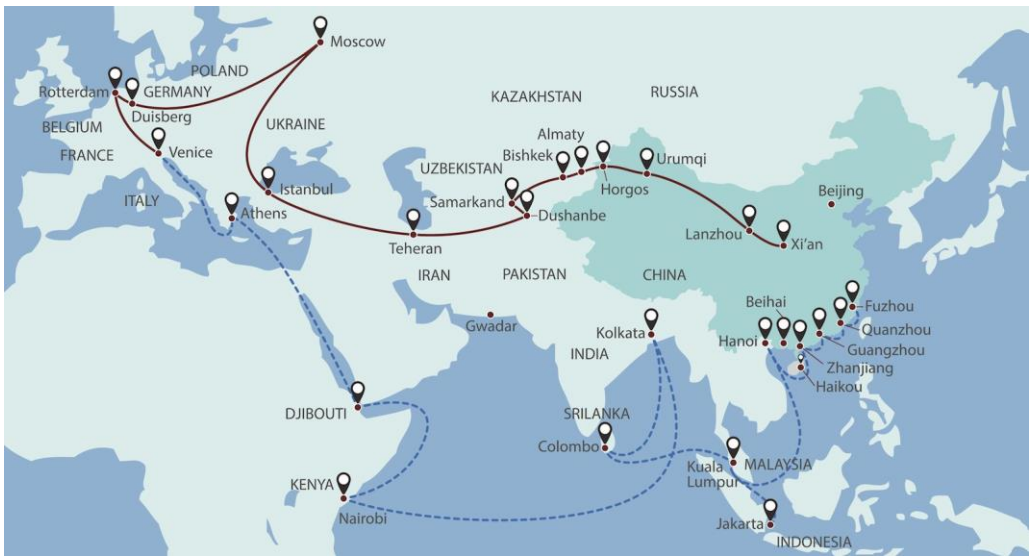

Figure 2.1: One Belt One Road Map

2.4 Understanding the BRI - Geopolitics and Geoeconomics

Current understandings of the BRI are mainly generated from both geopolitical and geoeconomic perspectives. Before examining specific claims, a short account of definitions will help to illuminate the differences. Geopolitics and geoeconomics are two closely interrelated concepts with different meanings. Yu (2017) suggests that geopolitics is an older expression used to describe the links between geography, state territories and world power politics in both academic and popular usages. Geoeconomics is a relatively new concept and refers to the link between economic development and geography, and its role in capitalist development via networks, connections and transborder ties instead of blocs, walls, and national territories.

Essentially, geopolitics concerns politics, military, human resources, and other hard power elements, and their influence on state policy making, particularly foreign policy. In contrast, the field of geoeconomics studies the economic space of production and its relations, such as transportation connectivity, network, trade, commerce, investment, financial and economic activities in relation to the national pursuit of economic performance and competitiveness. Nonetheless, geopolitics and geoeconomics are two sides of the same coin with "…the political dimension of geoeconomics being strongly intertwined with the competitive economic dimension of geopolitics" (Yu, 2017, p.354). Geoeconomics and geopolitics are constantly working at the same time, with one having an impact on the other.

2.5 Geopolitics

The geopolitical understanding of the BRI derives from several factors including the US's Pivot to Asia and in the early years following 2013 the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), China's new foreign policy direction and its aspiration for global ascendancy under President Xi, as well as national security considerations.

2.5.1 The US "Pivot to Asia" & TPP

Political scientists have addressed the importance of the geopolitical and foreign policy aspects of China's new Silk Road, raising questions such as whether and to what extent the BRI serves to expand China's political influence in Eurasia whilst countering the US "pivot to Asia" strategy since the Obama Administration (Casarini, 2016)? Since 2009, then President of the United States, Barack Obama, carried out a new rebalancing strategy in Asia Pacific, indicating the repositioning of the US's strategic centre of gravity to the Asia Pacific. Analysts believe it intended to target China and its rise in a strategic way, although the US initially denied this. With the introduction of the rebalancing strategy, 60 percent of the US naval forces were shifted to the Asia Pacific.

From 2010 onwards, a series of regional conflicts began to touch China's vital interests: these included the US's intention to sell arms to Taiwan; China and Japan's dispute over Diaoyu/Senkaku Island; the deterioration of China-South Korea diplomatic relations over Terminal High Altitude Area Defence (THAAD) installation, as well as the South China Sea dispute between China, Vietnam and the Philippines. These initiatives led Chinese leaders to believe that the US was reasserting its influence in the Asia Pacific region in the face of the emergence of the Asian version of NATO. Considering such geopolitical competition, Chinese leaders argued their national security was under threat. This reading led China to invest a large amount of resources in its periphery aimed at strengthening its relationships with neighbouring countries alongside its Western borders to counterbalance the hostility (Wang, 2016). Chinese political analysts proposed the idea of a westward march to expand its strategic manoeuvring space. It is believed that by establishing close relations with neighbours, China would be better placed to deal with the pressure of the US and its Asian allies, such as Japan.

During this period (2013 onwards), negotiations around the US-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) were speeding up as an economic rebalancing strategy to contain the rise of China. The TTP sought to reshape the economic rules in the region, with the potential to surpass the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) influence, given its size and scale (Ye, 2015). It promised to be a high labour standard and inclusive trade regime, yet China was not included. In 2012 Presidential Debate, the then US President, Barack Obama, claimed that the TTP negotiations should "deliberately" exclude China whilst including other economies in the region. The US saw the TPP as a mechanism to pressure China so that it would be "compelled" to follow the rules being promoted in the TPP, thus establishing a US-dominated order. Considering China joined the WTO and its long-list of WTO-plus concessions, the view at the time was that the TTP was set to create a replay of similar scenario. In 2015, President Obama stated:

> But as we speak, China wants to write the rules for the world's fastest-growing region. That would put our workers and our businesses at a disadvantage. Why would we let that happen? We should write those rules (Obama, 2015).

During a Wall Street Journal interview, he again stated: "If we don't write the rules, China will write the rules out in that region. We will be shut out" (the Wall Street Journal, 2015). Obama's strategic using of a 'China-fear' factor to win domestic votes turned out to be successful. Yet such rhetoric, as well as the TPP itself, are viewed as an unfriendly gesture and a challenge to Beijing, with the aim of isolating China in relation to regional economic integration in the Pacific. In such a context, China's "March Westward" can be read as 'strategic necessity' to tactically confront the US not by military power in the Western Pacific but instead pursuing political and economic goals by going 'westward' (Ren, 2016). It is worth mentioning that under the US Trump Administration, the US has withdrawn from the TPP. It is unclear what the implications of this are for foreign policy in the region. It none-the-less has not dampened the BRI initiative, in part as it is also tied to the realisation of other objectives, particularly economic.

2.5.2 Redirection of Chinese Foreign Policy- from Reactive to Proactive

As argued earlier, external pressures have caused significant changes around Asia's geopolitical landscape. In 2012, when President Xi Jinping became the new Chinese leader, he redirected Chinese foreign policy to build a much closer relationship with neighbouring nations based on the principles of 'Friendship, Sincerity, Reciprocity and Inclusiveness' (亲诚惠容). Beijing's 'Peripheral Diplomacy' (周边外交) has become visible since 2013, with much of the discussion focused on a shift from Deng Xiaoping' 'bide and hide' （韬光养晦）strategy to a more proactive one that 'strives for achievement' (奋发有为). Deng initiated China' opening-up strategy in 1978. His longer standing foreign policy philosophy was to keep a low profile, hide the strength of China, bide time, and never take the lead. Deng and his two successor's slogans never attempting to position China as a potential regional or even international leader or rule-

maker. Nevertheless, Xi's distinctive diplomatic approach called for 'salient Chinese features and Chinese vision' at home and abroad (Callahan, 2016; Ren, 2016; Yu, 2017). While Deng focused on 'peace and development', Xi (2014a) sought to 'pursue China's overall domestic and international interests and its development and security priorities, in a balanced way. He focused on the overriding goal of putative 'peaceful' development and national rejuvenation, upholding China's sovereignty, security, and development interests. Beijing's new foreign policy has therefore become much more confident, proactive, assertive and globally-driven. Scholars have argued that Asian regionalism in the past was often initiated by other countries, rather than China, and primarily concerned with economic collaboration. Even so, the China factor was always at work. China in the past more a passive reactor rather than active initiator via various mechanisms, such as coercion and competition, supplemented with persuasion and socialisation (Ye, 2015). However, the US's strategy of positioning China as a rule-taker was interpreted following Xi's foreign policy redirection.

2.5.3 National Security

The notion of peripheral diplomacy implicitly reflects the fact that the Asian security architecture was built around bilateral security treaties between the US and its allies. Xi (2014b) criticised such allies by proposing a 'New Asian Security Concept' (亚洲新安全观). He pointed out that one cannot live in the 21st Century with outdated thinking from the Cold War and its zero-sum game. Instead, he argued, China should renovate concepts of security by inviting actors to jointly establish a regional cooperation architecture that shared a win-win philosophy. Beijing's cooperation logic is contrasted with the US' competition logic in the region. Yet Beijing's call for discarding the Cold War mentality of zero-sum relations and building 'new model of major-country relations' (新型大国关系) was not optimistically embraced (Aoyama, 2016; Wang, 2016). It is under such an environment that China started to use the BRI to finance and establish a new network of ports and coastal infrastructure projects stretching from South Asia to Southeast Asia, East Africa and the Mediterranean Sea. Flagship projects included

Gwadar Port in Pakistan, Piraeus Port in Greece, Colombo Port in Sri Lanka, and Djibouti Naval Base. Indian Scholars name this series of ports facilities the "String of Pearl" on which China had invested heavily to form a sea lane of strategic importance to its shipping and energy supply chain (Casarini, 2016; Yu, 2017; Lim, 2016). In relation to road infrastructure, the Yiwu-London, and Belgrade-Budapest high speed railway will also significantly reduce shipping time and costs, which potentially makes the Chinese products more competitive in the European market. In combination, these initiatives are reshaping the meaning of geostrategic importance, in that goods can now be shipped or sent by rail using alternative routes. The BRI in this way serves both geostrategic and economic development goals.

The aforementioned geopolitical factors have worked in combination, shaping the emergence and development of the BRI. It is therefore understood not only as a geopolitical offensive strategy as a defence against US threats to lock Sino-US relations into a 'zero-sum game' in East Asia, but also as a novel and alternative strategy which challenges the existing international institutional architecture characterised by prevailing the US interest (Ferdinard, 2016; Wong, 2016; Ploberger, 2017).

2.6 Geoeconomics

Apart from geopolitics, geoeconomic considerations have also been taken as crucial factors in formulating and understanding the BRI. The following section summarises several key factors that are key to geoeconomic relations.

2.6.1 Domestic Economic Issues

Over the past three decades, the success of China's economic reforms has created major areas of growth. Yet these economic achievements were mainly powered by massive export-oriented manufacturing industries. However, since the Global Financial Crisis, China's economic growth has slowed, and particularly so since 2012. Observers note

this to be the state of a "new normal" (新常态); a concept describing the ongoing slowing down of China's GDP growth to around 7% annually. Therefore, Chinese economic development appears to have reached a bottleneck, partially caused by external economic conditions, and internal factors, such as rising labour costs that make the labour-intensive Chinese manufacturing sector less competitive following the global financial crisis in 2008 (Huang, 2016; Wang, 2016).

In addition, economic slowing down also reflects a domestic policy shift towards a more sustainable economic development model. Xi points out that economic development must be sustainable, and that environmental costs must be taken into consideration. This suggests that the high-speed pattern of growth exhibited in the past is unlikely to be replicated (Du, 2016). This reality indicates that the Chinese economy is at an historical juncture, now being shaped by actions such as the rebalancing and restructuring of the economy from an export-oriented, labour-intensive, inward-direct-investment model to a domestic consuming, outward, direct investment model so as to sustain economic growth (Wang, 2016; Ferdinand, 2016; Liu & Dunford, 2016). It was in this context that Chinese individuals, along with private sector and State companies, have been encouraged to 'go out' (走出去) so as to explore offshore opportunities for investment (Ren, 2016; Casarini, 2016).

In addition to the slowing down of economic growth, the Chinese economy also faces two further challenges: that of domestic overcapacity, and excessive foreign exchange reserves. The overproduction of steel, cement, aluminium, coal and even an emerging industry such as a new energy sector, has posed serious questions. Who can consume such overcapacity? Similarly, its foreign currency reserves were estimated to be nearly 4 trillion US dollars, partially due to the large-scale stimulus package scheme (Huang, 2016). 1.4 trillion of the 4 trillion was invested in purchasing the US national treasury bonds (Wang, 2014). Yet China, together with other US national debt holders, such as Japan, risks losing its money due to the US's quantitative easing policy and US's

reluctance to peg its sovereign debt to the rate of inflation as a protective mechanism for its buyers. This over-accumulation and capital expansion suggests new outlets need to be urgently identified where surplus production and capital cannot break the labour, resources and technology ceiling.

Meanwhile, the Asian region has become a new economic growth centre which needs materials and skilled labour for infrastructure development, where the region is predicted to generate better investment returns than low-yielding US debt (Callagan & Hubbard, 2016; Wang, 2016). Arguably, the BRI opens the imagination for a new form of state-led action for infrastructure development that ultimately connects and facilitates the network of railways, ports, and the flow of capital across the Eurasian continent. For economists, the BRI is viewed as a perfect solution to not only resolve China's domestic economic problems but also develop new markets in China's immediate surroundings and beyond.

Moreover, China's economic achievements have not been evenly distributed, with the Eastern coastal provinces becoming much more affluent than their Central and Western counterparts. Historically, Central China was the economic, cultural, and political centre until the late Qing dynasty, whilst the coastal areas were forced to become port cities for trade and commerce. Today, regional disparities are significant. To develop the vast regions of Central and Western China, the Chinese Government has attempted to employ various strategies, including the Grand West Development (西部大开发), to stimulate the regional economic progression (Goodman, 2004). The BRI in this case, enables the peripheral provinces Yunnan, Guangxi and Xinjiang to improve their inter-regional connectivity and break the inland-lock barrier so that direct connection and access to markets in neighbouring countries can be made possible. Building ports, highways, and railways in these regions can greatly facilitate regional connections and regional economic integration which in return enhance both China-ASEAN, and also China-Central Asia bilateral relations. All these measures will produce more trade and

prosperity and eventually improve regional competitiveness. Domestically, it will help the West to catch up with the more affluent East. The BRI thus also discharges domestic responsibility for the purposes of reducing income inequality within the country (Fredinard, 2016; Ren, 2016; Yu, 2017).

2.6.2 The BRI as A Spatial Fix

A range of scholars have attempted to theorise the BRI with the idea of it being what is referred to as a 'spatial fix' (Zhang, 2017; Yu, 2017, Summers, 2016; Blanchard & Flint, 2017). David Harvey's (2001) notion of a 'spatial fix' refers to various forms of spatial reorganisation in the context of capitalism's geographical expansion. A 'fix' aims to manage, in a timely fashion, crisis-tendencies inherent in the process of capitalist accumulation, production and reproduction (Jessop, 2006). Harvey's concept might well offer an alternative perspective to interpreting the BRI; as an effort on the part of China to manage the internal crisis tendencies within China as a result of spare productive capacity by fixing a new spatial strategy to help manage accumulation.

At the policy level, *Vision and Actions* (2015) clearly stresses the significance of *Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade and Financial Integration*. From the Chinese perspective, connectivity and infrastructure are viewed as key pre-conditions for economic-take off and prosperity. Having well-built infrastructures means nearby countries are more likely to engage in bilateral trade and investment cooperation with China, and that Chinese-made goods will also find other fast-growing Asian markets to power its own domestic economic growth. Meanwhile, Chinese overproduction in the area of infrastructure capacity can also be exported to nearby countries pursuing infrastructure projects and in doing so, excess capacity can be consumed. Summers (2016) has suggested that the BRI coordinates well with its 'going out' strategy as a national response by inviting and encouraging Chinese capital to seek out offshore markets and outward foreign direct investment as to transfer its domestic economic crisis. Essentially, the BRI could be interpreted as a state-led 'spatial fix' focusing on

infrastructure and development of networks of capital across the Eurasian continent and not just that of, or indeed not a case of, geopolitical manoeuvring. Zhang (2017) traces the historical development trajectory of the 'going out' strategy back to 2000, suggesting the 'going out' policy was only the first step to engage the elements that might result in a 'spatial fix'. Seen this way, the BRI in fact takes its 'going out' policy to a qualitatively new strategic level in that it is aimed at further economic integration by creating a regional economic cooperation framework to benefit those countries along the BRI route. In doing so, it is reshaping China's geo-economic boundaries. More interestingly, the *Vision and Actions* (2015) documents in its *Section, III: Framework* jointly set up concrete mechanisms for cooperation. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, and the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor, are some of the featured flagship projects on the BRI. Palit (2017) sees the economic corridor of the BRI as a geographical entity that connects cities, sub-national regions, and countries to form a vast set of hinterlands. This is a particular form of a 'spatial fix' that essentially improves economic competitiveness through widening the spectrum of heterogeneity regarding economic activity, its efficiency and quality of infrastructure.

In short, by expanding and restructuring geographical boundaries and building up infrastructures in an efficient way, China's excess capacity and over-accumulation of capital finds a time-space channel to reduce spatial barriers and speed up accumulation and expansion. In return this facilitates connectivity and the flow of capital so as to resolve its internal crisis. In this sense, China's BRI is not a novel strategy but an old one, with classic and logical reasoning for strategizing, maintaining, and reproducing the social relations of capital accumulation through incorporating new markets, labour and resources into an existing capitalist system based on the emerging power's preferred rules of the game.

2.6.3 AIIB - New International Economic Architecture

Alongside the development of the BRI, Chinese authorities have also initiated a set of institutional innovations to reinforce their ability to implement these infrastructure connectivity projects. In 2013, during Xi Jinping's state visit to Indonesia, he also proposed a plan for launching a new multilateral bank to finance the relevant infrastructure development projects in addition to the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road proposal. China's call for establishing the new bank is based on the Asian Development Bank's argument that Asia has a large funding gap in terms of financing infrastructure construction (Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016; Ren, 2016). The Bank's 2009 report states that "…between 2010 and 2020, Asia will need to invest $8 trillion in national infrastructure and an additional $290 billion in regional infrastructure projects in transport and energy" (ADB, 2009, P.18). The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB), when combined, do not have adequate financial capacity to fulfil such investment demands, while the associated high-risks and long construction cycles of infrastructure building have deterred private investors. The Asian Development Bank Institute published a working paper calling for a modern or restored 'Silk Road' to help Asia meet its potential in 2009. The article points out the crux for the new Silk Road is that transport costs and connectivity, and not tariffs, have become major impediments to intra-regional trade. The solution is to build intra-regional highways and railways to connect Central Asia, and Southeast Asia with China, thus reducing the impediment of disconnection. What was lacking, particularly in light of the post global financial crisis, was financing for that investment. This article was translated into Chinese and published in a journal edited by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (Bhattacharyay and De, 2009).

Ironically, Asia also has surplus savings, particularly in the form of foreign exchange reserves. In the past, large amounts of these foreign serves were used to purchase US Treasury Bonds which generated moderate financial return. The Asian community under the well-established US global financial regime are nevertheless facing an

awkward cycle; the deepening of various Asian countries' reliance on the West, as consumer markets, results in a similar dependence of Asia on the US's financial vehicle as store of value for domestic saving. According to Zhang (2017), this has led to more trade and more purchase of US debt, and subsequently contributes to the financial stability of the US economy without adequate Asian benefits.

While several reports confirm that Asia's future economic growth is closely tied to infrastructure building, a different perspective is also put: how to use Asian money for Asian development, simultaneously promoting the global economic recovery by creating new growth pole, especially as the economies of Europe and North America remain drifting in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis (Ren, 2016; Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016)?

With the global economic centre of gravity is shifting from the North Atlantic to East Asia, China appears eager to take a bigger role in global economic leadership. However, China's pursuit is also frustrated by the US's reluctance to cede some of its powers as the hegemon in various international institutions, such as the International Monetary Fund (IFM), the World Bank (WB) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). On the one hand, the US demands that China to plays a bigger role in international affairs; on the other hand, China is not given that role in the global financial system commensurate with its weight in the global economy. The 2010 reform package to restructure the Bretton Woods institutions by offering emerging economies more voting shares had been blocked by the US Congress (Ren, 2016). At one point even the IMF Director, Christine Lagarde, warned that she wouldn't be surprised if the IMF moved to Beijing one day. An alternative way for China to resolve this impasse is to create its own institutions (Ren; 2016; Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016). To some extent the AIIB, can be interpreted as a response to the slow process of reform within the existing global financial architecture. Geoeconomically, Chinese leaders see the AIIB as a millennium opportunity in that it places China at the centre of the Asian economic governance

structure, to counterbalance and challenge the long-standing Japan-US dominated regional and global economic order (Ren, 2016).

AIIB was officially established in 2015, with 57 countries as founding members and 86 countries as official members. In March 2015, the United Kingdom joined AIIB against America's advice, followed by France, Germany, Italy, Australia, New Zealand and South Korea (Wilson, 2019). Despite the fact that the US and Japan are still not members of AIIB, AIIB has already become an influential multilateral financial institution gaining significant momentum. Both the USA's and Japan's attitude reflects their worry that their long-standing supremacy might be undermined by the rise of an emerging power, and thus having the capacity to weaken and erode their influence in the region. Why have European countries joined? It could be argued that these European countries think they need the AIIB to engage with China for their own long-term benefit. Australia and South Korea realise that they share similar strategic circumstances in that although the US is their security alliance, they rely on China economically (Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016).

AIIB promised to tackle the financial need to boost regional infrastructure development with an initial capital base of 100 billion US dollars. It is designed to address the forecasted multi-trillion-dollar infrastructure shortfall across the region. The establishment of AIIB is the centrepiece of the 'One Belt One Road' initiative as many commenters regard AIIB and BRI as "twin brothers" (Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016; Ye, 2016). The BRI signifies China's push to take a bigger role in global affairs and is seen as the upgraded version of China's grand strategy of opening-up in 1978, as well as China's strategy for economic globalisation with the intention of establishing a free and open market system as well as restructuring the geo-economic order in the heartland of Eurasia (Du, 2016). Huang Yukon, former Country Director and current advisor for China at the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, defends the AIIB against the criticism that AIIB emerges as a means for China to pursue a strategy of dominance

by stating “the size of the economy determines the weight of the share, so China will have a large share, but not a veto one; Asian countries as a whole enjoy a majority voting rights” (Lim, 2016). This contrasts with the distribution of votes in the existing international funding agencies, such as the World Bank, where the US retains veto powers. Practically, AIIB allows China to diversify its foreign exchange reserves and help the Chinese currency Renminbi/ Yuan to internationalise (Callahan, 2016; Ren, 2016). The new Bank embraces the idea of being open and inclusive; observers argue that is not aimed at replacing any existing financial structures but rather supplementing them so as to narrow the increasing gap between supply and demand and to lubricate the circuit of capital.

Coupled with AIIB, the Silk Road Fund and the Maritime Silk Road Infrastructure Fund were also created during the 2014 Beijing APEC Summit and ASEAN meetings, with initial funding of 40 and 20 billion US dollars respectively. Those funds are also committed to overcoming the funding gap of the BRI’s flagship project, the Hydro Power Plant construction project in Pakistan. The AIIB and Silk Road Fund, together with existing institutions including the BRICS New Development Bank, the Exim Bank of China, and the China Development Bank, reflects China’s increasing presence on the world economic stage and its ambition to achieve its objective stated in Financial Integration in Vision and Actions (Scobell et al, 2018). Such an initiative is unprecedented in that it is the first time since the Second World War that the ‘rest’ takes the lead to initiate an international institution as such. As an emerging power, China’s willingness to provide what might be viewed as public goods at a regional level has become clearer, and it is expected to have a profound impact on Asian development, as well as on the existing global financial architecture.

To conclude this section, the leading Chinese economist Huang Yiping (2016) argues there are four economic motivations behind the BRI. First, it is an important strategy to sustain China’s economic growth by exploring new forms of cooperation with new

partners. Second, China is motivated to seek greater global economic influence through the BRI, and to supplement the existing global financial architecture building. Third, the BRI provides a platform for China to promote its infrastructure development projects. Finally, the BRI brings economic opportunities for the global community and contributes new thinking and economic developmental model in an era that is seemingly characterised by uncertainty and protectionism.

2.7 The BRI & Culture

Much of the discussion on BRI has been generated by concentrating on both geopolitical and geoeconomic aspects, while the cultural aspect has often been neglected. This section aims to elaborate on the BRI as seen through a set of cultural lenses.

2.7.1 The BRI & The Old Silk Road

As argued in Chapter One, the BRI established itself based on an historical concept of the Silk Road; a symbolic term referring to an ancient trade route connecting the East to the West for nearly two centuries. The Silk Road covers the vast landmass in Eurasia and parts of Africa, sharing a similar geographic scale with the contemporary New Silk Road. Throughout the 2000 years of history dating back to China's Han dynasty, various trading, commercial and cultural exchanges started to emerge and grow on the Silk Road. As its name suggests, the Silk Road was the expressway bringing silk, one of the most commonly traded commodities, together with tea and other products, from China to Europe. It also shaped westerners' imagination towards ancient China. It also enabled cultural and religious dissemination, such as the spread of Buddhism from India and its prosperity in China, Korea and Japan. Although the Silk Road has been viewed as a Chinese product, it is in fact multicultural in nature. It reflects the regional/trans-continental trade and cultural history of the Eurasian continent and Africa, connecting multiple civilisations and facilitating cultural, religious, scientific, and technological

exchange. The Silk Road is not merely a trading route but also a cultural route characterised by openness and cultural blending (Liu & Dunford, 2016).

Replacing camels with modern high-speed railways over the land route, the 21st Maritime Silk Road re-establishes itself though the identical route where Zheng He and Vasco Da Gama's voyages have once passed by. The modern Silk Road thus draws upon the values of an historical-cultural legacy by explicitly stating in the Vision and Actions that it not just simply to resurrect these ancient trade routes but to use its cultural meanings as a form of soft power for promoting international cooperation. The Silk Road thus symbolises both the common cultural heritage and close historical ties of many countries across Asia, Europe and Africa. It is a metaphor for 'peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual interest.' (Vision and Actions, 2015). This metaphor is called the Silk Road Spirit, and it is enshrined in the Vision and Actions document. It underpins the principal value of the BRI as inclusive, and it also seeks - at least rhetorically - to lay the cultural foundation for international cooperation based on China's win-win logic. The Silk Road Spirit and its related cultural meanings and ideological claims are arguably, forming the BRI's metaphoric software. While physical infrastructure is seen as 'hardware', 'software' such as ideas, policies, governance structure and institutions are equally important in establishing the connectivity of the BRI.

2.7.2 New Governing Ideas: China Dream, Community of Shared Destiny & Inclusive Globalisation

Xi Jinping stresses the importance of using cultural discourses in shaping and directing China's aspirations for the future. He creatively ties the so-called China Dream (中国梦) to the BRI. One of the rationales behind the BRI is to revive the old Silk Road which in turn echoes the so-called 'China Dream'; that of realising the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The Chinese leadership sees the BRI as an important step to reclaiming China's rightful historical global position. The use of China's 5000-year-old

great historical tradition and cultural civilisation generates a 'nostalgic futurology'; a sense of national pride is invigorated which then justifies and consolidates the legitimacy of the regime. At the regional level, Xi has stated that "the Chinese people, in their pursuit of the Chinese dream of great national rejuvenation, stand ready to support and help other peoples in Asia to realise their own dreams. 'Let us work together for realising the Asian dream'" (Xi, 2014b).

Dream has thus become a popular slogan. Critics view the China Dream as a collective national dream instead of individual's ideals and aspirations, even though Xi made it explicit that the China Dream must closely rely on people for its achievement. Such differences in viewing the China Dream itself reflects a difference in the individualistic versus as collectivist social ethos. Interestingly, this notion has rebranded the USA's concept of an American Dream and in doing so seeks to capture public attention with a new kind of cultural good.

When the BRI proposal was made in 2013, an underlining philosophy of China's foreign policy was to highlight the importance of working with other countries to create a "Community of Shared Destiny" (命运共同体). This notion is based on China's long-standing foreign policy logic of "mutual respect, mutual interest, reciprocity, equality and win-win". To some extent it inherited the concept of "harmonious world and peaceful development" from Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao (Wang, 2016). Callahan (2016) interprets Community of Shared Destiny as a cultural concept that serves the purpose of both politics and economy. Xi's Community of Shared Destiny is closely linked to China's Peripheral Diplomacy (周边外交). Beijing's claim of expanding regional cooperation from the principle of mutual benefit to "shared beliefs and norms of conduct for the whole region" highlights the importance of using soft power to re-establish an alternative regional order by offering political stability and consolidating economic development in light of external pressures. The slogan, therefore, is a moral mission to develop new ideas, aspirations, and norms, so as to incorporate, and socialise,

regional countries within the Sino-centric regional order. This concept was then exported to various organisations to influence a wider audience. Notably it was incorporated into the BRI's Vision and Action (2015) by proposing to "build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness" which would be enshrined in the Chinese Constitution in 2018.

Another concept was the idea of 'Inclusive Globalisation' (包容性全球化) promoted by Xi during the 2017 World Economic Forum in Switzerland (Reuters, 2017). This Chinese vision differs significantly from the neoliberal/Washington Consensus globalisation in that it emphasises 'being inclusive'. Countries that followed the Washington Consensus measures (Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa and former Communist Eastern Europe) failed to achieve satisfactory economic progress (Serra, Spiegel & Stiglitz, 2008). By way of contrast, Beijing's insistence on self-reliance, gradual reform, deployment of coordination between 'the virtues of the invisible hand of the market' and 'the virtue of good governance', might be seen as resulting in dramatic economic success which consequently contributes to global poverty reduction. This experience indicates that the State capacity to take advantage of globalisation is crucial, yet that function was largely reduced in countries which adopted domestic neoliberal reform agendas.

Since the mid-1970's Fordist crisis in the heart of the West, the developed economies have gradually out-resourced unskilled manufacturing industries to developing economies which have, in turn, also led to an economic model characterised by the hollowing-out of manufacturing and the over reliance on high-valued added industries such as finance (Brown & Lauder, 2006). The 2008 global financial crisis proved such global economic structure was indeed fragile. By promoting the labour-intensive industrial sector, developing economies, including China, have benefited economically. Yet ecologically, the price paid was huge. Therefore there is a need to think about more

equal global economic development and cooperation model.

The implications of being inclusive for the BRI means that the New Silk Road is not now confined to the old route. The BRI also promises to respect the diversity of social paths and modes of development, including that of national sovereignty, territorial integrity, security concerns, and cultural and religious differences so that the world might 'live in harmony, peace and prosperity' (Vision and Actions, 2015). Inclusive globalisation when linked to the promise of the BRI might well advance new ways of thinking and doing for building a more inclusive global community, though this framing in policy is yet to be seen in practice.

Xi's various innovative forming of new ideas, including the 'China Dream', 'Community of Shared Destiny', and 'Inclusive Globalisation' are distinctively marked with Chinese characteristics. They are China's intellectual contribution to the world. It is obvious that these cultural products are not just for domestic politics but intended to spread Chinese ideas and promote its developmental model, with its values and visions of governing at the international stage. As Xi explains: "We should increase China's soft power, give good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the world" (Xi, 2014a).

2.8 Chinese scholarly views on the BRI and Education

What do local Chinese scholars have to say regarding the emergence of the BRI and the role of education in it? In this section I examine the main Chinese interlocutors, highlighting their key insights and commentary. Before I do, I will make a more general point, and that is that much of this work tends to reflect the main claims of the policy documents. In essence, they tend not to be critical in ways that scholars in countries like the UK and USA tend to engage in. This is not surprising, given that offering a critical perspective on key state initiatives can be regarded by the Chinese State as not

being loyal. That said, their voices are important here for this thesis.

Here I begin with Xie (2018) who explores the relationship between the BRI and global governance and suggests the BRI could be interpreted as the Chinese approach towards global governance in the 21st century. He argues that as a rising power, China's attempt to contribute to global governance is likely to be structured and embedded within the current global governance system, and entangled with formal institutions, rather than making parallel institutions. There are tensions between the BRI and the formal and exclusive institutions that are more Western-led, but according to Xie, the BRI neither contradicts the existing western-led global governing structure, nor does the BRI attempt to replace the current international system. It is simply a supplement to the present global governance structure. Seen in this light, Xie argues that the BRI should not be read through a zero-sum lens but rather understood as an important mechanism through which developing countries along the BRI strive to promote a more inclusive and equitable international system. In Xie's view, the BRI countries can also work together and collaboratively with developed economies to tackle pressing global issues such as climate change, energy consumption, and environmental degradation by adopting a 'extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits' principle, thus the initiative itself opens a new channel to respond to urgent international concerns.

Wang (2018) makes similar points, arguing that the BRI is advancing a multi-dimensional opening-up for China, ushering in a new type of globalisation and global governance whose ultimate goal is building a community of shared future for humankind. Wang also suggests that the BRI is profoundly transforming China's relations with the world as it provides the international community with a new platform to pursue global common good, with opportunities to promote development through strengthening global connectivity as well as to make new contributions to world economic growth and intercultural exchange. Similarly, Tang and Jing (2017) note that the BRI is not only an inevitable trend and a continuation of China's opening-up policy,

but it also marks a distinctive transition of China from a participant to a shaper of globalisation. Understood against this background, of China being an important player in prompting globalisation process, it is argued that the country should be aware of its changing identity and pay more attention to the use of public diplomacy to construct an international image of peaceful, inclusive, and responsible stakeholder, in order to win the recognition and acceptance from the BRI countries.

Chen and Guo (2018) examine the BRI and specifically its implications for the internationalisation of higher education. They suggest that China's internationalisation started in 1980s and was largely based on Western models with a strong focus on individuals and institutions as its development pathway. However, the BRI offers an alternative model and thus distinct set of possibilities to think about approaches towards internationalising higher education in the future. For Chen and Guo (2018), the BRI can be seen as the means to do this and they note several important points that need to be taken into consideration for future higher education planning. These include: (i) a shift from a western-oriented internationalisation paradigm to a more balanced and globally-oriented paradigm, giving visibility to systems and countries that are previously under-represented in global higher education landscape; (ii) the development of an higher education ecological system that encompass multiple actors and agencies; (iii) changing the focus from institutions as key drivers of internationalisation to societies; and (iv) striking a balance between importing knowledge from the west and developing indigenous knowledge at home. These measures do not necessarily mean the BRI is an alternative development model which is opposed to the Western-led pathway for development in general. Rather it suggests that the BRI offers a space for reflection for particular countries to rethink their current policies and practices on international higher education, and as a way to better engage with the West and the rest towards more sustainable and inclusive future progress.

In another study, Zhou et al (2018) analyse university rankings in five BRI regions,

including West Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States. These five regions cover more than eighty per cent of the BRI member states, and it is projected that universities in these territories are showing rising trends in global rankings. Israel, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Kazakhstan, India, Serbia and Hungary are listed as examples. It is argued that despite the traditional pattern of international higher education and research cooperation often found between China and the developed countries in the West, including Europe, the US and Japan. The BRI now offers new opportunities for developing better research collaborations with emerging middle-size countries along the BRI route in numerous fields and disciplines. Zhou and colleagues further classify the potential areas of collaboration such as engineering, mathematics, chemistry, nanotechnology, arts, and humanities. The authors promote the benefits of such south-south cooperation, as well as practical issues in relation to implementation of cross-border cooperation. To facilitate BRI-related higher education development, Ren and Qiu (2019) point to the need for a multi-layered and systematic policy design, sufficient funding support as well as institutional and organisational consortium construction are pre-requisite, and the implementation must also adhere to the principles of pragmatism and flexibility by adapting measures to accommodate local conditions. This would help the BRI countries to both coordinate and promote higher education cooperation in a joint manner within the region, as part of the wider social, cultural and economic developmental initiative.

In a similar vein, Hu and Shi (2018) argue China is gradually moving from a semi-peripheral to a core position in the international political economy, with education strategically promoted by the Chinese state to help China to transform its position and its identity during this process. This study also tackles issues of internationalisation, including higher education collaborations and partnerships globally. It examines the differentiated higher education systems amongst BRI countries by categorising them into three groups according to Martin Trow's (1973) theory of the rise of mass higher education. They propose different strategies for collaborating with diverse higher

education systems according to their developmental phrases, and as a result of local and contextual situations. By doing so, the study points out that the pathway towards higher education internationalisation should be plural, and that cross-border higher education partnerships should take multiple forms. It also stresses the importance of considering both the supply and demand sides of international higher education in policymaking and suggests both education 'going out' and 'bringing in' dynamics need to be flexibly combined to meet future challenges.

Assessing the BRI policy documents, Qi and Zheng (2019) suggest education plays a key role in connecting minds and hearts in the BRI policy framing. They highlight the role of education as an important medium through which the cultural mission of the BRI gets transmitted. Promoting cultural exchanges and shared understandings is a key aspect of the BRI, with education an inevitable part of the BRI process. However, their study also notes that the cultivation of talents needs to be done in ways that acknowledge both Chinese cultural traditions and global civilisational diversity. This has implications for Chinese higher education policy and management. Whilst China continues to promote higher education and its cultural outreach, nurturing linguistic experts, Sino-foreign higher education cooperation and curriculum internationalisation remain at the top of reform agendas.

To conclude this section, Cui (2019) summarises some emerging research themes and topics in relation to the BRI and education over the past six years. All in all, BRI-related research has attracted an increasing amount of scholarly attention in China and research outputs continue to grow. Cui's review finds that BRI-related higher education internationalisation, talent cultivation, overseas students' education in China, higher education trade services and higher education reforms have become new and important areas of research focus in Chinese educational research community. Regarding future research, he suggests more historically grounded and empirically driven studies should be encouraged. The role of higher learning institutes, such as think tanks, should also

be further developed in that they can be actively engaged in research and strategic policymaking as well as providing advisory services to relevant communities. It is also argued that constructing an effective educational platform to facilitate information and knowledge exchange among countries would bring additional benefits. Optimising and integrating educational resources would allow those who participate to form new partnerships and strengthen research collaborations in turn improving the governing capacity for the BRI educational community-building project.

2.9 The BRI in summary

The international community's take on the BRI is quite mixed. Given the size and scope of the BRI, commentators have drawn comparisons between the BRI and the USA's Marshall Plan in Europe after the Second World War. Chinese scholars argue that the BRI is fundamentally different from the Marshall plan in that it is open and inclusive. They argue that the BRI is an open cooperation platform, whilst the Marshall plan placed political conditions on the receiving countries and excluded pro-Soviet Europe, leading to new divisions in Europe. Looked at from a distance, the BRI is not an alliance and appears not attach explicit political conditions to its investments. A key question to be explored in this thesis is whether this is the case, and if there are conditions - especially in relation to the focus of this thesis TNHE, what these are and what are their likely consequences?

Another view is that the BRI is more ambitious in that it was not restricted to Europe but is more globally-oriented (Lim, 2006; Casarini, 2016; Yu, 2017). Ferdinard ((2016) suggests that the underlying logic for the BRI is analogous to the formation of the European Coal and Steel Community, which envisaged the establishment of shared transnational infrastructures to promote connectivity and cooperation, whilst limiting the risks of conflict.

Although different understandings co-exist, one cannot deny that the BRI has

significant geopolitical, geoeconomics and cultural implications as a current strategy of China. It should be seen as a process in which global geopolitical and geoeconomic landscapes are being transformed, as well as one where politics and economics are interactive and engage with one another at multiple levels. Such a process might well alter and redefine the dichotomy between maritime-based and continental-based power (Ploberger, 2017; Blanchard & Flint, 2017).

The political scientist Fukuyama (2016, online) notes that the BRI is part of "…an historical contest… over competing development models…between China… and the United States (US) and other Western countries… (whose) outcome will determine the fate of Eurasia for decades to come." The BRI and its ensemble of building projects, governing ideas, institutions, and policy initiatives are believed to generate collective effects so as to re-constitute a new regional order and beyond. The deployment of both hardware and software is aimed at leveraging and projecting China's emerging power so as to regain a position of pre-eminence in the world and eventually become a normative power to also shapes the rules of the game for global governance. In short, the BRI is a national development strategy that places China at the centre of geopolitics and geoeconomics in the region and beyond; a position from which China is likely to strengthen its economic and geopolitical ties with other countries. It is comprehensive in the sense that a range of overlapping goals from politics, economics and culture, are taken into consideration and involves sectors such as higher education. Figuratively speaking it is, 'using one stone to kill multiple birds.' The involvement of multiple actors both at home and abroad makes it simultaneously highly complex, very interesting, but also rather confusing. It is therefore important to study this initiative, and especially with regard to the role that education plays in realising this initiative.

Chapter 3: Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks

3.1 Introduction

To address the main question of this thesis; of how and in what ways higher education institutions in China and beyond have become part of the BRI in the wider Belt and Road as a spatial project aimed at resolving internal and external dynamics for the Chinese state, regionalising processes, theories of globalisation, internationalisation, regionalism and regionalisation need to be addressed. This chapter develops the concepts that makes up the wider theoretical framework to enable me to explore the relationship between education, globalising processes, and regionalising projects. It begins by reviewing key concepts and definitions of globalisation, and discusses how it both relates and responds to the changing architecture of the emergent world regions. My focus on new regionalism theory and its implication for conceptualising the rise of global higher education regionalism offers a new perspective on this process and an innovative way of framing the role of higher education in the BRI project. Following this, debates on regionalisation and internationalisation are examined, with a contextual account of Chinese higher education internationalisation strategy provided. I also highlight the latest features of transnational higher education development in China's rapidly changing higher education landscape.

3.2 Globalisation

Globalisation is an abstract concept and sometimes used as a catch-all phrase. Globalisation as a phenomenon has been well documented and broadly includes projects and processes that make our life and our world more interconnected and interdependent through trade, communication, and mobility (Held et al 1999). However, the impact of globalisation on international issues has been strengthened since the 1970s as a result of advances in information technology (Castells, 1996), greater capital

flows across borders, the international mobility of labour, the insertion of new public management into many institutions of the state, and the weakening of nation states (Enders, 2004; Maringe &Foskett, 2010). Scholars have attempted to define globalisation drawing on different disciplines and fields, ranging from geography to economy to sociology, in turn producing various understandings of globalisation.

From a geographic perspective, globalisation is a process through which the global interconnectedness and boundary are being reimagined and reproduced. In the context of power and politics, globalisation witnesses the deterritorialization, denationalisation and reterritorialization in which power and authority are transformed, as globalisation from above, globalisation from below and globalisation from sides (Torres, 2008). Cultural globalisation is characterised by the movement of people and ideas including their influence on social processes, relations and understandings (Appadurai, 2000). Similarly, there are technological, scientific, financial, and ecological globalisations that connect different parts of our world together through their specific networks and activities. For many commentators, globalisation has produced significant gains at the global level particularly in economic terms because of the increasing international trade in goods and services, capital, labour, technology but also in culture and governance. Globalisation is multi-faceted in nature containing different meanings which generate diverse implications for social and individual's life and has different impacts and manifestations in different geographic localities (Figge &Martens, 2014). Nation states exhibit different levels of globalisation or connectedness. An important understanding of globalisation is that it is not a single entity but should be seen as a set of social processes contributing to multiple versions of local-global intensification and reconfigurations (Mittleman 2000). These processes need to be embedded and contextualised within different historical and contemporary social transformations which happen across different parts of the world, thereby making globalisation a plural social phenomenon rather than duplicating a singular standardised version of globalisation.

Mittelman (2000) suggests that globalisation can be briefly classified into two categories: the first refer to the process in which the world is increasingly interconnected and interdependent as a result of intensified trade, transnational flows, diminishing barriers of movement, and degrees of cultural homogenisation. The second aspect is theoretical, which suggests the traditional notions of time and space are being reconstructed through tightening social relations and networks many miles away. Mittelman's conceptualisation argues that globalisation is a dynamic and ongoing process with contradictory effects. It facilitates the spread of knowledge and information, promotes technological innovation and productivity gains, yet it can also weaken cultural traditions and political and economic control by individual nation states. As such, it is perceived as creating new threats to individuals, societies, and ecosystems evidenced by exacerbating wealth inequality, environmental degradation.

Likewise, Steger (2003) interprets globalisation as consisting of four related dimensions, namely economic, political, ideological and cultural. All four dimensions are closely inter-connected, and each generates unique implications for related world affairs. Acknowledging the pluralistic character of its driving forces and consequences is an essential step in describing globalisation. In fact, this kind of pluralistic approach towards the conceptualisation of globalisation, including economic, socio-cultural, ecological, and other multiple dimensions dominates much of the literature. For instance, we can see this is Marginson's six aspects of globalisation (Marginson, 1999, p. 21). Globalisation appears to have been approached from different perspectives identified as geographical, political, cultural, and institutional in nature. Thus, globalisation may well be defined as a process in which basic social arrangements become disembedded from their spatial context due to the acceleration, expansion and extension of transnational flows of people, products, finance, images and information (Beerkens, 2003). Critics argue this approach tends to reify rather than integrate globalisation as a concept (Kellner, 2002; Steger, 2002; Stiglitz, 2002). Nevertheless, it provides a useful framework to deconstruct the complexity of globalisation as a

concept and becomes useful to articulate specific processes and structures at different scales.

Processes of globalisation have also been apparent in basic social arrangements within and outside universities for which significant changes have been brought to the higher education sector. The rise of global league tables is one such example, where international rankings emerge out of an increasingly globalised, stratified, competitive yet unequal global playing field of higher education, creating a global hierarchy for universities to compete for world class universities statues (Marginson & van der Wende, 2006; Deem, Mok & Lucas, 2008). The rapid development of global higher education and science, international student and academic mobility, cross-border research collaboration, transnational education provision are seen as the processes and outcomes of the globalised higher education landscape. This helps to increase the interconnectedness between universities and academic flows globally, at the same time contributing to the global construction of academic standardisation and harmonisation processes and mechanisms. It is thus fair to say that globalisation has reoriented the ways in which higher education functions, and how the sector is perceived - from being a traditional, nationally-structured internal affair, to a more interconnected and internationalised set of events, activities, and social relations among emerging and expanding international actors. Despite this globalising tendency, some universities saw themselves as more national/subnational rather than global institutions.

Although globalisation has introduced many positive changes to higher education systems worldwide, it also poses some threats to local, indigenous knowledge system by decreasing the diversity of educational traditions and increasing the 'competition logic' amongst nation states thus making the regulation and supervision of national systems both less locally attached but more globally driven. In sum, the literature portrays globalisation as an ongoing process in which profound changes are taking place in our world; such changes are transforming nation states, social institutions,

social identities, territoriality, jurisdiction, and ways of thinking, doing, and knowing the world in relation to the changing external space.

3.3 Region, Regionalism and Regionalisation

Globalisation and regionalism are closely interconnected. The formation of regions, along with the rise of regionalism and regionalisation, are often viewed as reactions to or a subset of globalisation, where a similar process of disembedding is occurring, much as with globalisation, but where arrangements now become re-embedded in an emerging regional context. The theoretical and empirical work on regions and region-making involves a lexicon of terms, such as regions, regionalism, regionalisation, inter-regionalism, regionness, posing new theoretical-conceptual conundrums for researchers as they navigate this terminology and how it might relate to processes that are emergent. Ideas about what constitutes a region vary greatly by perspective and purpose. Understanding and explaining what a region is has caused substantial debates in the social sciences, and scholars mention the difficulty in reaching a commonly accepted definition about region and how related concepts such as regionalism can be understood (Borzel, 2011). A region might be broadly defined as a limited number of states linked by geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence, such as ethnic, linguistic, cultural, social and historical bonds (Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000; Hettne, 2005). The manifestations of a region can be presented in subnational or supernational contexts that forms part of the international system, with differentiated social, economic, political, and organisational cohesiveness. A region can thus be conceived as an 'intermediate form of community', between the national community of the state and the potential global community of humankind (Whiting, 1993, p 20).

The term 'regionalism' refers to more of an ideology that is being shaped and forged out of the process of region-making. Dent (2008) defines regionalism as the 'structures, processes and arrangements that are working toward greater coherence within a specific

international regime in terms of economic, political, security, socio-cultural and other kinds of linkages' (Dent, 2008, p. 5). Most literature claims that regionalism comes in two waves, namely old regionalism, and new regionalism (Brestin & Higgott, 2003; Hettne, 2005). The old regionalism began after the second world war lasting until the 1980s, and largely focused on nation states as primary actors and vehicle for initiating effective and peaceful regional governance, often fashioned as 'from above' through superpower engagement and bounded by geographical closeness. Much of the early debates on regionalism has focused on the European territorial space and its integration, viewing the making of the European region as an endogenous process through institutions aimed at using trade as a means for creating post-war security. This was best exemplified by the European Coal and Steel Community in 1952, as a European peace building and trade project that eventually led to the formation of the European Union. Theoretically, old regionalism has been powered by theories of federalism, functionalism, and neo-functionalism. Integration theorists led by Ernst Hass (1958, 1964) and Leon Lindberg (1966) argued the regional integration has placed great emphasis on the unintended consequences of cooperation during inter-state interdependence. Hass and Lindberg suggest that when nation states are assigning shared supranational responsibilities to realise a task, there will be unintended 'spill-over' effects in other interdependent arenas. Thus, the creation of common markets in Europe is a regional integration effort that is best illustrated as both a process and outcome of increased economic interdependence which then produces a 'spill-over' effect on the political side to drive integration even further, with the ultimate intention of preventing another European war. Old regionalism and neo-functional theory, however, has been criticised for its 'Eurocentric' position and experience, especially in the context of globalisation (Axline cited in Hettne, 2015; Mittelman, 1996). As we have witnessed with an increasing number of cases of regional integration across the globe, the features of state-centrism, the duality of national-supranational, of inward looking and protectionist-oriented older forms of regionalism have become insufficient to explain the new changing patterns of regionalism in the post-cold war world order.

New Regionalism emerged in the context of globalisation of the late 1980s and the 1990s. Compared to the previous wave of old regionalism, new regionalism has several distinct features: it is taking shape in a multi-polar world order, driven by voluntary process from within the emerging regions, more open and exported oriented, more comprehensive and multi-dimensional in its processes, and forms part of a global structural transformation with a variety of non-state actors operating at multiple levels within the global system (Hettne, 2002). New regionalism is associated with the profound political and historical changes in world orders and ordering following the end of the Cold War. The shift from bipolarity to multipolarity in the global political economy means new actors, powers and division of labour are now entering the international playing field, with various regional formations also emerging globally. This new world order facilitated a US-led liberal globalisation through which the international flow of people, capital, service, goods, data, and markets were made possible. During this period, regionalism is understood no longer as a small-scale and state-centric behaviour aimed at security or economic protectionism only, but rather is a simultaneous global structural transformation comprised of both state and non-state actors along multiple dimensions in response to the changing world order, including globalisation and neoliberalism in increasingly multipolar political and economic contexts. These processes have been accompanied by emerging powers, new regional architectures, and novel governing arrangements.

There are many similarities between old and new regionalism; many regional projects and organisations were initiated during the era of old regionalism, and then simply renewed after 1980s and 1990s. As a result, it can be difficult to separate the historical from the contemporary. Mittelman (2000), however, argues new regionalism is most evidenced through its global presence and outreach, projecting significant inter-regional linkages. New regionalism also takes different shapes in different parts of the world; it is thus global and pluralistic in nature (Söderbaum, 2003). Moreover, the objectives, content, scope, and diversity of new regionalism is much broader than that of old regionalism. To facilitate an understanding of region-making in the

contemporary and globalised era, it is useful to turn to new regionalism theory proposed by international relations (IR) scholars in the next section.

3.4 New Regionalism Theory

In more recent years, New Regionalism Theory (NRT) has become a popular theoretical construct in studying region-making. Conceptually, NRT is rooted in social constructivism suggesting that regions are not to be taken as 'given' but are seen as socially-constructed. In essence, regions and their meanings are made, and remade by actors in the process of structural transformations. Thus, the reading of regionalism should not be static (Väyrynen, 2003). Conceptualising what regionalism constitutes has become more difficult as regionalism itself is evolving to be a more complex social process and phenomenon over time. The nation state-centric thesis is insufficient to explain the entry of private market actors in region-building, just to give an example. As a result, scholars have classified the different kinds of integration labelled as informal, formal, de facto and de jure.

Breslin and Higgott (2003) differentiate two important terms here: that of regionalism and regionalisation. Regionalism is typically related to state-led projects of co-operation arising from intergovernmental dialogues, treaties, and agreements. Regionalisation refers to those complex processes of integration, driven by non-state actors such as private markets, business, or trade. However, whether regionalisation is a conscientiously planned or spontaneous process has not been agreed upon by all authors. This distinction opens up the study of regional integration in those parts of the world where EU-like institutionalised organisations and mechanisms are absent. Central to the argument of NRT is that region have different levels of intensity and cohesiveness, therefore NRT seeks to identify the levels of 'regionness' presented in the process of regionalisation. This means NRT sees the formation of regional blocs as a continuing process of becoming, with different layerings in terms of their regionness.

Table 3.1 Levels of Regionness in NRT (adapted from Hettne & Söderbaum, 2000, pp. 461-478; Hettne, 2005, p. 548)

Levels of Regionness	Main Characteristics
Regional Space	Region that is rooted in territorial space, a geographical unit, and that is primarily defined by natural boundaries or ecological characteristics, residents are united through a set of shared cultural values and common bonds of social order forged by history. Examples are Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, North America, the Southern cone of South America, 'Africa south of Sahara', Central Asia, or 'the Indian subcontinent'.
Regional Complex	A regional system with widening translocal relations through increased social contacts and transactions between previously isolated human groups and influences between cultures. Increasing interdependence among constituent units; the starting point for regionalisation process. Example is the creation of Latin Christendom between 800 to 1200.
Regional Society	Region as an international society is characterised by norms and rules through rule-based patterns of relations; the emergence of a variety of processes towards the transcendence of national space that involves both state and non-state actors; multidimensional regionalisation of various processes of communication and interaction in the economic, cultural, and political fronts; more formally organised regional cooperation led to 'de jure' region defined by members of the regional organisation; Include a wide range of non-state actors such as markets, private business, firms, transnational cooperation, transnational business network, non-governmental organisation; the phenomenon of 'micro-region'.
Regional Community	Region increasingly turns into an active subject with distinct identity, institutionalised or informal actor capability, legitimacy and structure of decision making in relation with more or less responsive regional civil society, transcending the old state borders; Regional community is also shaped by enduring organisational framework that facilitates and promotes social communication and convergence of values and behaviour throughout the region; regional community is characterised by a mutually reinforcing relationship between 'formal' region and 'real' region, in which transnationalised regional civil society has a role to play; varieties and diversity of micro-regionalism at play; A regional collective identity emerge, increasing mutual trust driven by social learning among regional members; shifting relations between those inside and outside regional community; examples are Nordic countries, ASEAN.
Region-State	Region as institutionalised polity with fixed structure of decision making and stronger actor capability; rather hypothetical; region-state in terms of scope and cultural heterogeneity can be compared to the classic empires; a voluntary evolution of a group of formerly sovereign national communities into a new form of political entity; different from nation-state where homogenisation happens in a culturally pluralist manner, not comply to one ethnic model, and show greater compatibility. Example is the former Soviet Union.

Regionness can be read in parallel to 'stateness' and 'nationness' which defines the position of a particular region with regard to regional cohesion. It is the result of a long-term historical process, changing over time as a result of from coercion, the building of empires and nations, or even voluntary cooperation (Hettne, 2005, p. 548). Regionness increases when a regional space begins to move from an isolating community to become more complex regional existence with intensified trans-local activities and relationships, this process continue to be developed into a society that is characterised by a set of norms and rules, then a community where convergence of values and behaviour is enabled by social communication. Ultimately, a region may achieve the stage of institutionalised polity that is legally bond, with stronger decision-making power and actor capability to act independently, harmoniously, and heterogeneously. Accordingly, the level of regional cohesion, unity and solidarity increases alongside the way though this is not an inevitable outcome and can also be reversed. A region as political project may also fail, like nation states, with regionness moving in the opposite direction in its evolution, in which case we see decreasing level of regional collaboration or even the collapse of regions. The main characteristics of the five levels of regionness are shown in Table. 3.1.

3.5 Higher Education Regionalism/Regionalisation/Region-Building

The rise of new regionalism over the past few decades following the end of the Cold War has attracted a number of scholars' attention with regard to the role that higher education plays in this. Higher education, traditionally viewed as a national affair, is now being increasingly rescaled and incorporated into regional governance frameworks. Cross-border cooperation in higher education is being deployed and actively promoted as significant agents in powering and consolidating supranational forces for regional integration, producing new regional spaces, and enhancing their competitiveness (Dale & Robertson, 2002; Robertson et al., 2016). Positioning higher education as an important constituent in region-building has given rise to what some have called

"higher education regionalism" which Chou and Ravinet (2015, p. 368) defined as "a political project of region creation involving at least some state authority (national, supranational, international), who in turn designs and delineates the world's geographical region to which such activities extend, in the higher education policy sector". For these writers, the conceptualisation of higher education in relation to regional initiatives is set within an interdisciplinary paradigm grounded in both international relations (IR), with particular regards to regional integration theory, and the studies of higher education science. Building on this understanding, higher education has been seen as a key aspect brought into these region constructing processes, as it embodies a cultural dimension for realising regional imaginaries, constructing norms, diffusing values, and building shared identity. Essentially, higher education is bridged with regional integration in that it creates a sense of actorness, togetherness, convergence and solidarity on behalf of a given region vis-à-vis other regions socially and culturally; this refers to the theories of higher education regionalism, which emphasize on the role of higher education in contributing to region construction, especially in socio-cultural terms. This is a key aspect of higher education regionalism as region itself is made alive through cultural and educational activities in comparison to other regions (Acharya, 2004).

Much of the discussion in the higher education literature has focused on differentiating region-related concepts and their implications for higher education. For instance, regionalisation in higher education refers to a process by which connections, relationships, alignments, and collaborations are being intentionally built amongst higher education actors and systems within a defined area, emphasizing processes of "becoming" whereas higher education regionalism relates more to an ideology or set of beliefs underpinning and guiding such process (Knight, 2012). Likewise, other similar concepts, such as higher education regional integration, or inter-regional higher education cooperation, are used to define varying situations and conditions in which higher education is being mobilised for regional development. While these inter-related

and interdependent terminologies may differ in their focus and meanings, they jointly point out that building a higher education region involves multiple actors, agencies, networks, collaboration, and that making of higher education region is diverse in shape, form, strength and could be moving into opposite directions at times. The thesis is interested in exploring the extent to which China's BRI as a spatial project can be understood as a form of regionalising and if this is the case, then what is the role of higher education in both endogenous and exogenous processes that are giving rise to a new regional process and project? Specifically, I ask: what are these processes look like, what ideas are being drawn into the regional space, what policies are in place, with what outcomes to be generated? These questions will be explored in chapter 6.

The most researched higher education region by far is the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The European Union and its allied institutions have pioneered regional integration since the end of the World War II and has evolved to be a successful case in creating a European regional knowledge area. Studies in the area of higher education examine the ongoing Bologna process, the evolution of EHEA, and related Erasmus programmes - all designed to facilitate academic mobility and scholar exchange for advancing Europeanisation (Huisman & van der Wende, 2004; Vukasovic, 2013; Robertson & Dale, 2009). Outside Europe, we can see the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as a parallel project (Feuer & Hornidge, 2015), alongside Latin America's counter-hegemonic regionalism (Muhr, 2010), to Africa Union's higher education regionalisation initiatives (Knight & Woldegiorgis, 2017). It could be argued that global higher education regionalisation is indeed flourishing (Robertson et al, 2016). Although these variegated initiatives are not subject to the same understanding regarding their developmental phase and manifestations, the logics underpinning these movements are similar.

Within the burgeoning literature surrounding higher education region-building, East Asia receives limited scholarly attention. Nevertheless, the rise of China and its NSR alters this scenario in that it envisages and empower an (re)arriving East Asia/China-

centred region. Against this backdrop and informed by related theories, this study attempts to advance a case of East Asian-led higher education regionalisation, with a focus on the Silk Road region that also extends the Asian initiative to an interregional one consists of both Asian and European elements. In doing so, this study expands its reach in geographical scope, and shed new lights on how the dynamics arising from higher education, international relations, and political economy, interacts, forms, and transforms region through policy, development, and cooperation in higher education, contributing to understanding about the global variegated higher education regionalisation simultaneously underscore the importance of education in shaping the NSR.

3.6 Internationalisation

Internationalisation has often been confused with globalisation (Altbach, 2004). These two concepts might be understood as two sides of the same coin; they share many similarities, yet are not synonymous. Internationalisation can be defined as the process of adapting a nation's operations (strategy, structure, resources, and policies) to the international environment, structures, and practices. Enders (2004) argues that "…internationalisation should refer mainly to processes of greater co-operation between states, and consequently to activities which take place across state borders. It reflects a world order in which nation states still play a central role" (p. 367). Internationalisation and globalisation are not new concepts in the field of higher education, but surprisingly people are using them with very different meanings (Knight, 1997). According to De Wit (1999) and Knight (1997), the internationalisation of education is one of the ways that a country responds to the impact of globalisation through its education system yet at the same time it respects the unique individuality of each nation state. van der Wende (2002) views internationalisation as a response to intensified competition caused by globalisation, with the aim of seeking cooperation between nations, systems, institutions, and individuals. Yang (2002, 2003) contends

that while the globalisation of higher education is ultimately based on the market-driven fundamentals of globalisation, which has been linked historically to western domination and imperialism, internationalisation invokes different connotations in that it has the potential to create a more equitable and constructive relation and it is also perceived differently in between the West and developing countries.

In essence, the concept and practice of internationalisation in higher education is to be read in response to national, regional, and global dynamics and demands over time. Higher education internationalisation appeared after the second World War, accompanied by a wave of idealism following the global security and development needs when nation states are attempted to maintain peace and reconstruct societies from the disasters of two world wars. Higher education cooperation was identified as a means of underpinning the development of mutual understanding, with exchange programmes being established and strengthened, particularly in Europe and the US. International cooperation and exchange were included as minor activities in bilateral agreements between nations, and in creating development cooperation programs such as the Fulbright programme (Altbach & de Wit, 2015). Since the 1980s, the Erasmus Programme launched by the EU has greatly enhanced European citizenship education, region-wide academic exchange, and research collaboration (Corbett, 2005). Internationalised higher education has become an important mechanism for raising regional competitiveness, and enhancing relationships among nation states for cultural, economic, political, and societal reasons. Internationalising universities has also become popular in Asia, with different national governments adopting various strategies so as to build a competitive knowledge economy (Mok, 2007).

Jane Knight defined internationalisation as a "…processes of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purposes, functions, or delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003. p. 2). Internationalisation has been categorised as 'at home' and 'aboard', with an additional pillar 'at a distance' due to the increasing use of technology in more recent years (Knight, 2004; Mittelmeier et al,

2020). These changing definitions underline the point that internationalisation is a fluid and dynamic social practise that evolves over time and in space with different manifestations. The rationales diving the development of internationalisation include but are not limited to political, economic, social/cultural processes. For example, nation states may develop their internationalisation policy and strategy when they need to nurture human resources for enhancing economic and technological advantage, boosting commercial trade, promoting multicultural projects and nation-branding. At the institutional level, universities embrace internationalisation for improving its institutional reputation, the quality of teaching and learning, generating revenue income, forming strategic transnational alliances, increasing student and staff mobility, and facilitating the production of research. At regional level, internationalised higher education has been brought into the process of region-making, as mostly evidenced in the European context. European Commission, the governments of EU countries, universities include staff, students and stakeholders have all been actively engaged in internationalisation policy and agendas to create a competitive European knowledge economy and in response to rising global challenges (Corbett, 2005; Robertson & Dale, 2009).

Internationalisation, globalisation, and regionalisation are closely engaged with each other in two somewhat conflicting ways. Taking Europe as an example, Enders (2004) points out that regionalisation of higher education is ‘a benign regional version of internationalisation processes’ since Europeanising higher education is a process of growing regional co-operation or even integration via mutual co-operation and ‘horizontal’ interaction at all levels: between national and sub-national governments, between sectors and institutions of higher education across the region, and even region-wide collaboration among corresponding units within universities and colleges (p. 368). Higher education regionalisation can be read as part and parcel of globalisation processes, building co-operation amongst neighbouring counties to reduce the tension from other parts of the world. Having said this, it may seem that internationalisation and globalisation are to some extent uniform processes leading to converging outcomes.

Nevertheless, in terms of focus, Kishun (1998) and Knight (2003) assert that the subtle difference between globalisation and internationalisation is that globalisation implies uniformity, whereas internationalisation emphasise on diversity. Many authors believe that globalisation has become a pervasive phenomenon and is transforming national higher education systems gradually through increasing internationalisation activities, especially in areas such as Business, Linguistic and Management (Scott, 1998; Marginson & Rhoades, 2002). Internationalisation is changing the world of education and globalisation is changing the world of internationalisation, heated debate continues as to whether globalisation is a catalyst for higher education internationalisation or internationalisation is becoming the acting agent for globalisation (Scott, 2005; Knight, 2003). The various meanings attached to these terms illustrate their complexity and richness as concepts. The existing trend of globalisation, internationalisation, regionalisation changes the functions of higher education, and shift internationalisation polices beyond transnational mobility and cooperation. In fact, as Zha (2003) concludes, higher education has now become part of globalisation processes to cater for greater economic and social demand; they are no longer restricted to national contexts and the scale and impact of higher education also moved beyond national borders, this requires a broader conceptualisation of internationalisation. A key concern of this study is how these ideas might apply to the internationalising strategies of China, and what new insights the study of China might enable.

3.7 Internationalisation of Higher Education in China

From an historical perspective, the internationalisation of higher education in China can be traced back to ancient times if "international" can be interpreted as the relationships between small kingdoms (Chen & Huang, 2013). However, based on the contemporary interpretation of the term, it seems more embryonic and emergent. Although efforts were made from the late 19th Century onward, actual progression is limited as a consequence of China's economic capabilities and separation from the outside world

(Zha, 2011). As argued in Chapter Two, it was the open-door policy initiated in 1978 that has significantly transformed the landscape of China, including its higher education system. Recent years have witnessed a global expansion of China's educational influence, the amount of international cooperation, academic exchange, and mobility has been unprecedented. Wang (2013) notes that the priorities of internationalisation of higher education in contemporary China have shifted over the last three decades. In the 1980s, the focus was on raising the awareness of internationalisation, followed by the desire to improve education quality and build world-class universities in the 1990s, whereas in the new millennium, the emphasis has been placed on the adoption of high profile "going global" strategy. This gradual shift is consistent with China's wider socio-economic context.

Since 1978, high economic growth in China has fundamentally changed demands on knowledge and skills for the Chinese population, thus creating pressure on higher education system (Pinna, 2009). Re-entering the global stage also means China needs to face fierce competition at an international level, therefore, human capital is becoming an important concept underpinning the Chinese higher education reform. The concept of cultivating human capital can be found in Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nation* in 1776 (Harber, 2014) and it has been developed over time. Its contemporary version is best articulated by Gary Becker (1993). In the modern era, investing in education is regarded as an effective way to bring benefits to individuals, to facilitate domestic industrial development, increase workforce productivity, and promote national economic and technological progression (Brock & Alexiadou, 2013). Countries worldwide seek to nurture human capital for economic prosperity, and this has been accelerated by globalisation effect (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). China is no exception regarding this trend; it has also adopted this concept strategically in the light of the intensified global competition. As a result, Chinese authorities have launched a series of agendas, reforms and policies to internationalise its higher education system, which not only aims to reduce the gaps in higher education between developed nations and China but also ensure it is compatible with China's national goal of achieving

modernisation with Chinese characteristics (Pinna, 2009). China's aspiration of internationalising its higher education system has been translated into a series of efforts as discussed below.

One of the successful strategies to internationalise Chinese higher education is through international academic collaboration and mobility (Jokila, 2015). Over the past three decades, leading Chinese institutions have established collaborative relationships with many foreign counterparts. These collaborations have taken in a variety of different forms via individuals, team projects, or institutional level cooperation (Xi, Guo & Li, 2010). This is particularly evident in the science and technology field. Fudan-Yale co-funded Biological Development Research Centre is an example to show such cross-national academic cooperation. It is believed such alliances and networks have positively facilitated the progression of research and improved the quality of research outcomes (Xue, Su & He, 2007). In addition, China has played an essential role in international academic exchanges. Language tutors, university lecturers and specialist experts are dispatched by the government to varying foreign institutions over the years for academic collaboration and cultural exchange. Meanwhile, education authorities also invite academics from aboard to teach and research at Chinese universities as permanent staff and guest lecturers (Chen & Huang, 2013). Moreover, when one thinks of China and education, the hundreds of thousands of Chinese students often come to mind. Since 1978, China has sent its students to Japan and the West to acquire knowledge and experience: the majority were funded by the state with the rationale a nurturing expert in various disciplines for the country's overall development. The knowledge transferred from the developed countries was the justification for the internationalisation of higher education and was used to realise the four modernisations of the country (Hayhoe, 1984; 1989; Huang, 2003). From an initial small scale, there has been massive growth in the number of overseas students in the last decades. Today, China is the biggest international student exporting country, estimated to account for twenty-five percent of international students in the world, and this percentage is predicted to rise in the foreseeable future (Centre for China & Globalisation, 2017). The

massive transnational flow of Chinese students is believed to have a significant impact on the receiving country's economy, culture and society and institutions, and they have also brought much valuable knowledge and experience back home.

3.8 The Emergence of Transnational Higher Education and China

A new development of internationalisation of higher education is transnational higher education (TNHE), which has now become an increasingly important and integral part of internationalisation of higher education in many countries (Huang, 2007; Knight, 2013). The difference between the 'internationalisation' and 'transnationalisation' of higher education is the difference between making and taking. Knight believes that "transnational", "cross-border" and "borderless" are terms that can be used interchangeably to describe both real and virtual movement of students, teachers, knowledge and educational programme from one country to another though there might be some conceptual differences between these terms. In general, TNHE refers to higher education in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based (UNESCO, 2001); in other words, any education delivered by an institution based in one country to students located in another (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). It may also take one of many forms, such as branch campuses, franchises, articulation, twinning, corporate programmes, online or distance learning and studying abroad (Global Alliance for Transnational Education, 1999). In this study, TNHE is mainly concerned with branch campus.

TNHE emerged and has grown rapidly in China within a short period. The development itself reflects China's overall policy arrangements during recent decades of reforms. From the mid-1990s onwards, several important policy documents were published by the Chinese authorities to shape the emergence and development of TNHE in China. In 1995, the "Interim Provisions for Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools" (Interim Provision) was enacted. Under this policy document, 24 TNHE Programmes were approved by the former State Commission of Education (Huang, 2007; He, 2016,). In 2003, a second version of this policy was announced, namely *"The Regulations of*

the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools" (MOE, 2003). In the following year, the MOE implemented *"Measures for Implementing the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools"* (MOE, 2004 cited in He, 2016). In viewing these policy documents, we can see a gradual change identified, one that seeks to uplift the status of TNHE from a supplement to a component in China's higher education system. Greater commitments were also given to renowned overseas institutions with regard to cooperation. The policy change has led to a dramatic increase of TNHE in China. Today, 1247 joint-programmes alongside with 70 TNHE institutions were approved spread to 28 provinces in China (MOE, 2017a). In Shanghai alone, 9 TNHE institutions and 70 joint programmes are in operation to transform and reshape the outlook of this global metropolis.

Several factors have worked to rationalise the emergence of TNHE from the Chinese perspective. At the national level, the Chinese government views TNHE as a strategy to further internationalise China's higher education system by directly introducing foreign resources, forming strategic alliances with world-class institutions, and to promote the reputations of domestic universities. Additionally, TNHE can also accelerate the process of human capital building, counteract brain drain as a syndrome and enhancing China's international competitiveness. However, TNHE is also viewed as part of the wider economic reforms, which means China starts to lose tight control over the market of education by inviting private actors, foreign capitals and entrepreneurs to be engaged in higher education investment in order to stimulate economic growth (Yang, 2008; Marginson & McBurnie, 2004; Huang, 2003, 2007; Knight, 2003, 2006; He, 2016). At the institutional level, those institutions establishing a foreign collaboration will benefit from importing high quality courses, building academic collaborations, and practising cross-cultural understanding (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007; Huang, 2003, 2006, Yang, 2008). At the individual level, TNHE provide individuals with a choice of more internationally oriented knowledge systems and learning platform, often with high quality education at a cheaper cost (Gu, 2007).

In 2004, the establishment of the University of Nottingham Ningbo Campus (UNNC) marked a milestone in the history of China's higher education development. It demonstrated a new model of TNHE cooperation. Unlike Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, China imposed strict regulations on TNHE governance; UNNC was the first joint-venture university (with Wanli Education Group) to obtain legal status as an independent campus in China whereas the majority of TNHE programmes are not licensed to operate independently (Mok & Xu, 2008; Ennew & Yang, 2009). UNNC delivered comprehensive education compared to programmed-based collaborative TNHE projects, and its curricula, management as well as governing structures are replicated from UK campus. It can be conceived of as the first foreign university campus in China. Following Nottingham's success, Xi'an Jiaotong Liverpool University (XJLU) was born in 2006. Liverpool, like Nottingham, is a member of the Russell Group, with Xi'an Jiaotong one of the oldest and most prestigious universities in China. Drawing on the strengths of both parent universities, XJLU adopted science, engineering, technology and management as its academic corner stone (Feng, 2013). Similarly, University of Leicester partners with Dalian University of Technology to offer dual STEM degrees from 2017 in their first international campus located in Dalian, China; the Chinese Ministry approved such transnational HE collaboration under the new name "Leicester International Institute, Dalian University of Technology". Recent years have seen more Chinese – American joint Campuses. New York Shanghai University and Duke Kunshan University also opened campuses in 2013 and 2014, with their respective Chinese partners East China Normal University and Wuhan University. UCLA is also predicted to build its first Chinese campus in Henan Province in the short future (China Plus, 2017).

McBurnie and Ziguras (2007) see the future of TNHE as both congested and competitive, and that the market will not be growing much, but that the presence of high-quality institutions will accelerate with gradually tightening regulation imposed on quality assurance by hosting nations' governments. They further argue that what will become visible is the economic rise and social development in the Pacific Asia, and

that more intra-regional student mobility than inter-regional outflow will be observed, meaning more Asian students will stay within the continent to pursue higher education. This prediction is consistent with the booming joint – TNHE institutions in China and at a larger scale in Asia (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2009). TNHE institutions have created a strategic presence in the region, and this is crucial and relevant for them to preserve long term position and reputation as leading higher education providers in the world.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has set out to provide key conceptual and theoretical frameworks that underpins this research, and some of these concepts and theories will be utilised later in the following chapters. Specially, the new regionalism theory will be employed in Chapter 5 to theorise the BRI as an emerging region-building project, and higher education regionalism will also be examined in more detained in Chapter when I make the case of building China's Belt and Road educational community. Literature on globalisation, internationalisation of higher education is useful in guiding readers to get a wider contextual background in which this study is situated in, and internationalisation of higher education will also be examined as a key dimension of higher education region-building.

Chapter 4: Philosophical and Methodological Approach

4.1 Introduction

The chapter presents an account of the philosophical assumptions and methodological approach employed in this research. It draws on Critical Realism (CR) and Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) as metatheory. Its methodological principles follow the Intensive Research Design whilst the analytical framework is largely illuminated by Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In the following pages, the research methodology is explained and justified, including philosophical perspective, qualitative research design, methods of data collection and analysis, ethics.

4.1.1 Ontology, epistemology and methodology

Social research often begins with the question of ontology and epistemology. To start with, ontology refers to the theory of 'being' (the word derives from the Greek for 'existence') which is concerned with 'what is', what exists, and the nature of reality. It deals with the underpinning structure of the world and asks the question: "is there a 'real' world 'out there' that is independent of our knowledge of it?" (Marsh & Furlong, 2010, p185) or is the world in here and socially constructed. Ontological positions reflect competing views on the nature of the world. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge (the world derives from the Greek for 'knowledge') and is concerned with the ways in which the knowledge of reality is acquired. Epistemological position reflects one's view of what and how we can know the world (Marsh &Furlong, 2002). Collectively, these assumptions outline the basis of being and the limits of knowing; it enables social scientists to consider what exists to be known, and the conditions of acquiring knowledge of that which exists. They are often related to each other for the former affects the latter (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Ontology and epistemology are fundamental to social research as they outline a certain way of understanding what reality is, the nature of knowledge associated with that reality, and consequently, how to gather what might count as data and evidence to make claims. Marsh and Furlong (2010) argue that both concepts are significant in shaping the approach to theory and methods that social scientists adopt. Thus, they should be seen as skin not a sweater; they cannot be put on and taken off for the sake researcher's convenience because they reflect the researchers' assumptions about the conception of the social world which also generates significant methodological implications (Marsh & Furlong, 2002; Hay, 2002). Methodology is therefore inextricably linked to ontology and epistemology, and represents the choice of analytical strategy, as well as the substantive design and analysis that underpins the progression of research. It should not be confused with methods; while the methodology establishes principles, method is concerned with concrete techniques. Arguably, ontology, epistemology and methodology are dependent and interrelated in a "directional" manner (Hay, 2002, P.63; Grix, 2010). It has been suggested that by following such an order of dependence, researchers are likely to increase the soundness of the research and acquire a sense of direction and stability (Crotty, 1998). In light of this, this chapter will follow a 'directional' format in explicating its theoretical and methodological choices.

4.2 Critical Realism

4.2.1 Introduction

The term Critical Realism (CR) emerged from the work of Roy Bhaskar and his early work on 'transcendental realism' as a critique of positivism in the natural science, as well as his 'critical naturalist' critique of interpretivism in the social sciences (Bhaskar, 1975; 1979). It is a philosophical meta-theoretical or philosophical position to describe the social sphere as different from the natural world. It argues that there is an objective, knowable world that is independent of human observation, and acknowledges that our

knowledge is provisional, approximate, and influenced by social factors. Therefore, it creates a possibility of rearticulating a more sophisticated realist ontology and epistemology to make CR a comprehensive philosophy of science (Archer et al, 1998; Brown, Fleetwood & Roberts, 2002; Sayer, 1992; 2000).

4.2.2 Ontological Realism

For critical realism the world exists regardless of our knowledge of it. It rests on an ontological assumption that an external reality exists independently of human perceptions in the world of 'the real'. Knowledge is either true or not, even though we, for the moment, do not necessarily know which. In other words, knowledge has two dimensions; the transitive and the intransitive. The transitive dimension of knowledge is composed of the theories and discourses that are constructed by human beings in order to uncover the intransitive dimension of knowledge, which is the objects of study themselves, whether these are physical processes or social phenomena. Transitive knowledge (theory, perceptions, conceptualisation) develops over time as it seeks to get closer to reality; that said, the 'real world' is a truth claim that is also fallible, and there will never be in a direct, corresponding, relationship (Bryman, 2016; Houston, 2010; Sayer, 2002).

As human knowledge only represents a small proportion of a deep and vast reality, it is important to state that ontology (our explanations of what is real, the nature of reality) is not reducible to epistemology (our knowledge of reality). Critical realists presuppose that social reality is stratified – meaning that what we can't see empirically is nevertheless important, in that we can see outcomes and must offer explanations as to the potential causal powers that are involved in shaping these processes and relations. In other words, the real is greater than what we know, so CR holds an anti-positivist, anti-reductionist view of the social world. In this respect, it critiques positivism for conflating an understanding of reality with what can be empirically known. Likewise,

interpretivism is guilty of reducing the realm of the real to how reality is interpreted. The same critique applies to strong constructivism that views reality as entirely constructed within human knowledge or discourse. The problematic reduction of ontology to epistemology has been described as an 'epistemic fallacy' (Bhaskar, 1998; Sayer, 2000).

4.2.3 Epistemic Relativism

Despite the fact that CR has a strong commitment to ontological realism, it also recognises that our knowledge about that reality is always situated in historical, cultural and social contexts. Knowledge claims are made from different standpoints according to various influences and interests, and it is also socially constructed and subject to individual's beliefs, experience and interpretation. In other words, our knowledge is conceptual, contextual and activity dependent (Sayer, 1992; Danermark et al, 2002). This is most evident in ethnography and discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2013). Thus, CR believe that we need to embrace epistemic relativism as there is no way to understand the world except under particular historical conditions. As a result, although we recognise the existence of an invisible reality, our attempt to understand and explain it are fallible. Our social worlds operate in a double hermeneutic circle in which a two-way interpretation is constantly exercised between the researcher and the researched (Sayer, 2000). Our individual cognitive, cultural and political preferences inevitably prevent us from approximating or viewing the truth in an objective manner, which we cannot eliminate. Nevertheless, it should not stop us seeking to understand reality; it simply means that the way towards this understanding of reality are not straightforward. Ontological realism cannot grant a reality based on any of our conceptual constructions, and neither does it justify a derogation of the lay actor (Porpora, 2015). Instead, CR sees ontology as having a relative degree of autonomy from epistemology.

4.2.4 Stratified ontology

The most important feature of CR is that it presupposes that the nature of reality (the intransitive dimension of knowledge) is stratified into three independent domains which each possess its own properties. These three levels of reality are the empirical, the actual, and the real. The empirical refers to what can be experienced and sensed at the surface level and is contingent upon the real and the actual. It is the visible manifestation of the emergent powers of the interaction of ideas, instruments, institutions and so on. Yet events or objects that can be measured empirically and explained through our 'common sense' are always filtered through human experience and interpretation (Fletcher, 2017). This is the transitive level of reality. The next level is the actual, where events occur in a context, but whose structuring mechanisms are not necessarily visible, but instead can be understood as activated by causal powers or mechanisms at the level of the real. The real has a central and unique importance in critical realism. Sayer offers an accessible explication of the real,

> *…the real is whatever exist, be it natural or social, regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us, and whether we happen to have an adequate understanding of its nature. Whether they be physical, like minerals, or social, like bureaucracies, they have certain structures and causal powers, that is, capacities to behave in particular ways, and causal liabilities or passive power, that is, specific susceptibilities to certain kinds of change. (Sayer, 2000, p.11)*

The real is constituted from deep unseen structures and causal mechanisms that have effects, or outcomes. However, these are not always activated and thus can be latent. These structures and mechanisms have a transfactual quality in that they exist irrespective of our perception of them. The major task for critical realists is to uncover these underlying structures and causal mechanisms to explain social phenomenon in particular contexts. This is the intransitive level of reality (Fletcher, 2017; Sayer, 2000). This stratification of reality thus allows critical realists to image and examine situations where things have "unexercised powers, as well as powers that are exercised but unrealised and powers that are realised but unperceived" (Steinmetz, 1998).

4.2.5 Emergence

The notion of emergence is closely tied to the stratified ontology of CR. It refers to a situation when combinations and interactions of entities and properties at one level of reality generate 'emergent' phenomenon at other levels, and these have properties that cannot be irreducible constituent parts but are the outcomes of the whole. A classic example is water, which has the causal power to distinguish fire, but its constituents Oxygen and Hydrogen have the opposite casual power to accelerate fire (Gorski, 2013). In fact, emergence captures the dynamic movement in which causal powers are created through the emergent properties in an ontologically stratified system which can be radically different from its individual constituents. Thus, it helps to reveal the complexity and inherent unpredictability that is intrinsic to open systems, implying huge potentialities and unpredictability within our social world. Whether things happen or whether we can experience them depends on the intersectionality of deep causal mechanisms inherent in structures and conditions that have the potential to trigger the actualisation of structure's causal power.

4.2.6 Causation

The most distinctive feature of critical realism is its analysis of causation. For realists, causation is not understood as certainties but tendencies. To understand this, we need to recognise that social worlds are an open system (Fleetwood, 2017; Lawson, 1998b). Consistent regularities are only likely to occur under experimental conditions in a closed system when variables or conditions are stable. Yet this isn't the case in the social world. The social world is an open system that is much more complicated. It comprises a myriad of interacting structures and systems, each with its own distinct generative mechanisms, and these mechanisms interact to produce constant changes and irregularities in events, depending on various conditions. The combined effects of these complementary and countervailing mechanisms result in a rich tapestry of cause

and effect at the empirical level of reality where it becomes difficult to predict with certainty (Sayer, 2000; Demetriou, 2009). In other words, the future is open, and events are not pre-determined, depending instead on contingent conditions which might proceed in different directions. Consequently, CR rejects the idea of causation as constant conjunction (Houston, 2010). Instead, it argues that causes are not simply determining of actions but must be seen as tendencies. From CR's perspective, an explanation of social phenomena should instead focus on "…identifying underlying causal mechanisms and how they work and discovering if they have been activated and under what conditions." (Sayer, 2000, p.14). It is the explanation of that tendency that should be prioritised, instead of collecting empirical evidence to formulate hypotheses in a positivist or successionist sense.

4.2.7 CR as underlabourer

CR sees itself as a philosophical tradition committed to 'under-labouring' for substantive theories. Locke (1979, p.9-10) defined under-labouring in the following,

> *"The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity: but every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge."*

CR attempts to 'clear' the ideological ground to allow for the full expression of sciences through conceptual clarification and facilitating emancipatory change. Bhaskar (2011, p. 19) argues that:

> *By making the possibility of philosophical discourse contingent upon the actuality of social practices, transcendental realism provides a way of integrating philosophical and sociological (or historical) studies of practices, such as science. Moreover, through the resolution of the problems generated by*

> *the notion of the contingency of the causal connection and the critique of the deductivist (and deterministic) theories generated by the notion of its actuality, the scene is set for a philosophy that will once more act as 'underlabourer', and occasional midwife, to the sciences. On the new world-view that emerges both nature and the sciences are stratified and differentiated; and the possibility arises that the behaviour of higher-order (biological) entities, such as human beings, might both be explanatorily irreducible to (or emergent from) and yet entirely consistent with, lower-order (physical) laws.*

An example of this can be found in the discipline of economics. Lawson (1995, 1996, 1997) notes that mainstream economics relies excessively on a deductivist methodology. It embraces an uncritical enthusiasm for formalism, and believes in strong conditional predictions in economics, despite repeated failures. By drawing on CR, economists like Lawson are critically reflective about mainstream economic theory. Simultaneously, CR has been used to analyse a range of eminent economists and economic schools such as Post-Keynesian, Marxist, Austrian, Evolutionary, Institutional and Feminist Economy (Lawson, 1997); additionally, the philosophical insights CR represents have also been refined and adjusted to the discipline. Of course, CR can also be adopted in other social science fields including management, organisation theory, information system and geography for enlightenment. This means CR, as a philosophical metatheory, is inclusive and compatible with a wide range of methods (Collier, 1994).

4.2.8 Abstraction, Abduction & Retroduction

CR believes in conceptualising objects and events through abstracting the various constitutive elements, and their influences. By unpacking and examining individual components, how they work, and how they interact with each other, we are able to return to the concrete, many-sided, nature of objects and make sense of it. It is a systematic process which involves a double movement, from concrete and complex to the abstract and simple. This allows social scientists to reconstruct concepts and test reality by examining the constituent' characteristics and most importantly their

combined effects. Abstraction is a useful approach for avoiding misattribution of causality (Sayer, 1992; Sayer, 2000).

As is now clear, the social world is complex, messy, stratified in nature, which leads to the question of how can we deal with such a system to reveal the processes and deep structures that go beyond the empirical level? Abductive and retroductive inference are tools for analysis that enable researchers to identify causal mechanisms. Abduction is a process of "inference or thought operation, implying a particular phenomenon or event is interpreted from a set of general ideas or concepts" (Danermark et al, 2002, p.205). Abduction is also known as theoretical redescription, which aims to employ new theories or frameworks to give meaning to existing phenomenon. It starts with a theory and considers to what extent it fits a case. Abduction raises the level of theoretical engagement beyond descriptions of the empirical entities in an attempt to seek for alternative interpretation of reality, albeit a plausible and fallible one. It reflects the essence of CR in that transitive knowledge is moving towards intransitive knowledge through a theory-laden, not theory-determined, approach (Danermark et al, 2002). It is offering new meanings to already known phenomenon, challenging taken for granted assumptions in a novel way.

The other theoretical tool that enables such investigation is retroduction, which is a type of inference that allows researchers to think about what might be the conditions, structures and constituent parts that exist invisibly for constructing social phenomena. In other words, it refers to the inference from a description of the phenomenon to a description of something that produces it. That is, it is a means of endeavouring to clarify the basic prerequisites or conditions for causal mechanisms to take effect, circumstances without which things cannot exist. Therefore, retroduction moves beyond "the manifest phenomena of social life, as conceptualised in the experience of social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitates them" (Bhaskar, 1979, p.23), and concerns itself with the question: "How is any phenomenon, like an action or social organisation, possible?... What properties must exist for X to exist and

to be what X is?" (Danemark et al, 2002, p.97). I consider retroduction to be an effective means for thinking back from, below, or behind, effects to seek its causes, and is an alternative approach for contributing a more sufficient account in elaborating the social reality. It is a reasoning process that moves from concrete to abstract and back again, retroduction is the 'central mode of inference' in CR (Lawson, 1998a, p.156).

Both abduction and retroduction make it possible to explain the social processes that cause events. They are beneficial for the interpretation of qualitative data, providing a more nuanced analysis than inductive and deductive inference permit. Both inferences enable researchers to make connection and form new ideas that is previously known but can be understood in different contexts (Meyer & Lunnay, 2013); more importantly, these modes of interference and the ways of thinking they represent will be applied in the intensive research design employed in this research.

4.3 Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education

4.3.1 Introduction

Critical Cultural Political Economy of Education (CCPEE) was initially conceived as a means to provide an alternative theoretical approach to the study of the globalisation of education to either cultural only, or political economy only, approaches. Its use does not remain there, however and has been used to help understand processes like regionalisation (Robertson et al, 2016). For the purpose of my research, it is a valuable starting point. It is an innovative approach in the sense that it aims to critically interrogate social phenomena or social events by highlighting their cultural, political and economic dimensions (Robertson & Dale, 2015). It is inspired by the work of the Lancaster scholars who attempted to bridge studies between critical political economy with critical semiotic analysis for advancing a cultural turn in the field of policy studies (Sayer, 2001; Jessop, 2004, 2009; Sum & Jessop, 2013). CCPEE offers a systematic way of understanding how educational activities are interrelated to, and are shaped by,

various factors that are located within and beyond the wider cultural, political and economic contexts. In the following section, I will elaborate essential characteristics of CCPEE alongside its implications for my research. WHYIS IT USEFUL FOR YOUR RESEARCH?

4.3.2 Critical

CCPEE is built on a critical realist philosophy of science. As such, CCPEE has a stratified ontology and believes a multi-layered reality. Mechanisms (the real) cause social phenomena and events (the actual), which may or may not be experienced by us (the empirical). Relating this notion to education, it implies that the various kinds of education activities that make up an ensemble of emerging properties that is complex in nature, and this collective needs to be viewed as multi-layered entity that full of layers of structures and generative mechanisms. Therefore, education is a product of multiple determinations (Robertson & Dale, 2005, p. 150). Given its ontological nature, it is impossible to observe those invisible dynamic movement, mechanism, structures and conditions that give rise to observable events. But we need to take account of those when trying to explain phenomenon within the field.

CCPEE is also premised on critical theory. Robertson and Dale took Sayer's challenge "if a new cultural political economy is to be a worthwhile enterprise, it needs to be more critical …" (Sayer 2001, p. 688). Critical implies a need to take account of the conditions for knowledge and knowing, how do we construct our knowledge through a-priori and experience from the disorder should be contested in order to be critically reflective. Likewise, by applying the concept critique into the investigation, we might be able to see the contradictory effects marked by cultural, political and economic processes and develop understanding for social change (Robertson & Dale, 2015, p. 166).

4.3.3 Cultural Political Economy

The emergence of CCPEE is partially due to an observation on that the current dominant theoretical framework that is narrowly focused on specific aspects within the broader frame of education ensemble, therefore unable to provide a holistic account of reading. CCPEE, alternatively, highlights the significance of collectivity in interrogating elements from culture, politics and economy in producing a more comprehensive reading towards the ongoing transforming process of education with, within and beyond societies (Robertson & Dale, 2015).

Cultural Political Economy (CPE) is the essential concept needs to be addressed here. Cultural political economy should not be taken at its face value as Culture, Politics or the Economy. Instead, a new set of meanings are embodied at this occasion. The meaning of 'Culture' has been rearticulated in a more generous sense as the 'business of making selves … how worlds, meanings and consciousness are formed'; 'Culture' goes beyond semiosis and discourse to identity, affects, experiences, ideology and even civilizational projects such as Western modernity, Confucianism and Islam, 'Culture' is understood as meaning making and it needs a comprehensive reading for placing education ensemble into its analytical orbit (Robertson & Dale, 2015, p. 154; Shah et al, 2014). Similarly, 'Political' is more than Politics, it moves beyond government/governance and widen our horizons by attending to all relations of power between social actors (Kedzierski, 2016) and proposing question such as "Whose knowledge counts to how the sector is governed" (Robertson & Dale, 2015, p.154). It potentially involves various power dynamics within an education ensemble at multiple levels, from governing institutions to foreign policy to region building. 'Economy' is concerned with 'value', yet it is not limited to particular ways of organising production, distribution and exchange such as the Capitalist market economy; It embraces the diversity of forms of 'economy' and includes non-market economy with non-measurable value and various new economies that we have little understanding of, such as gift economy, platform economy, electronic economy (Robertson & Dale, 2015,

p.153). In sum, CPE needs to see itself as a broader and more sophisticated collective. Robertson (2012) summarises that CCPEE advances a new perspective of seeing "education as part of societies; it does not sit outside of it" – by not simply 'adding' education to CPE, but critically viewing education as being both constituted by and connected to cultural, economic and political dynamics and processes.

Why CR & CCPEE? Why Critical? Philosophically, CR holds the belief that the social world is embedded within relations, structures, conditions and causal mechanisms. The social world is essentially a complex collective full of unequal power dynamics, structural inequalities and forms of social oppression and oppression. CR implies what can be experienced or observed might be not the absolute truth. Building upon the critical realist's recognition of visible and invisible nature of reality, it demands a deeper understanding of how social structures and agents are interacting and producing social phenomenon in a multi-layered social world. Thus, any simplistic reading of the social world advocated by positivist and interpretivist is insufficient. Applying these two concepts, it suggests that the BRI as a Chinese spatialising/ globalising project should not be taken-for-granted, nor does China's education policy and initiatives on the BRI. They should be instead viewed as the manifestation/observable events that are underpinned by deeper causal mechanisms. Larger social forces, forms of power and other external conditions (eg. geostrategic) that is at work in constituting such an initiative. CR examines how various forces, power and conditions within a stratified system working on, in and through social event or phenomenon, either as facilitators or as barriers.

Harvey (1990, p.1) distinguishes critical social research as follows:

> *"Critical social research is underpinned by a critical-dialectical perspective which attempts to dig beneath the surface of historically specific oppressive social structures. This is contrasted with positivistic concerns to discover the factors that cause observed phenomena or build grand theoretical edifices and with phenomenological attempts to interpret the meanings of social actors or attempt close analysis of symbolic processes."*

Critical draws from the tradition of critical theory that is largely down to German philosophers Karl Marx (Bohman, 2005). The critical tradition has evolved throughout years, with variations emerged and developed. What remains is that critical theorists and researchers align themselves with the interests of those opposed to the dominant order of society. They reflect on ways in which competing interests clash and how conflicts are resolved in favour of particular groups. In this regard, critical social science is economic and political in nature (Seiler, 2016). Critical theory embraces critique, which has an emancipatory function for social change (Robertson & Dale, 2015). If China's BRI is viewed as a form of wider regional transformation at a global level, then what would be the forms of social power that drive such change, and what are the implications? The existing prevailing system is socially constituted and determined by the social structure that is seen as unequal and oppressive, which generate unequal power relations and cause inequality, domination, and oppression (Jupp, 2006). Bring critical is to uncover the structure that underpins the prevailing system and provides an alternative reading and understanding. In that way, we not just look at the BRI and its education-related activities at their appearance; but to understand the deeper structures that enable their emergence.

4.4 Methodological Design

By adopting a critical realist ontology and epistemology, it is important to have a methodological design that is philosophically compatible. From this point, critical realists argue the need for a critical methodological pluralism. It doesn't pre-exclude any method, nor does it advocate any new method; what it does is to combine different methods together under the umbrella of CR philosophy.

It believes both qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other in helping us to better understand the dynamic social world. Nevertheless, it argues "but not all methods are equally suitable". What is suitable not only depends on the capacity to answer the research questions but also should be based on the relationship between

metatheory and methodology, specifically the ontological-methodological link. CR in this respect challenges pragmatism for lacking a solid philosophical foundation on which its methodology is built. This could result in less fruitful and less meaningful outcomes. It is under such theoretical guidance that CR introduce a new dual concept, an intensive and extensive research design (Danemark et al, 2002; Sayer, 1992, 2000).

Table 4.1 Summary of ‘intensive’ and ‘extensive’ research (Adapted from Sayer 1992, p. 243)

	Intensive Research	Extensive Research
Types of research questions posed	How does a process work in a particular case or small number of cases? What produces a certain change? What did the agents actually do?	What are the regularities, common patterns, distinguishing features of a population? How widely are certain characteristics or processes distributed or represented?
Relations	Substantial relations of connection.	Formal relations of similarity.
Type of groups studied	Causal groups	Taxonomic groups
Type of account produced	Casual explanation of the production of certain objects or events, though not necessarily representative ones	Descriptive 'representative' generalisations, lacking in explanatory penetration.
Typical methods	Study of individual agents in their causal contexts, interactive interviews, ethnography. Qualitative analysis	Large-scale survey of population or representative sample, formal questionnaires, standardised interviews. Statistical analysis.
Limitations	Actual concrete patterns and contingent relations are unlikely to be 'representative', 'average' or generalisable. Necessary relations discovered will exist wherever their relata are present, for example, casual powers of objects are generalisable to other contexts as they are necessary features of these objects.	Although representative of a whole population, they are unlikely to be generalisable to other populations at different times and places. Problem of ecological fallacy in making inferences about individuals. Limited explanatory power.
Appropriate tests	Corroboration	Replication

4.5 The Intensive Research Design

The methodological design for this research has been inspired by Sayer's *Methods in Social Science: A Realist Approach* (1992) and *Realism and Social Science* (2000). Sayer draws a distinction between extensive and intensive research design in terms of the purpose, scope and approach. That is, these approaches have been applied to solve different kinds of problems. Intensive research aims to identify how causal mechanisms are exercised in a small number of cases in an intensive way. Since most social science issues are complex in nature, it would be difficult to study such problems in large numbers if we intend to offer an explanation, thus forcing social scientist to limit their cases, which are researched in an intensive way. It mainly uses qualitative methods, such as interactive interviews, ethnography, and participant observation. It is based on a less formal, less standardised, and more interactive mode of communication, and thus expands the scope of generating richness and insights in the process of researching. This more flexible research approach enables researchers and their respondents to construct knowledge instead of testing pre-determined hypothesis. In contrast, extensive research design is interested in discovering generalities and regularities in events, which is often involved with large number of samplings through surveys, formal questionnaires and statistical analysis. It looks at how certain characteristics are represented and distributed in a population. Extensive research design helps to capture contrastive demi-regularities between different taxonomic groups, and therefore providing clues to generative mechanism that gives rise to manifestations. It is important in a sense that we cannot detect interesting patterns in the social world without it.

It is obvious that an intensive and extensive research designs have different foci. However, the difference between them should not be seen as depth versus breadth. Danermark et al (2002) note that both intensive and extensive research designs are useful in their own rights; each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Danermark et al (2002) and Lawson (1997) have demonstrated how extensive and intensive research

design can be applied together in a sequential manner so as to identify regularities, and to try to explain such patterns. The key issue here is that both designs are not exclusive to each other under the critical realist metatheory, and they can be complementary to each other on the condition that their purpose is being made clear. The difference is the claims that are made. An extensive design, such as a survey, provides a set of data points, rather than a theory that stands for all time.

The primary concern of this research is to make sense of the phenomenon of how a Chinese-led BRI has emerged and evolved over time, and to examine its implications for regional political economy as well as analyse how education has been incorporated into such a grand strategy, and with what possible outcomes for regional higher education landscape. My interest is not in studying the generalisability of patterns or uncovering regularities, but to comprehend the process of change and how it has been linked to the wider socio-political policies, development and global transformation. I have thus been interested in exploring how the BRI and its education development initiatives is subject to causal processes and how these mediate the ways in which education manifests itself at the level of policy production and development initiatives. As the BRI has gained in momentum in recent years, the question for this thesis is: how best to describe, understand, and theorise these developments? What structural mechanisms are in place to facilitate and counteract these processes? Under what conditions is the BRI being enabled and developed? I intend to offer rich, nuanced explications for these questions. I am not seeking generalisations or identifying universality and regularities, meaning I am not interested to investigate how representative the Chinese-led BRI can be and how it can be generalised or replicated elsewhere, rather the focus is in generating explanations of these accounts of social phenomenon. Taking the above factors into consideration I decided to use an intensive research design. The sampling principle in intensive research design is strategic, and the empirical bases of intensive research design, are cases (Danermark et al, 2002).

4.6 Data

The primary data sources used in this research includes: key official policy documents; government reports; official website coverage from Ministry of Education (MOE); leader's speeches; and legislation; media reports, and secondary documents consist of scholarly publications and internet resources; as well as institutional and local/provincial administration's policy statements. This policy analysis has been supplemented by interviews with the BRI and education experts within and beyond the country so as to answer the question: "how can we describe and understand the BRI?" and "how, in what ways and with what consequences is education being incorporated into the BRI?" In essence, it addresses the question of the role of China and its education strategies in ways that are constitutive of the BRI. To answer these questions, governmental official policy documents are drawn upon as a major source to interpret and explain the BRI and its strategic relevance to education development. Key individual researchers who possess knowledge regarding the BRI and education studies have been approached and invited to complement the official policy analysis by providing additional accounts of their individual interpretations on the initiative and its relationship to education in a broader sense.

The empirical data collected from fieldwork spanned from November 2018 to May 2019. 16 semi-structured interviews with experts were conducted on selective sites during fieldwork in Beijing, Xiamen, and Hong Kong, who were located in 11 different institutional organisations. These institutions were well established higher learning and research organizations, universities and government department. Those people that I interviewed working in those organizations are at the time doing research or policy work on BRI-related issues, I managed to reach these interviewees because of their work on the BRI and related topics. The primary interviewees are academics and mostly are senior scholars who hold senior positions in their respective institutions/organisations. All interviews were conducted in Chinese and/or English, depending on the preference of the interviewees to express their ideas. Most interviews

were between 45 minutes to one and half hours in length. Experts with different disciplinary backgrounds are represented in this study, their disciplines include education, political science, management, technology, and science.

Table 4.2: Selection of research participants, their occupations, and locations

	pseudonym	Position/occupation	Discipline/field	location
1	Mr. S	Director, University Professor	Political Science	Beijing
2	Mr. Y	Director of research Institute	Educational Futures/ STEM	Beijing
3	Ms. L	Director of research Institute	Area Studies	Beijing
4	Mr. L	University Professor	Comparative Education	Beijing
5	Ms. Z	University Administrator	History of Education; Political science	Beijing
6	Mr. H	University Professor	Higher Education	Beijing
7	Ms. W	University Professor	Higher Education	Beijing
8	Ms. L	Policy Officer	Education Policy	Beijing
9	Mr. P	University Professor	Education Policy	Beijing
10	Ms. X	University Professor; Director	Higher Education	Beijing
11	Mr. J	Director of Research Institute	Higher Education	Xiamen
12	Ms. L	University Administrator	Higher Education	Xiamen
13	Mr. W	University Professor	Higher Education	Xiamen
14	Mr. D	University Professor	Higher Education	Xiamen
15	Mr. W	University Professor	Higher Education	Hong Kong
16	Ms. K	University Professor	Higher Education	Hong Kong

During the interviews, I asked general questions about the BRI including:

1. How do we make sense of the BRI in constituting China's overall development?
2. What potentials does the BRI hold for China and the regional cultural, economic, and political cooperation?

I also asked more specific questions targeting the BRI and higher education nexus:

3. How to understand the Ministry's policy endeavour in promoting education on the BRI? What elements of China's higher education has been mobilised to support the development of the BRI?
4. What is the institutional strategy that your organization has adopted in response to the BRI policy initiative? What are the major challenges or concerns in policy implementation?

Besides, I also asked them to share thoughts about future developments regarding both the BRI and higher education wherein, together with open space for them to reflect on their own thoughts on the topic.

4.7 Research Methods

The methods employed in this research are 'qualitative', which include document analysis, interviews and observation.

4.7.1 Using Documentary Sources

Documentary sources form an important aspect in this research method design. Documents can be treated as a source of data in their own right. Given the nature of the research questions, this study will make extensive use of documents as a source of information. One of the greatest advantages of using documentary sources is their accessibility, vast amounts of documentary information are easily accessible in the public domain without much cost, delay, prior appointment or the need for authorization. In other words, documents pose considerably fewer challenges as a source of information for researchers to obtain. Denscombe (2003) notes the sources of documentary data range from academic and non-academic publications, websites, records, letter, memos, diaries to government publications. Documentary data can be further classified into primary and secondary resources, drawing a distinction between existing materials that have not yet been used in other contexts, and data produced through other researchers (Flick, 2011). Often primary sources are generated from administrative departments or organisations for the purpose of monitoring, analysis and

elaboration. In this research, preference has been therefore given to 'official' first-hand primary documents supplemented by second-hand sources for the analysis and interpretation of relevant policy initiative on the BRI agendas. Additionally, the authenticity and credibility of the documents are also considered. Careful selection of documents elicits creditable information from governmental sector, organisational, institutional sources, official website information, academic publications, media coverage, and research reports from think tanks. Amongst these, official policy documents are prioritised since they are characterised as authoritative, and carry a set of values or set of ideas about what ought to be (May, 2011; Denscombe, 2003). The documents have been accumulated as the research progressed. The collection of documents was used for critical policy analysis/ critical discourse analysis, complementing and corroborating the analysis of semi-structured interviews as to develop a fuller account of reading on the topic of investigation. Documents and publicly available sources have illuminated my research direction as more new information come to light and more documents got published throughout my research process.

4.7.2 Interviews

Oppenheim (1992) claims that probably no other skill is as important to social science researchers as the ability to conduct good interviews. Broadly, an interview is the most frequently used method in social science and aims to collect either standardised or varied accounts of lived experiences, viewpoints and perspectives from the participants regarding the issues under investigation (Mason, 2002). Qualitative interviews are distinguished from standardised/structured interviews as being less structured in approaching the subjects of research and in allowing individuals to fully engage in their response to questions. Semi-structured interviews were used in this research; they are less structured and thus more flexible, allowing the researcher to bring pre-determined questions into the interviewing process while simultaneously creating possibility for exploring new ideas throughout the interviewing process, thus affording the opportunity for creating new insights and exploring particular theme further in depth (Cohen et al,

2011; Bryman, 2016). The nature of a semi-structure interview enables participants to explain the significance of their specific circumstances and conditions (Sayer, 1992). This creates a more productive and meaningful mode of communication whereby researchers maximise the information flow for generating, discussing and eliciting information that respondents feel more relevant to them. It also encourages researchers to constantly reflect and adapt their preconceived conceptions and challenge the traditional idea of 'observer induced bias'. Interviews were thus selected as a method for this research considering its research scope, aims and questions. This method makes it possible to directly engage in conversations with key actors to collect important views. While each interview followed the same format and procedure, there was some flexibility within each interview. Interviewees were invited to answer questions and reflects on their professional experience in relation to my research questions, but the question orders, time spent on each question varies from one participant to another. I also encouraged each interviewee to be flexible and to retain autonomy in their answers, which helped in gathering important and informative information. During the interviews, I found most scholars were quite open about my questions, they were willing to engage with the topic and share their perspectives on the BRI, so almost all interview sessions went well. Officials, however, tend to be more cautious about what they say regarding the subject and emphasised the importance of the accuracy of the information. My reflection is that policy officials might felt that they are somehow representing the state, thus were more careful about the message they deliver. Nevertheless, most interviews were successfully conducted, and I think the biggest challenge was to found those people in the first place.

4.7.3 Individuals as key informants

One of the important issues for designing this research project is to identify some key individuals as a source of information. In intensive research design, the research focuses mainly (though not exclusively) on how groups relate to each other. Identifiable individuals are of interest regarding their modes of connection with other. Individuals need not to be typical or similar in their attributes. They are often selected one by one

as the research proceeds, and as an understanding of membership of causal groups is to be established (Sayer, 1992). In other words, some leeway or space have been left for researchers to identify who might be a useful informant, and then to use snowballing techniques so as to build a sample from contacts and networks. This is what also actually happened in my case when I was in Beijing. I therefore contacted and confirmed with some individuals who I believed to be in strategically important positions for developing an understanding of the BRI education policy and practice. The selection of interviewees was made on the basis of their roles as key players or experts in their respective organisations within specific contexts, mostly in higher education research institutions. Most of them were undertaking education research and some are engaged in the BRI related research and institutions, albeit on different topics from my own research. Others were education practitioners and global China watchers. The selection of key informants was based on criteria include seniority and degree of involvement in their research and work in relation to the BRI and served as a means to enter the fieldwork. Meanwhile, through those key informants, I have acquired more valuable information alongside the research progression. The snowballing techniques did apply in my field, some researcher I interviewed introduced me to other people who were doing BRI-related research, which I found useful.

As mentioned earlier, the fieldwork was conducted between November 2018 to May 2019 in China. Participants were from a diverse range of cities, universities, and professional backgrounds were involved in this research. Interviewing a diverse body of experts was important part of my study as individuals' comments and views helped to me to generate a better understanding of the BRI research and its nexus to education from different perspectives. However, given the limitation of the scope of my study, I focused more on the depth rather than breadth, which also encouraged my research participants to talk more about their own individual experiences, understandings of, and relation to the BRI and how that shaped their work.

Of the sixteen research participants, five were executive directors, directors of BRI-affiliated research institutes, six were university professors or senior researchers at state-sponsored first-tier (985) universities, four were professors, researchers and policy analysts at second-tier (non-985) universities, and one worked at the Chinese state department – the Ministry of Education as a policy officer. All participants were Chinese citizens and had extensive experience in Chinese higher education system and were familiar with policy and research. They were located in different cities throughout China at the time of interviewing them, including Beijing, Xiamen in Fujian Province, and Hong Kong SAR. As experienced policy researchers and policy makers, participants have provided very useful information with regards to the changing nature of Chinese higher education policymaking and institutional development from historical and genealogical perspectives, and they have helped me to better interpret state policies by liking them to the wider social change and transformation. In this way, I managed to not only connect what they have said about Chinese higher education policy evolution and system-level development to key policy texts including the BRI, but also to my theoretical framing of cultural political economy.

4.7.4 Participant Observation & Double Positionality

Participant observation is primarily associated with qualitative research and is one of the most well-known methods in the social sciences (Bryman, 2016). It refers to the method in which the researcher participates in the daily life of people who under study. In such case, researchers are positioned as both participant and observer, seeking to observe the behaviour, listen to conversations and engage with key informants. It is widely used in anthropology and ethnography. The advantages it offered me was to gain first-hand information, producing detailed, subtle insider views. Denscombe (2003) claims that participant observation discloses information through researcher's experience by participating and experiencing events. The insider's perspective will facilitate an awareness of the contextual significance in shaping social events, hence place the participant observers in a strong position to understand and explain social

phenomenon. In this case, I saw myself as both a researcher and a participant observer through my engagement with various research events, conferences, even specialised training programmes during and after the fieldwork. Rather than merely collecting empirical data from sites, I also immersed myself in this topic throughout this research journey, accumulating knowledge across geographic spots, in order to understand it fully. This dual positioning resonates with that of holding both insider and outsider perspectives (Crossley, Arthur & McNess, 2016). An a national of China, and a local who was born in a city at the eastern end of Silk Road, I am easily classified as an insider in the context of this study. Yet I am also looking at China arguably via an outsider's perspective. This outside perspective has been acquired through my experience as an international student studying in the English higher education system. These two sets of identity and my facility with the language have helped me capture insightful insights that single-identity authors are incapable of.

Sayer (1992) argues that in intensive studies there is a strong sense of being explanatory. In contrast to extensive studies in which all samplings should be pre-determined and adhered to consistently so as to ensure representativeness, intensive research can be more flexible. It is possible for us as researchers to establish and refine the design as we go along. That means that instead of pre-determining the entire research design and who and what we are going to do in advance, we are more likely to discover interesting connections and gradually build up a knowledge network in which structures and causal groups co-exist. Of course, this is not an excuse for a 'fishing expedition', but it acknowledges that research is a process of learning by doing. This understanding implies that my original research design including setting and sampling are subject to modification and change throughout the researching process, which have been proven to be the case in this research journey.

4.8 Data Analysis

Based on two types of data collected for this study, I have adopted qualitative data analysis methods by combining critical discourse analysis and thematic analysis to make sense of both documentary sources and semi-structured interviews as the next steps of research design and direction and explained in the following section.

4.8.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

> Discourse theory can be used to explore policies in their historical contexts; tracing how policy 'problems' are constructed and defined and how particular issues get to be on the policy agenda. It is also useful in highlighting how policies come to be framed in certain ways-reflecting how economic, political and cultural contexts shape both the content and language of policy documents (Taylor, 1997).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) regards "language as social practice" (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997) and takes into account consideration of the context of language use. It aims to analyse "opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (Wodak, 1995, p.204 cited in Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000). It emphasises the role of language as a powerful resource that is related to ideology and socio-cultural change. It also draws on theories, such as that of Foucault, complemented by neo-Marxist theorists such as Gramsci (Taylor, 1997; Bryman, 2016). Fairclough (2001, p. 229) argues that his approach to CDA is interdisciplinary and that: "…'it opens a dialogue between disciplines concerned with linguistic and semiotic analysis… and disciplines concerned with theorizing and researching social processes and social change' ". In that sense, CDA is not a rigid procedure but can be adapted to suit particular research tasks (Taylor, 2004). Blommaert and Bulcaen (2000) note that CDA's central critique is the nexus of language/discourse/speech and social structure. CDA sees that discourse is socially constitutive and conditioned. It intends to incorporate social-theoretical insights into discourse analysis, and the critical nature of it leads to a close association with topics such as ideology, inequality and power. By applying CDA, discourse is regarded as a

three-layered complexity, namely as text, discursive-practice, and social-practice. In other words, the emphasis is given to understanding the object/text itself, the process by which it has been produced, and the socio-historical conditions that govern these processes by which the text/discourse are produced and received. Accordingly, the analysis moves from description (text/discourse analysis), to interpretation (processing analysis) and explanation (social analysis) (Janks, 1997). Howarth (2009) and Fairclough (2013) demonstrate how CDA can be used for critical policy studies. By incorporating notions of power, discourse, and policy into a complex interrelationship, and interrogating that combination for the purpose of critical policy analysis, allows researchers to not only describe but evaluate through normative critique. In doing so it moves beyond description and evaluation to explanation through explanatory critique (Fairclough, 2013). CDA helps to uncover how language/discourse has been 'implicated in relations of power' (Janks, 1997, p.329) to produce and construct social events. However, it also leaves some space for researchers to represent, reconstruct, and reconceptualise, social realities via its reflective characters; that is the dialectical relations between material and semiotic (Jessop, 2004; Fairclough, 2013). CDA is therefore explicitly suitable for theoretical work.

What is also crucial is to have some distance from the data, embedding the data in the social, taking a political stance explicitly, and having a sense of self-reflection. Regarding this research, CDA is particularly appropriate for critical policy analysis because it allows a detailed investigation of how language has been used to produce and construct the phenomenon of the BRI relation to wider global/regional social and cultural structures, relationships, and processes. As Jupp (2006: 276-279) suggests, official policy documents are valuable sources for what has been defined as problematic, what is viewed as the explanation, and what seems to be the preferred solutions. Accordingly, critical policy analysis needs to be reviewed in a social and institutional context, for the meaning of it depends on where they are used, by whom, and to whom. CDA and its three-layered analytical procedures, fully acknowledges that discourse is embedded into the social and it must be understood relationally and dialectically to the

external environment. Critically policy analysis also pays attention to the complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented, and recognise policy as an "extremely complex, often contradictory process" (Diem et al, 2014). Therefore, I see that CDA and critical policy analysis share some mutual characteristics, and that CDA is appropriate for addressing the challenge of critical policy analysis in this research.

The policy analysis focused on how texts have been produced through and in relation to the wider cultural, political and economic dynamics experienced in the current era. Texts are more than just semiotic resources and effects; they are made through social structures and social practices. Understanding policy critically involves text analysis (description), processing analysis (interpretation); and social analysis (explanation). Combining CDA and CCPEE, I was able to trace out the emergence and evolution of policy development, with a focus on how wider social and political processes and forces shape the way policy came to be. That allows me to comprehend and contextualise policy work in a relational way.

4.8.2 Thematic Analysis

Besides policy documents, qualitative data collected from key individual interviews were analysed by applying thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has also been used as a preliminary method for analysing documentary data such as media, think tank reports, website information etc. They define thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes my data set in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic" (p. 79). While the qualitative data coding and analysis process would seem to be more recursive than linear, I followed Braun and Clarke's (2006, p. 87) six stages, step-by-step, guide of thematic analysis as suggested below:

Phase1 – Familiarizing yourself with your data: Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas

Phase2 – Generating initial codes: Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.

Phase3 – Searching for themes: Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.

Phase4 – Reviewing themes: Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level1) and the entire data (Level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

Phase 5 – Defining and naming themes: Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

Phase 6 – Producing the report: The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

The analysis of data started with familiarisation. I had interview recordings transcribed while listened to recordings several times to deepen my familiarity with transcripts. Generally speaking, recording went on rather well, and I did not encounter much challenge. As transcribing data is a time-consuming process, I decided to have all transcription done in my mother tongue Chinese language to save time and become more familiar with the data. Following this, I read each transcripts several times in greater detail to see if initial codes and meanings were emerged out of these transcriptions. Coding repeated patterns across data-set is an essential phase of thematic analysis, which can be done in either a 'data-driven' or 'theory-driven' way (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 88-89). This suggests themes could be dependent on the data, or researchers could approach the data with specific questions in mind that they wish to code around. In this case, a more theory-driven coding approach was adopted. For example, when coding concepts of higher education and region-building, special attention was given to ideas and issues such as higher education regional cooperation and internationalisation in illuminating a NSR regional project. Other relevant matter, such as regional student mobility, statements from university alliances, transnational education development, and cross-border research collaborations, have all

demonstrated the benefits of creating a regional higher education space, and of course, geopolitics among other factors were coded and categorised as a potential contracting force against the formation of the BRI educational community building. In addition, another important aspect of thematic coding rested upon its ability to uncover both semantic/explicit and latent/interpretative meanings (Boyatzis, 1998). Semantic meanings refer to the explicit or surface meanings, while the latent meanings can be understood as the 'underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisation – and ideologies – that are theorized as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84). This resonates with CDA in placing greater importance on the deeper structural power dynamics in shaping policy formation, meaning-making processes of interpretation and how power relations have been implicated and reconfigured during these developments. The development of semantic meanings involves interpretative work, which is not just about description, but is about why and how things happened the way they are. GOOD For instance, why is education such an important element in constituting and consolidating the development of the BRI? What's the Chinese state take on this matter, what kinds of assumptions does an official policy text reveal? What kind of dynamics or synergies exist between policy and its translation into practice? To draw out a theoretically laden and semantic interpretation, the process of analysis is best summarised as a flexible, creative and critical 'go back and forth' dialogue that bridges the interview data, policy texts, wider cultural political economy, historical and cultural legacy of Silk Road and researcher's own positionality. All in all, coding the gathered data focusing on the meanings, power and forms of exchange has not only enabled me to interrogate data against the theoretical and conceptual frameworks mentioned earlier, but also help to identify emerging themes that potentially contribute to knowledge building. In that sense, I have creatively adopted some of the thematic coding technique that in effect combines ideas with those of grounded theory coding (Flick, 2014).

4.9 Trustworthiness

According to a critical realist ontological and epistemological perspective, social reality exists independently of our representation, with all of its complexity not fully available to researchers. Acknowledging this, CR theoretical positioning and epistemic fallacy should not compromise research trustworthiness, a concept that is used to support the argument that the degree of confidence in data, interpretation, and methods used to ensure the quality of a research (Polit & Beck, 2014). In quantitative research, reliability and validity is often measured through establishing cause-effect relation from drawing on empirical and statistical data. In qualitative research, trustworthiness or the rigor of research are more variously defined. Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four-dimensional framework provides useful criteria as a benchmark for critical self-evaluation. Lincoln and Guba suggest that trustworthiness in a qualitative study may be judged by a combination of credibility (internal validity), transferability (external validity/generalisability), dependability (reliability), and confirmability (objectivity).

To address the trustworthiness of this research, I have employed multiple strategies. During the interview processes, I asked interviewees to clarify or elaborate on their views in response to some unclear points. I also employed triangulation by using supplementary data sources, comparing data between rounds of interpretation over time. For example, when I asked about the challenges of developing BRI education, one interviewee mentioned that the BRI is not yet an institutionalised regional entity, so it would be difficult to promote education development within this area. This point has been shared by other scholars in later interviews, that they also talked about regionalisation often start with politics and economy, and education come after that. This process allowed me to check knowledge claims made by respondents against those made by others and existing policy statements and governmental reports. Another example, one interviewee said that his institution only has a limited budget from the Ministry of Education each year, and how to prioritise that funding is a challenge – striking a balance between domestic needs and international (in the case BRI) agenda,

which has been confirmed by statistics that made publicly available and his view has also been shared by other scholars during my interviews. As for research transferability, it may be that the critical approach together with methods employed in this research can be repeated in a different setting for a similar study yet given the unique wider socio-political context that shapes this research, I would be cautious in generalising the findings elsewhere under different set of conditions. I consider the applicability and consistency of the study relies on the insights of this research for other similar contexts or initiatives. Finally, I have been mindful and self-reflective as data analysis proceeded and have been aware of the possible impact that my background and experiences could have on the interpretation and findings. It is also worth mentioning that presenting my ongoing doctoral research at various academic occasions have been a very helpful way to gather external security.

4.10 Ethics

Ethical issues form an important part of this research. To begin with, I have been adhered to the ethical guidance of the British Educational Research Association (BERA) and Faculty of Education, Cambridge University ethics procedures, with relevant concerns being carefully addressed throughout my research process. These ethical principles were helpful in setting the basis on which this research was conducted. Several key aspects of these ethics are now being discussed below.

The first common ethical issue is informed consent. In my research, I acquired participants' consents at multiple stages. Prior to the fieldwork, a copy of consent letter was sent to prospective participants to inform them about the nature of this research, and a guarantee to confidentiality and data protection. The consent form also informed participants of their rights, choices, and freedom to withdraw from the study; who the researcher was; the purpose of the research; the likely audience; and likely research outcomes. I have also sought verbal consent when I was in the field with my research participants. I discussed my research with them, and asked if they had any questions or concerns, whether they understood the objective of my study etc. I asked research

participants to contact me any time after the interview if they have any further concerns or if they would like to read my work.

Another significant ethical consideration was privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity (Flick, 2011). Individual informants were offered the option of remaining anonymous, and on that basis guaranteed their identities would not be disclosed, and that their privacy (anonymity and confidentiality) would be strictly protected throughout this research project. As most of my research participants prefer not to be named, or identified, I entirely anonymised them. This means the identities, personal details of the respondents, their positions, other characteristics, and the name of their affiliated establishments will not be directly or indirectly referred to or identified in this research, thus relevant information will be strictly kept and not be revealed. As an alternative, their identities will be replaced by using pseudonyms. Moreover, I password-protected and solely handled the data throughout the process to avoid any accidental or intentional disclosure. Interview data will be permanently destroyed within three months of final submission of this thesis. Furthermore, as I have demonstrated earlier, my identity as a Chinese citizen inevitably influences the way in which I approach my research and the how I interpret the narratives of China's growing global influence in education. Having realised this, I have also been also critically self-reflective about my identity and its potential impact on this research. I am exceptionally mindful not to bring my personal biases and judgements into this project and affect the research outcomes. Being an insider also means I should avoid jumping to taken for granted conclusions when I come across well-known policy, facts or developments. To do so, I have engaged with different actors of various backgrounds over time for collecting different, and sometimes competing opinions regarding the topic of investigation, allowing them sufficient space to express views and opinions during this research journey.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the philosophical and methodological choices made during the development of my research project. I have reflected on the characteristics of philosophical paradigm CR and the theoretical construct of CCPEE and my employment of both in this study design. The second half of this chapter documents the methodology resign, including research methods, data collection, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethics. Combining all sections together, the chapter outlined how this study was designed and conducted.

Chapter 5: Reordering a Region: A New Sino-Centric Regionalism?

5.1 Introduction

China's rise and its development of the BRI has significant implications for the East Asian region. Yet the link between the BRI and whether (and how) it might represent a nascent East Asian regional order remains a relatively underexplored topic. What might its contours look like as the processes of producing, making visible and meaningful a Sino-Centric region begin to take shape? To answer this question, this chapter begins by examining the literature on the rise of East Asia in the global political economy, with a special attention paid to the variegated nature of East Asian regionalism from a historical developmental perspective. I will argue this body of work demonstrates the challenges China has experienced in the pursuit for building a regional community. That said, the second part of this chapter theorises the BRI as an emergent form of region-building, highlighting its endogenous and exogenous dimensions and its core function as an alternative to constructing a Sino-centric regional order amidst changing world politics.

5.2 The Shifting of World order and Asian Renaissance

Globally, the past five hundred years was witness to the expansion and domination of territories by colonising European powers to the East, West and South. By the end of the Second World War, China had become one of the world's poorest countries whilst the defeat of Japan in turn subordinated it to the post-war expansion of the United States. However by the late twentieth century following the decline of economic growth in the so called 'West' as a result of deindustrialisation and an expansion of economic activity into the Asian region, coupled to anti-colonial projects in South Asia that a new set of political conditions emerged leading to new forms of social and economic advancement

(Barraclough, 1967). Less than half a century after the WWII, a dense web of commercial exchanges was established by Japan and other lesser East Asian economies. Since then, the existing Eurocentric global hegemony has been gradually destabilised in light of the rise of the East Asian Tiger economies beginning in the 1950s and 1960s to be followed more recently by the growth and expansion of China. We are now entering into a new era where we see the restructuring of world orders through global and regional political, economic and military realignments. In the past few decades, the monopoly and hegemony of the West appears to have diminished; the world is also become increasingly multi-polar following the collapse of USSR, and more recently and US's failures in the Middle East. Mainland China's weight in the global economy has been increasing far more rapidly than that of any other country or region of comparable demographic size. Arrighi (2007) argues that the current organisation of world order is likely to reach its limits, and a global power shift is in train giving rise to the economic, political and demographic reorientation of Asia that might lead to an Asian age, with China to be featured as a major player.

The economic renaissance of the East Asia region is one of the most important themes of the late twentieth century and has attracted global attention. Rozman (1991) suggests this East Asia renaissance is not a coincidence but is based on its great past when it sat in the forefront of world development for at least 2000 years. This renaissance began during the 1950s and 1960s in post-war Japan. Soon the economic miracle snowballed to Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia in the 1970s and 1980s, culminating in the millennium in a collectively formed islands of Asian "Capitalist Archipelago". Today it is argued that the East Asian economic renaissance is entering a Chinese phrase, with China an emerging global powerhouse developing a dynamic and gigantic economy powered by market socialism with Chinese characteristics, social entrepreneurship and technological innovation. Collectively, the region is moving towards the centre of the global economy, repositioning the traditional centres of capitalist power – Western Europe and North America – leaving them to evaluate their industries, capitals and ways of living. The probability of witnessing an East Asian-

centred world-market society is increasing, which might also act as an equalizer so as to rebalance the Western-centred global empire (Arrighi, 2007; Jacques, 2009; Breslin, 2009; Hamieri & Jones, 2016). These dramatic changes have occurred in a relatively short period, which in turn creates a unique puzzle for global audiences regarding the overall scale and scope of an emerging world order with China at its centre. China's reintegration with the global community has only been three decades since its 1978 national reforms and opening-up policy were initiated. Yet this has produced dramatic impacts both within and outside its national boundary. China's unprecedented visibility and high-profile involvement in the international arena in more recent years has generated heated debates and a proliferation of different forms of analysis. It is now the second largest economy and is predicted to overtake the USA in foreseeable future according to the UK-based Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR, 2020). The French emperor Napoleon Bonaparte was famously quoted, "Let China sleep, for when she awakes, she will shake the world" (Tulard, 1999). Many international commentators now argue China has awakened, and that she is shaking the world, especially through the unravelling and revitalising of the New Silk Road.

5.3 East Asian Regionalism

In geographical terms, East Asia includes five northeast countries China, Mongolia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Republic of Korea, and Japan, ten ASEAN countries Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. These countries in this region are closely tied to each other through either land or shared ocean. The idea of East Asian cooperation has a long history, yet the notion of viewing East Asian as having a collective regional existence is relatively new. From an historical perspective, the East Asia region was organised on the Chinese Tianxia (天下)/ tributary system, with China at its core and its Confucian heritage neighbours as periphery (Kang, 2010). In more modern times Japan became the first East Asian state to drive the development of East Asian regionalization

with expansionism and ended as militarism (Zhang, 2005). As the first industrialized Asian country, Japan was conscious about the impact regionalism in strengthening its rising power statues within the region and thus became very active in mobilising the spirit of "Asianism" to promote its Great East Asian Co-Prosperity, especially during the Second World War, this has also challenged the traditional Sino-centric regional order. Meanwhile, although China has also made attempts to call on East Asian unity in the wake of western colonisation, its voice was too weak to be heard. After the war, the region has been split into different blocs with competing politics and ideology. As a result, the discussion of East Asian regionalism faded away (Zhang, 2005).

The re-emergence of East Asian regionalism began in the 1960s when the Japanese economy started to take off, followed by the four "Asian Dragons" making what Kaname Akamatsu describes as the "flying geese" model of development (Kojima, 2000). However, this type of regionalism was limited to maritime Asia – countries that are situated between the Asian Continent and the Pacific Ocean, which by and large aimed at building institutional linkages between newly developed Asian economies and the American economy. It is for this reason it has been characterised as "Asia-Pacific" regionalism. In 1967, an important regional organisation was established, that is the *Association of Southeast Asian Nations* (ASEAN). ASEAN is the most durable forum to emerge in this part of the world and has proved to be a significant regional vehicle for countries in Southeast Asia to manage and promote their specific interests. Despite the fact that the foundation of ASEAN marks a milestone in Asian regionalism, the development of a wider East Asian regional grouping that included the major powers of Northeast Asia – in this case China, Japan and South Korea – did not gain any real traction until the 1990s. Yet, this period has witnessed the formation of several Asia-Pacific based, including Pacific Basin Economic Council (1967), the Pacific Trade and Development Conference (1968), the Pacific Economic Cooperation Council (1980) and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) (1989). These different types of Asia-Pacific regionalism might be seen as attempts to incorporate Asia into a larger unit in which the US maintains the principal role (Higgott & Stubbs, 1995).

The transition of Asia Pacific to East Asian regionalism began to emerge in 1990 when the former Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad first made his proposal to create a rival, exclusively East Asian institution, the East Asian Economic Group (later changed to the East Asian Economic Caucus, EAEC) in response to the founding of APEC (Higgott & Stubbs, 1995; Webber, 2001). Mahathir's idea was that an emerging ASEAN and East Asia (Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan and China) as a whole needed a more favourable international economic system to better reflect its interests. The proposal of establishing EAEC was supported by ASEAN members as the majority believed EAEC would position ASEAN at the core of the organisation and create more opportunities for this region. Yet the US Bush administration put pressure on Japan and Korea to reject the idea as concerns arise from the US regarding the implications of EAEC for the newly founded APEC and the American general mistrust for exclusive multilateralism (Nair, 2009).

As an alternative and competing regionalism, APEC gathered considerable momentum in the first half the 1990s. Nevertheless, its momentum largely disappeared after 1995. This was largely as result of the incapacity of the member governments to agree on the implementation of the trade liberalisation agenda. This happened at the time of the Asian financial crisis, APEC's sectoral liberalisation and inability to alleviate the crisis has severely damaged its own reputation and credibility in East Asia. The intra-APEC conflicts over trade liberalisation manifested in setting the organisation's priorities. Irreconcilable disagreements arise between the US, backed by the most developed, "Anglo–Saxon" member states, and Japan, supported by most of East Asian states, over whether trade liberalisation should give way to trade facilitation and economic and technical cooperation (Ravenhill, 2000; Webber, 2001). The West's push for trade liberalisation at a time of economic crisis illustrates a lack of sensitivity to East Asian states, thus resulting in the dysfunction of APEC. Another problem with APEC is the lack of leadership in steering and fostering the development and cooperation of this regional bloc, the US become interested in APEC when it perceived that the grouping might be used to further US objectives in global forums. Other Asian members were

wary of the disparities in the level of economic development among participating states and were reluctant to cooperate with the USA's demands. Furthermore, APEC was relatively weak at civil-society level compared to its European counterpart (Ravenhill, 2002).

Although the Malaysian Prime Minister's proposal to found the EAEG did not come to fruition, by the end of 1990s ASEAN Plus Three (APT) "in effect" had not only emerged, but had already gone far beyond what Mahathir had originally proposed. APT consist of 10 members of the ASEAN and three Northeast Asian states – China, Japan and South Korea (Archaya, 2003). It has grown quickly since the first meeting of the Heads of Participating Governments in 1997. Not only governments, but also finance, economics, and foreign ministers, bank governors and senior officials have meanwhile begun meetings on a regular basis. Soon APT had produced a number of concrete products such as a wide range of region-wide cooperation include monetary, economic, social, security, technological and cultural that marks the "beginning of a new era of regionalism" (Dieter & Higgott, 2000).

The APT process is in many ways the continuation and manifestation of the East Asian regional cooperation. While the concept of East Asia was acclimated, the turning point for APT came when the Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong suggested that ASEAN members should invite China, Japan and South Korea to its informal annual meetings in his opening speech at the 5th ASEAN Summit in Bangkok, Thailand, 1995 (Terada, 2003). The Summit itself was also part of the preparation for the launch of the initial Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) which was approved by both ASEAN and the EU in the mid-1995, with special support from Singapore and France. In essence, it was an external stimulus – the European Union that fostered the formation of APT. In co-founding ASEM, the EU not only implicitly recognised East Asia as a "distinct geographical and economic entity" (Leong 1999, p.19), but also explicitly encouraged closer East Asian monetary cooperation. On the other hand, Japan's finance minister,

Kiichi Miyazawa, states: “these talks with Europe are helping us build up our own Asian identity” (Webber, 2001, p. 357).

As noted above, APEC’s internal conflicts over trade liberalisation has to some extent led to the formation of APT. In most of APEC’s major disputes, the majority of East Asian and Southeast Asian countries chose to stand together on one side, opposed to the western agenda of liberalising trade, open markets and reduction of governments’ role. For this reason, some Asian states begin to search for an alternative framework within which closer economic cooperation could be achieved in the East Asian rather than Pan-Pacific space. Perhaps the most important factor contributing to the rise of APT was the 1997-98 Asian financial crisis. The crisis swept across Asia from Thailand to South Korea. It has greatly altered people’s perceptions of Asian region, the mutual economic interdependence, and the vulnerability. These was a consensus that Northeast and Southeast Asian economies are so closely linked, and an integrated Asia will be able to exercise a stronger influence than what it presently did on international monetary policies (Higgott, 1998).

The crisis also triggered a deep reflection on the region’s overreliance on the US. Numerous sources report that most East Asians felt they were both let down and put upon by the West. The US, in particular, did not help or take part in rescue operations, but exacerbated the crisis by withdrawing their money from the region (Stiglitz & Yusuf, 2001). Major international monetary organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) did not make sufficient efforts to provide genuine support to alleviate the crisis. Naturally, there has been some resentments among Asian countries regarding the way they have been treated, which in turn fuelled the region with the determination to be more independent. The framing of APT may seems to be motivated and sustained by consistent external pressures, yet internally Asia recognises the seemingly arriving globalisation era, and understand that the region needs to follow the global trend of regionalisation as only then could Asia leverage its assent and capabilities in the race and competition against other regions. Last but not least, integrating an increasingly

powerful China into the regional environment is a strategic motive that will strengthen the APT's creditability (Webber, 2001).

Apart from these different initiatives, East Asia stands out as an interesting exception in the second wave of regionalism because in fact no commercial agreement of any kind existed among East Asian states prior to the mid-1990s (Kim, 2004). However, rapid market-driven regionalisation has been on the rise, without much coordinated governmental involvement. From an economic perspective, the region has made significant strides. The economic cooperation between Asian member states has been achieved through diverse approaches, external liberalisation, domestic structural reforms and market-driven investments, producing the so-called *East Asia Miracle* (World Bank, 1993; Wade, 1996). Kawai (2005) suggests that East Asian regional response to the traumatic financial crisis with the help of abundant initiatives has led to a de facto economic integration. Various trade and investment measures have been adopted to promote regional economic interdependence, including bilateral and multi-layered Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), establishment of regional surveillance mechanism, regional liquidity support system, Asian bond market and "SWAP" arrangements etc.

Other core aspects of East Asian regionalism include the establishment of ASEAN itself (1967), East Asian Summit (1995), controversial yet highly debated TRANS-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and the most recent discussion around Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RECP) (Dent, 2008; Acharya, 2003; Terada, 2003; Higgott, 1997). It is clear multiple and competing versions of East Asian/Asia-Pacific regional architecture co-exist, with many overlapping elements rationalised and propelled by economic, political and security factors. Overall, the evolution of East Asian regionalism has been praised for its ability in maintaining peace despite differences between states. Regionalism has also, to some extent, helped to overcome the isolation of less developed states such as Cambodia and Myanmar and reduced the economic disparities. And most importantly, creating a regional bloc has enabled some of the

Asian countries to work closer with each other and has generated a shared voice to secure the region's converging interest and manage its relations with external powers in a globalised, competitive, and multi-polar world. In that sense, East Asia finds its embryonic identity through intra and inter-region making.

East Asian regionalism originated from a pragmatic need, mainly economic concerns with various imaginaries about regional politics. This has made consensus building within the region relatively weak. As the process has gone on, consensus seems to be gradually strengthening. However, looking ahead, there remain several challenges. First, regional institutional building needs to be strengthened. Considering the region's great diversity in culture, religion, politics and economics, gradualism and pragmatism should be two most important principals in guiding the process of designing and constructing regional governing architecture. Second, far from having a homogeneous Confucian culture, East Asia still embodies a high degree of historical and national diversity. The slow progress in political integration is attributed to the antagonistic character of Sino-Japanese relations, and the relative weakness of non-state actors, such as transnational business sector, in mobilising interests for closer region-wide cooperation. Defining a shared "East Asian identity", a set of "Asian values" has been instrumental to the success of East Asian regionalism, the ideational base of regionalism needs to be developed in line with the de facto economic regionalism and de jure institutional regionalism. To that end, it is argued that East Asia must find its own way, whatever that might mean and be. In the late Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's words, East Asia as region is an idea that would not go away (quoted in Kim, 2004, p. 166). So, in light of China's rise and its rolling out of the New Silk Road, will the BRI bring new perspectives, dynamics and momentums to a renewed East Asian regionalism?

5.4 Conceptualising the BRI as an emergent region

Conceptualising the BRI as a nascent regionalist project in turn means engaging with various regional integration theories from the field of international relations. As I have noted in Chapter 3, scholars studying the multitude of regional cooperation and integration projects worldwide have identified several waves of regionalism following the end of Second World War. I also pointed out that acknowledging the subtle difference among these different types of regionalisms has been broadly labelled as the "Old" and the "New". Being a relatively young regionalist project, the BRI resembles the early stage of EU integration in a number of respects. First and foremost, Beijing views its BRI in functional terms as being an economic project. President Xi Jinping spoke of the BRI as "the wings of China [the great eagle] …Once they are constructed, China the eagle can fly higher and further (Quoted in Ye, pp. 219-220). This reveals a fundamental position that the Chinese state holds: the desire to strengthen China and its status in international politics, and the readiness to become a regional public good provider while transforming itself into a centre of a China-led regional order. At the core of the BRI is China's aspiration for enhanced regional economic collaboration. Regional connectivity is the functional issue and has been gradually improved through a variety of transportation and infrastructure building projects across Eurasia. To aid the functionality of the BRI as a region, the establishment of AIIB and Silk Road Fund is now playing a key role in financing and facilitating regional infrastructure and connectivity building. In addition to monetary architect building, a series of BRI flagship initiatives now include six Silk Road major land economic corridors: a new Eurasian Land Bridge and China–Mongolia–Russia, China – Central Asia – West Asia, China – Pakistan, Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar, and China – Indochina are well planned and under construction. Other infrastructure building initiatives aimed at enhancing physical connectivity for economic development are evidenced in Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, the China–Laos Railway, the Hungary–Serbia Railway, the port of Piraeus in Greece and the port of Gwadar in Pakistan and more. Similar to the

early days of European integration, the BRI has displayed some functionalist features in its incremental approach towards region-building. The idea of boosting trade and economic interdependence across the BRI region shares a similar underlying logic to that of neofunctionalism in the case of Europe, that intraregional trade relations will generates a neofunctionalist spillover effects in turn leads towards an integrated region in all its dimensions.

Apart from its functional features, the BRI has also embraced many elements that articulate with new regionalism theory. New regionalism theory as Hettne (2005) argues and which I outlined in Chapter 3, is bult upon social constructivism as its ontological presupposition. In assessing the BRI and its regionness, the first phase regional complex and the last phase region state are becoming irrelevant. It could be argued that this is because the BRI has transcended the first "pre-regional" stage of regional complex, yet far from achieving the region state, to be judged on the spectrum, as being a nascent regionalising project nevertheless.

The BRI's regional space is defined by the shared historical and geographic Silk Road territory connecting many countries alongside Eurasia. However, this old Silk Road imaginary and boundary has been de and re-territorialized since the launch of the BRI. Unlike the EU, the Chinese State argues that its BRI has been very inclusive and open so that many countries outside the historical Silk Road area are eligible for and have become part of the initiative. The BRI could be interpreted as a state-led spatialising project to redraw the Silk Road map through its networking of ports, nodes and railways, but that it also orders a new regional space that redefines the meaning of what Silk Road is in the contemporary era (Chen, 2021). In this sense, the BRI is also an open form of regionalism in that it opens to all states and invites all those who are willing to join. It is not limited to any particular region in contrast to the EU, and it transcends the borders of Eurasia, reaching out to North and East Africa, Middle East and Mediterranean Sea. Its low institutional and legal barriers, its flexibility, as well as a high degree of

economic and political heterogenicity among its members, make the entry accessible for any newcomers.

An important understanding of how regions are made according to new regionalism theory is that region ought to be understood from both endogenous and exogenous dimensions (Hettne, 2002; 2005; Söderbaum & Sbragia, 2010; Robertson et al, 2016) . In other words, regions are created by both "inside-out" and "outside-in" approaches. Neuman differentiate these two approaches in region-building in that the former emphasise endogenous dynamics leading to formation of region around a geographic centre whereas the latter "privilege the interests and interaction of great powers relevant to the region" (Neumann, p. 56).

In the case of the BRI, "inside-out" or endogenous approach is mainly concerned with the transformation of the Chinese state over the past four decades, as well as China's economic governance over the emergent BRI region. At the heart of the process of the BRI regionalism lies China's endogenous development. Jones and Zeng (2019) argue that rapid social and economic development in China since 1978 reform has led to the transformation of the Chinese national and subnational state. As a result, some functions of the Chinese state, such as regional development, or the activities of once State-owned enterprises, have become increasingly fragmented, decentralised and internationalised. Hameriri and Jones (2016) argue that, as a result of globalisation, the state can no longer be understood as a Weberian, sovereign monolith, coherently ruling a bounded territory, they are becoming increasingly fragmented, decentralised and internationalised. To understand this, in *Fractured China* (2021), Jones and Hameiri argue China is not the monolithic or unitary actor that many assume. Forty years of state transformation – the fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation within the party-state apparatuses - profoundly changes how its domestic and foreign policies are made and implemented. Currently, Chinese behaviour abroad is often not the product of a coherent grand strategy, but results from a sometimes-chaotic struggles for power and resources among contending politico-business interests, within a

surprisingly tolerant Chinese-style regulatory state. This mean that many Chinese actors, often with differing interests and agendas – including national ministries, regulatory agencies, law enforcement bodies, provincial and local governments and state-owned enterprise now operate internationally with considerable autonomy and limited coordination and oversight (Jones and Hamieri, p. 22). This do not always produce outcomes that necessarily reflects top leaders' will or agenda simply as a result of the transformed state and its fragmented, decentralised, and internationalised structure as well as the altered power dynamics wherein. Thus, they show that the policymaking process is more much complicated than commonly believed.

The shift from state socialism to state-managed capitalism is the primary dynamic shaping the transformation of the Chinese state, which generates significant implications for economic development, regional politics, and social lives (Zheng, 2004). Against the background of globalisation and state transformation, nations are no longer understood as hierarchically organised and territorially bounded sovereign entities. As a range of new actors has entered the deregulated national and transnational space for undertaking various economic activities, the regional economic ties between China and its neighbouring countries have been greatly intensified over years. This has not only reduced the role of the central state apparatus in a "command and control" state governance model to a "regulatory" model, but also profoundly reoriented the way how China engages with its neighbours over the negotiations of its extended and regionalised national interest through economic transnationalisation. Within the Chinese state, the transformation has also produced considerable developmental gaps between China's prosperous eastern coastal areas and land-locked western provinces over years (Wei, 1999). In coastal areas, foreign capital has become an important social basis for economic development, and coastal areas were also allowed to create experimental special economic zones, harvesting market reform benefits, and subsequently spread nationwide. As a result, China's eastern coastal provinces have similar values to South Korea and Japan in international industrial and trade chain in that they rely heavily on international markets and trade, but inland provinces have

much less interaction with the outside world and tend to be more domestically oriented, with interests in protecting domestic industries or predatory cross-border ventures in the infrastructure and extractive sectors. These gaps and difference between geographic regions have widened due to uneven capitalist development and accelerated by the state transformation.

After four decades of rapid development, China has been deeply integrated into the global community, especially economically, and to a lesser extent socio-culturally, hence repositioning itself as the new powerhouse for manufacturing, production and technology (ECPR, 2021). As China becomes the global factory and the largest exporter through the development of labour-intensive processing industries, some issues raise. Not only the global financial crisis in 2008 slowed down China's economic growth, but domestic overcapacity also made exporting industries and employment in those sectors endangered (Callaghan & Hubbard, 2016; Casarini, 2016). Moreover, with the gradual rising wages in China, some manufacturing businesses began to lose their comparative advantages and would need to be relocated to other countries with a comparatively lower salary. Therefore, the vast region that the BRI covers become ideal destinations for both relocating some of Chinese labour-intensive industries and exporting domestic overproduction that other markets can no longer consume. At the regional level, building infrastructure for promoting regional connectivity with a goal to unleash Asia's huge economic potential is a consensus that all members within the region can reach upon. The multilateral regional monetary organisation the Asian Development Bank has advised a solution in its working paper in 2009, regarding regional development and infrastructure,

> *"Asia's huge economic potential remains largely untapped due to lack of region-wide connectivity. This paper argues that lack of full regional connectivity is one of the major constraints hindering regional growth and integration in Asia, as well as with the rest of the world. One of the conclusions of this paper is that Asia must strengthen its physical connectivity to make it a conduit for international trade though restoring Asian Silk Route". (Restoring the Asian Silk Route: Toward an Integrated Asia, ADBI, 2009).*

Thus, the endogenous dimension of the BRI region-building is largely economically informed. Domestically, the BRI regionalising project also resonates well with China's Grand West Development that has been implemented for several decades in order to help the landlocked Western China to catch up with the economically prosperous Eastern Coast provinces. The implications of this for higher education policymaking and governance are also significant. Recent work has shown that the transformation of the Chinese state has changed the way higher education policymaking has been produced. Han and Ye (2017) argues the three most prominent changes are the transition from Party-dominant practice to one primarily driven by the state, the enhanced role of higher education institutions and scholars as 'professional interest groups' and the increasing participation of non-governmental actors in the policymaking process. In other words, fragmentation, decentralisation and internationalisation brought about by state transformation has affected state-higher education interaction and their longstanding relationship. The changing power relationship led to negotiation among various stakeholders in creating more space for higher education and policy reform. It is within this context that universities have gained more autonomy to respond to urgent socio-political demands, including the BRI-related issues, and the governing logics of the state have also gradually shifted from a direct control mode to indirectly supervision model.

With respect to the "outside-in", or the exogenous approach in the BRI region-building, the wider changing global environment played a key role. According to New Regionalism Theory, the forming of a new region is a reaction to and a modifier of globalization. This contrasts with many earlier theories of regionalism, which were heavily concerned merely with the endogenous forces of regional integration, especially neofunctionalism and the earlier debate on European regional integration. Undoubtedly, the regionalism in its exogenous dimension should be interpreted as the political response to globalisation. While the endogenous dimension of it is largely motivated by regional economic concerns, exogenous dimension is more related to political and security factors. First and foremost, the BRI as a nascent regionalising

project is taking shape in a multipolar world order, constituting a fundamental geopolitical strategy for protecting and securing China's regional interests by seeking alignments with its neighbouring countries and Belt and Road members. The changing world politics, particularly the US pressure on China over a series of events such as the Pivot to Asia under Obama, the Trade War under Trump, and rising protectionism, isolationism and unilateralism in US policy shifts, has made East Asia/Eurasia regions feel less secured as they were used to. It is for this reason that many countries feel to need to form a larger regional bloc in response to the wider shifting international political economy, instability as well as the changing world politics during the major transformation of world order. Thus, external powers, particularly the US plays a crucial role in facilitating the development of the BRI as a regionalising project, process, and polity.

Secondly, as a Sino-centric rationalising project, the BRI might also be regarded as a security regionalism in the making, meaning China as the regional core seeing the BRI as a means to achieving a regional security collective for a Sino-centric Asia. The BRI Regionalising project in this sense emerged out of a multi-polar world context and becomes a territorial basis and a governing bloc during new geopolitical manoeuvring among major powers. Thus, the region is subject to common external threats as the international politics become ever complicated outside the region in recent years. For China, the BRI have a broader goal of developing "a community of shared destiny for humankind", which connotes a vision of an inclusive global community of common interests where states are facing a shared future prospect. Nations ought to work together to share the rights and responsibilities for global development, as opposed to zero-sum relations (Mitchell, 2021). This gives the BRI an underlying political and ideological objective that can not only be read as goal, but a basis for constructing legitimacy and authority for the region, advancing a Chinese worldview, and reordering a more equitable regional space through employing a different set of governing logics. With external powers growing more isolationist and protectionist, China seems to be willing to shoulder more responsibilities in assuming a regional

leadership role. The BRI might be seen as the Chinese alternative and the emerging architecture to the US-led regional order in Asia, representing an attempt to reconcile Chinese distinctiveness with the need for regional development whilst avoiding the threat of great power rivalry and "Thucydides' Trap".

As emerging powers' regionalising initiative, the BRI represents an alternative social imaginary and a new type of regionalisation based on different economic, cultural and political ideas that are different from what has been promoted under the existing US-led global governing structure. The BRI regionalising venture complements and advances the Chinese inclusive globalisation project, seeking to reform and amend the shortcomings of the post-war international system and attempting to restore confidence and trust by introducing restructuring reforms in the global governing system (Yilmaz & Li, 2020). Even through the BRI is still a relatively young project that continues to unfold and evolve, it is important to pay attention to the ongoing evolution pattern of the BRI and its regionalism features that has been simultaneously in the making over the overlapping East Asian/Eurasian spaces.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed the body of literature surrounding the rise of Asia, as well as the complicated developments of East Asian regionalism. I examine several competing regionalising projects from an historical viewpoint and ask if the BRI might represent a possibility to a renewed Asian region-building. In what follows, I attempted to explain the characteristics of BRI regionalism, and this will inform the basis of the analysis of a higher education regionalisation project discussed in the latter part of the thesis.

Chapter 6: Critical Reading of Official Policy

6.1 Introduction

Polices are in the epicentres of, if not a determining factor for, driving social progress including educational development in any societies, though the role of the state in policymaking differs across different contexts. The Chinese state is no exception; its commitment socialism since Mao, its more recent embrace of market socialism with Chinese characteristics, and the key role of the party in the various institutions of Chinese society, including in education, presents a distinctive lens through which to view education policymaking. Moreover, since President Xi became China's new leader in 2012, ambitious plans and policy initiatives for national, regional, and international development were gradually released to cater to the changing internal and external social, cultural, political, and economic environments.

Following the initiation of the BRI, numerous policy documents were implemented to guide and govern developments in this new era. China's education policy has also witnessed important changes during this period alongside the rise and re-emergence of the country as a global superpower. Education is to be conceptualised as part of the bigger social policy package that aimed at transforming the wider outlook of China, reimagining, and reproducing the Silk Road, reflecting the transformative nature of the Chinese state in recent years. In light of this, the aim of this chapter is to 1) review critical approaches to education policy studies, 2) contextualise what critical education policy analysis might mean in the Chinese context, 3) outline relevant education policies in relation to the BRI and 4) analyse BRI-related education policy through the lens of CCPEE framework.

6.2 Defining Education Policy

Numerous researchers in countries like the UK, USA and Australia have attempted to define policy from a wide range of disciplines, including political science, public administration, and policy sociology. What constitutes policy is an ongoing debate among scholars, and thus achieving a mutual understanding of the definition of policy is not an easy task. As Cunningham (1963, p.229 cited in Taylor et al, 1997) describes policy is like an elephant, one recognises it when you see it, but it is somehow difficult to define. Harman's (1984, p.13) definition of policy might be regarded as a starting point, as he notes:

> "the implicit and explicit specification of courses of purposive action being followed or to be followed in dealing with a recognized problem or matter of concern, and directed towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired set of goals. Policy can be thought of as a position or stance developed in response to a problem or issue of conflict, and directed toward a particular objective".

His explanation suggests that policy is outcome-driven, and it is a tool that societies employ to address issues in a formal way as to achieve certain objectives. It is certainly true to make such claims but this is by no means the only way of developing understanding of policy. Ball (1994, cited in Taylor et al., 1997:25) defines policy as "both text and action, words and deeds, and it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete insofar as they relate to or map onto the 'wild profusion' of local practice". Taylor et al (1997) points out that Harmen's definition assumes policy making and implementation occurs in a straightforward and unproblematic way, thus fails to take into account that policy is in fact a highly political exercise in which conflicts and compromises often co-exist as Ball suggests. Rizvi and Lingard (2009) further elaborate this concept by arguing that:

> A policy can also be viewed as a 'process' involved in the production of the actual text, once the policy issue has been put on the political agenda. Policy process thus includes agenda setting, as well as work on the production of policy texts. They also refer to implementation processes, which are never straight forward, and sometimes also to the evaluation of the policy. (pp. 4-5)

Policy is both a referencing document and an on-going process that involves constant struggles over the modification to the text and the implementation into practice. Policy thus goes beyond a production of statements of intention and also involves agenda setting, implementation and evaluation. This conceptualisation captures both the changing and the overtly political nature of policy and acknowledges that the policy production and implementation is a continuous and contested process which involving actors with competing values and access to power that shape and formulate policy for their own benefits. In contrast to the prescriptive traditional approach, that of the rational model conceptualising policy in distinct and linear phases, policy process should instead be viewed as complex, interactive, multi-layered and political. Recognising the complex, changing, multi-dimensional and political nature of policy, Bell and Stevenson (2006) rearticulate the definition by stating that "policy is decisively shaped by powerful structural forces of an economic, ideological and cultural nature" (p.9) and "policy development therefore is not a simple case of understanding the priorities, or indeed the whims, of governments or individual school leaders. policy must be seen as a dialectic process in which all those affected by the policy will be involved in shaping its development" (p.2).

Based on definitions of policy discussed above, this study defines policy as a state-led initiative that includes text documents and demands actions, which aims to achieve predetermined objectives with efforts from all involving parties; it is both a product and process in which efforts, resources, policy designing, implementation strategies and assessment mechanisms are incorporated. Accordingly, policy analysis is understood as "the study of what governments do, why and with what effects" (Taylor et al, 1997). Policy analysis is no longer restricted to statisticians and specialists, which is practised by both policy analysts working within the systems and those commentators or critics outside the system (Olssen et al, 2004). There are various approaches for analysing policy, this paper adopts a critical approach for policy analysis that derived from its origin, critical theory. According to Cox and Sinclair (1996) problem-solving theory and critical theory are two major approaches, with the former focus on simple and direct

policy response to unsolved issues and the latter is more of a reflective process upon theorising itself. The following section provides a review of the critical approach and its application in educational policy studies.

6.2.1 Critical Approach in Education Policy Studies

Critical policy studies make use of many perspectives that fall under the umbrella of 'critical theory', as its orientation to studying education policies (Simons et al, 2010; Diem et al, 2014). Critical theory based upon the tradition of Frankfurt School, with scholars such as Habermas committed in exploring and revealing deeper structural political and economic systems that underpins cultural and social re/production as well as state activity. Critical theorist often stands apart from the prevailing order of the world and asks how that order came about, and how things came to be (Cox & Sinclair, 1996). It does not take institutions and social power relations for granted but is concerned with its historical origins; conditions for knowing and knowledge, conditions that produce social phenomenon the surface often conceals.

The application of critical approach in education policy studies is in part a response to the dramatic reforms took place in the educational systems in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA under the redirection of neoliberal and neoconservative regimes since 1980s. The discontent with traditional, rational and instrumental approaches for policy analysis acted as a catalyst for sociologists and educationalists to develop a new genre of policy studies - "education policy sociology", defined as "rooted in the social science tradition, historically informed and draw(ing) on qualitative and illuminative techniques" (Ozga, 1987, p.14; Ball, 1990; Bowe et al, 1992). Education policy sociology illustrates that the reworking of education policy needs to be broadened and not be limited to sociology; in shorts, it needs to be more interdisciplinary in its orientation. Scholars including Prunty (1985), Simons et al (2009) and Diem et al (2014) summarise critical education policy by offering new conceptual terrains in which key ideas are explored and discussed. When employed in educational policy studies, several discernible tenets associated with a critical approach needs to be highlighted. First, a

critical analysis tends to be overtly political. Unlike the traditional approach in drawing a distinction between politics and policy making, critical approach engages with concepts such as politics and power proactively. It deals with the distribution of power, resources, and knowledge, and ask question of whose interests is served, when and how. This leads to moral and social obligation in that critical analysts not only expose the sources of domination and repression, but also interrogate the difference between policy rhetoric and practised reality. Second, critical policy researchers focus on the policy, its roots, and its development. They tend to pay significant attention to complex systems and environments in which policy is made and implemented, as Levinson et al (2009) note, "we understand policy as a complex, ongoing social practice of normative cultural production constituted by diverse actors across diverse contexts" (p.770). The recognition of the creation of policy as an extremely complex and often contradictory process leads to efforts to capture the full complexity of policy contexts and its evolutionary trajectory over time. Taylor (1997) notes critical work needs to place education policy making within its broad economic, social and historical contexts as critical analysts are interested in understanding how policy emerged, in what backgrounds, with what purposes, how it changed and developed over time and with what consequence. Third, critical approach potentially advance various forms of critical advocacy, which aim to influence the policy agenda for the benefits of social improvement and justice.

Critical educational policy orientation is a complex, variegated, and evolving concept, which comprises a wide array of research collectives with similar or different preferences, strategies, and priorities. As Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) point out, "there are many critical theorists not just one, the critical tradition is always changing and evolving, and critical theory attempts to avoid too much specificity since there is room for disagreement among critical theorists" (p. 89). Acknowledging the complexity of the conceptual contours and changing nature of critical policy studies, the above listed tenets is not intended to be exhaustive, rather it is provided as a way of orienting the reader to engage with the chosen conceptual framework.

The adoption of critical approach in this study is primarily for its explanatory attributes for developing understanding of and explaining education policy. Dale (1994) argues that broader social, economic, and cultural contexts give rise to state politics and education policies, he called the "politics of education". Similar viewpoints have been made regarding the interactive relationship between "politics of education policy" and "education policy as politics" (Lingard & Ozga, 2007, p. 3). The implications from these terminologies indicate the need to position education policy studies in the broader context of power, social arrangements, needs of the economy and state apparatus in framing agenda and forming policy.

6.2.2 Reflection on Critical Policy Studies in China

Critical approaches to policy research are increasingly used within the education field (Diem et al, 2014), yet there appears to be little knowledge about this area of scholarship and its application in the Chinese context. This section attempts to reflect on this issue. According to Yang (2006), public policy research in China was found to be non-critical and its central concern was how to better reflect and achieve the existing goals demand from the authority; that is with more instrumental purpose. As a result, much less attention was paid to the intentions of policy makers, the interests of involved parties and other stakeholders' impact and involvement on policy making and implementation. From a historical and cultural perspective, Yang further elaborates the changing role of Chinese intellectuals (policy analysts) from "literati" in ancient time to "intellectual-cadre" in contemporary era (p.210-211). He argues a strong dependent relationship exists between intellectuals and the bureaucracy; Chinese intellectuals are considered as part of the ruling class. They have political attachment and are responsible to whom they are served, therefore developing a complex relationship with elites. They help to assisting and managing state affairs by legitimising the political regime though defining and practising moral values and spreading ideologies, which grant them high social statues and privilege in return.

Hayhoe (2005) points out that the fundamental differences lie between the Chinese scholarly tradition insist on the political responsibility of scholarship, and the western academic ethos that tolerate and advocate the separation of politics and scholarship. The difference in social structural orientation produces two vividly contrasting realities in social science research where one places upmost value on critical enquiry and engagement whilst the other emphasise on the commitment and loyalty to political demand. This might offer some insights as to why critical indigenous perspectives are found to be scarce in social research, including education studies in China. The lack of critical research means limited reflectivity and a constrained research imagination with little appraise and respect for value of dissent. In sum, the different social ethos and conceptualisation in cross-cultural contexts could be problematic, and therefore needs attention.

6.2.4 Contextualised 'Critical' in the Chinese Context

The critical spirit drawn upon in this paper is not meant to challenge the authority or resist the power structure; instead it is intended to explore and uncover the casual mechanisms that constitute phenomenon as to offer explanations. It is necessary to contextualise the definition of 'critical' and draw the distinction between critical and criticism. Critical derived from critical theory such as critical realism that implies the effort of uncovering the "past", the "hidden" and the "invisible" that shape and give rise to the empirical. It must also be acknowledged that a critical ethos and attitudes embedded in critical approach helps to distinguish between the analysis for policy and its own analysis of policy; the difference between these is the former advocates policy initiative while the latter offers an account to explain and interpret the nature of policy and its potential consequence. Thus, critical policy analysts attempt to remain a neutral stance and take a distance from the 'problems' to be problematised. This means analysing education policy production and implementation is not so much about how it works, but how it came to be in its current form and what consequences might be generated. Robertson and Dale (2014) point out the essence of critical approach is that

it recognises the complex wider economic and political structures in framing policy production over time, and the competing interests that are represented by those structures, forces and agents in the processes and outcomes of education. Being critical is to recognise education policy is not limited to those who are directly involved in education, not is it merely for the beneficiaries of education but must be viewed in relation to wider societal structural and processes. This understanding articulates a dialectic dialogue between structural and agentic power in critical policy approach, in that those decisions and agenda relating to education policy are structured through the forming of preference by engaging with concepts such as power, critique, interest and social transformation. It allows researcher to open up the possibility of constructing a larger picture in which the initially contemplated part become just one component and seek to understand the processes of change in which the part interact with the whole and beyond.

A more nuanced theoretical framework of CCPEE, elaborated earlier in Chapter 4, will be adopted, and employed as a more comprehensive theoretical construct and analytical toolkit for analysing education policy. Envisaging the social world as a stratified social otology, CCPEE holds the view that education should be seen as the product/manifestation of multiple determinations by casual mechanisms under varying conditions. The logics underpinning the production of education policy needs to be placed as part of the "education ensemble", - a kind of social system composed of invisible dynamics, generative mechanism, layers of structures and conditions that have collectively given rise to the observable, namely policy text. The theoretical devices employed in this research are not definitive accounts of 'how things are' but attempts for thinking about 'how things may be'. Education policy and reform is almost always part of the bigger changes in society, the economy, and the state (Ball, 2008). This means education and policy needs to be studied within contexts that are often related to history, structural change, and political projects. The critical approach to policy studies avoids reading policy text as merely 'text', but seeing how policy discourses have been mediated by and respond to external factors and how language has been deployed in

attempt to produce meanings, privilege certain ideas and empower certain values. The recurring theme is the relationship of education policy to the needs of the state and the interplay of cultural, political, and economic factors in shaping, consolidating and supplementing education in the policy making process.

6.3 China's Education Policies on the BRI

6.3.1 Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road

The promulgation of *Vision and Actions* (National Development and Reform Commission, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce) in 2015 signifies a new beginning of China's foreign policy and economic development pathway under President Xi Jinping, and it depicts the clearest overall picture of the BRI blueprint whilst illustrates China's attempt to materialise the so called 'grand strategy'. By initiating the BRI, China is placing an unprecedented demand on itself during the process of reaching out. Whether the interactions with the outside world are economic, political or technological, the success of BRI will always require cross-cultural engagement with people from different civilisations. Therefore, an open and welcoming spirit must be celebrated and enshrined. In light of this, Vision and Action was drafted on the basis of the Silk Road Spirit, described as "peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit", with the intention to "promotes practical cooperation in all fields, and works to build a community of shared interests, destiny and responsibility featuring mutual political trust, economic integration and cultural inclusiveness" (Vision and Action, 2015). As the official and most comprehensive policy document on the BRI, Vision and Action portrays an imagined landscape in which strengthened connectivity and partnership would facilitate trans-regional trade across Eurasia for economic prosperity while simultaneously enhancing cultural exchange and political cooperation. In an era characterised by

political uncertainty and economic turbulence, such initiative demands strong cooperation. Five major areas of cooperation have been proposed, including Policy Coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial Integration and People-to-People Bond. Although most current analysis of this policy are still political and economic oriented, Vision and Action also provides new opportunities and poses new challenges for China's education in the coming era. The role of education has been special in China's national development since the opening-up policy was enacted in 1978 (Marginson, 2018). Education with its historical duty, political commitment in assisting national development and modernisation have been well recognised and documented and is likely to replicate in the context of the BRI.

One argument about the BRI is that its ultimate success lies in a common foundation, that of the interaction among people from different countries and regions. All forms of interaction happen with and between people, and it is the people who will determine the success of the BRI. From this perspective, the cultural, communicative and equational endeavours are pertinent. Scanning through this policy document, the following quotation are of particular interest:

> *"We should carry forward the spirit of friendly cooperation of the Silk Road by promoting extensive cultural and academic exchanges…send more students to each other's countries, and promote cooperation in jointly running schools. China provides 10,000 government scholarships to the countries along the Belt and Road every year… we should increase exchanges and cooperation between non-governmental organizations of countries along the Belt and Road, organize public interest activities concerning education… for the benefit of the general public, and improve the production and living conditions of poverty-stricken areas along the Belt and Road." (Vision and Action, 2015)*

Clearly, education has been placed on the agenda of the BRI. It is arguably a major component constituting People-to-People bond that is both an indispensable factor for foresting connectivity on one hand, and a pre-requisite determinant for enabling the functioning of the other four (Policy coordination, Facilities Connectivity, Unimpeded Trade, Financial integration) on the other hand. Without education, without mutual understanding and learning of each other's language, culture and mindset, partnerships

and collaboration in trade, finance, infrastructures are unlikely to be enduring, sustainable and productive. This reminds the readers that the success of the BRI and the return of investment should not be measured in months, but years and decades to come, thus we shall argue that education is an important pillar for the "Belt and Road" development and is significant in shaping the long-term gain. Given that Vision and Action is the first official "Belt and Road" policy document and is comprehensive in its scope and scale, it is reasonable to claim that although education was only featured in a non-substantial capacity, its significance cannot be underestimate.

6.3.2 Opinions on the Work of the Opening-Up of Education in the New Era

In April 2016, The CPC Central Committee and the State Council issued the "Opinions on the Work of the Opening-Up of Education in the New Era" ("Opinions" thereafter, 2016). This policy initiative is believed to be the first comprehensive education policy of its kind in guiding China's international education development, reform and further opening-up. Aligned with the country's Five-Year Plan, Opinions also marks a distinctive shift in mobilising Chinese education in a much more outward-looking fashion. Its primary concerns lie in the government's intentions to further expand opening-up in the education sector so as to improve China's international statues in education, boost the quality of international education provision, and encourage transnational partnerships in education cooperation with the support from institutions and enterprise. Education further opening-up is an integral part of China's grand opening-up policy, serving the strategy of innovation-based development, and rejuvenating the country through science, technology, and human resource cultivation.

The promulgation of Opinions reflects the increasing importance of international education in China's new era and emphasises its political and economic contribution in serving the national development, as points are clearly made to "fully implement the Party's educational policies to serve the CPC and the state as the purpose, to co-ordinate domestic and international situations" (Opinion, 2016). It has identified six areas of priorities, including accelerating the development of inbound and outbound study-

abroad; enhancing the building of institutional mechanisms, increasing the level of cross-border education; strengthening the high-end leads, enhance education capacity and innovation; enriching Sino-Foreign People-to-People exchange through increasing mutual understanding between people; promoting win-win cooperation in education; and implementing the "One Belt One Road" education initiative, promoting educational cooperation with countries along the Belt and Road. It is the last one that provides a direct response to concerns associated with BRI.

> *"To strengthen the work of education interoperability and talent cultivation and training, to match the development needs of the countries along the Belt and Road, to promote joint initiatives with countries along the Belt and Road to achieve win-win cooperation. To expand the scale of Chinese government scholarships, to establish the "Silk Road" Chinese Government Scholarship, to fund 10,000 new students from Belt and Road countries to study or undertake training in China each year. To command international figures, teams and organisations that have made outstanding contributions and have an important impact in the common development of "One Belt One Road" regional educational exchange and cooperation." (Opinions, 2016)*

Education on the Belt and Road certainly received much attention in Opinions, and this policy also illuminates the overall direction China is taking in its international education reform. That is, more opening, more investment on cross-border education and more mobility, exchange and collaboration between academics, students, and researchers. The focus on building transnational education partnership is likely to generate more joint programmes and research collaboration, meanwhile Chinese universities and colleges are encouraged to go abroad for launching overseas campus and establishing joint programmes. Agendas were also set for recruiting more international students through scholarship scheme, particularly those from developing countries along the BRI route as well as from BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, South Africa), in part to increase the visibility of China as an attractive studying destination. The policy also aims to reform the approval and accreditation procedures of transnational education programme as to improve the efficiency and quality provision. Specific issues around governance as well as organisation and leadership were also stressed clearly in consideration of the process of policy implementation.

It is worth mentioning although Opinions covers a great deal of ground that includes discussion of how to support self-funded students is conspicuously absent, and there appears to be a lack of specific timeframe for policy implementation and evaluation. Interestingly, on the other hand, it has inherited significantly from previously published education policies such as Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) (2010) with regards to enhancing international exchange and collaboration, importing quality foreign education, and improving the level and quality of cross-border education partnership. In sum, Opinions offers valuable resource in terms of understanding China's priorities in the field of international education in a timely fashion, and therefore contributing to our knowledge in developing understandings about the relationship between education policy priority and the BRI.

6.3.3 Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative

Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative issued by the Ministry of Education (Action Plan thereafter, 2016) in July 2016 is by far the most significant and the most comprehensive education policy initiative tailored for BRI. It represents an unprecedented commitment from the Chinese authority in promoting education within the framework of BRI. Action Plan takes a step further in delivering the promises made about education from previous policies in more concrete terms. It proposes that China and countries along the "Belt and Road" should work together to enhance connectivity in education, promote people exchange, talent cultivation, language training, and jointly build mechanisms for future cooperation, so as to enable all member states on the route to benefit from shared quality resources and accelerate the development of education in various aspects.

Recognising the specific mandate of Action Plan is to serve the needs for education arising from countries along the Silk Road route, one could imagine the demand is huge and multifarious. The Ministry of Education managed to produce an all-rounded policy outlining where education fits into BRI. Yet as is typical for such documents, the scale

and scope often override the details. Given the comprehensiveness of Action Plan, I have no intention to list all its assertions, but only offer a brief overview. The policy consists of six sections, with its Priorities for Cooperation being further divided into three sub-categories. According to Xu Tao, Director of the MOE's Department of International Cooperation and Exchange, a three-pronged framework of ground-laying, supporting-building and forward-thinking were adopted, with each dimension being responsible for specific actions. This framework was then further settled into three main areas of cooperation as to accelerate the development of education in all Belt and Road countries while taking account of each country's specific circumstances. In total, 15 elements were proposed under the framework, including a wide range of issues such as education policy coordination, cooperation channels building, language teaching and learning, mutual recognition of academic credentials, exchange and training programmes, institutional collaboration, scholarship schemes, and platform for educational cooperation.

The significance of Action Plan in relation to my interest is reflected in its authoritative response in defining the role of education on BRI,

> *"Education is vital to the strength of a country, the prosperity of a nation and the happiness of a people. It has a fundamental and guiding role to play in the Belt and Road Initiative." (Action Plan, 2016)*

This makes it clear that education has been identified as a crucial sector for achieving multiple purposes as to "promote closer people-to-people ties, cultivate supporting talents, and achieve common development", which in turn "buttress the efforts of these countries toward policy coordination, connectivity of infrastructure, unimpeded trade, and financial integration along the routes." Action Plan states that:

> *"promoting a common prosperity of education in the countries along the routes will not only strengthen win-win cooperation with these countries, but also provide strong stimulus to domestic reform and development in education…China is ready to work with the countries along the routes to expand people-to-people exchanges, strengthen cooperation in the cultivation of talent, and together create a bright future for education in the region."*

Such discourse resonates with Vision and Actions in that People-to-People bond (education) lubricates and facilitates the other four areas of connectivity. Similarly, discourses with regards to further opening-up education sector has also been explicitly articulated in echoing Opinions,

> *"China will consistently stick to its open policy in education and deeply integrate with the global trends in educational reform and development. Promoting a common prosperity of education in the countries along the routes will not only strengthen win-win cooperation with these countries, but also provide strong stimulus to domestic reform and development in education." (Action Plan, 2016)*

Action Plan exhibits a high level of proximity in comparison with the other two policy documents in many aspects. All seem to view education as an essential means for promoting cultural exchange, enhancing China's global image; and stress its significance in region building and cooperation, talent nurturing and reiterate China's commitment in taking more responsibilities in education investment. The following quotation from Action Plan illustrates four discourses on connectivity, cooperation, responsibility and region building in just one short paragraph:

> *"China is ready to work with the countries along the routes to expand people-to-people exchanges, strengthen cooperation in the cultivation of talent, and together create a bright future for education in the region… China is willing to shoulder as many responsibilities and honour as many commitments as possible, and to make a greater contribution to the development of education in the region." (Action Plan, 2016).*

Education Action Plan also empowers provincial and local authorities, as well as individual institutions, to develop their own education cooperation initiatives by using their respective geographical strengths and local features. It invites social actors to engage in the education-related development such as technological innovation and jointly running schools. A key theme of this policy document is cooperation, which has been identified as one of the most frequently cited key word appearing nearly 80 times. Cooperation represents an acknowledgement of shared interest, understanding, trust, harmony, inclusiveness and openness.

The concluding section borrows an African metaphor: “He who travels alone travels faster, yet he who travels in company travels farther.” It reemphasises the significance of using education cooperation and development to facilitate social, economic developments, eliminate poverty and improve living standard of people and cultivate highly competent talents. This includes flexible cooperative mechanisms and new models of educational cooperation and exchange need to be explored with the ambition of creating a better shared future.

6.3.4 China Education Modernisation 2035 Plan and The Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernisation 2018-2022

Additionally, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the State Council issued two policy directives “China Education Modernisation 2035 Plan” (“The 2035 Plan” thereafter, 2019) and “The Implementation Plan for Accelerating Education Modernisation 2018-2022” (“Implementation Plan” thereafter, 2019). Measures have been put into place systemically to accelerate Chinese higher education internationalisation in a joint manner. As the first comprehensive policy of its kind in guiding China’s international education development, Opinions incorporated the BRI as an important platform for promoting higher education “going out”. The primary concerns lie in the government’s intention to further open and deregulate the sector as to boost China’s education image and statues, increasing its competitiveness and quality, and encouraging transnational partnership and cooperation. For the first time, it marks a distinctive shift in mobilising resources into an outward-oriented reform direction. The 2035 Plan aimed at substantially modernising China's education system by 2035, the year the country is determined to realise socialist modernisation and become an education powerhouse. It takes a firm stance on international education cooperation and global education governance. To facilitate China’s participation and engagement, Implementation Plan suggests the BRI region will be prioritised for enhancing Sino-foreign higher education collaboration, with the intention to improve the quality of

cooperatively running schools and to optimise the distribution of Confucius Institutes for promoting Chinese language learning. China also seeks to recruit more international students, especially those from the BRI countries, strengthening academic mobility, exchange, joint programmes, advancing scientific research partnership and collaborations, as well as promoting mutual recognitions of degrees and diplomas.

These policy documents reveal that China's education policy making might has some consistent and interconnected underlining logics running through different initiatives, and this will be explored further in the following analysis part.

Chapter 7: Understanding Education on the BRI: Policy and Cultural Political Economy

7.1 Analysis—Understanding Education through the lens of Cultural Political Economy

In this analysis section, the study offers a set of explanations for the emerging education phenomenon on the New Silk Road, with special reference given to education policy formation. This section is divided into three parts, with each devoted to one aspect of CPE in examining its relationship with education. Drawing on intensive interviews, mainstream media, publicly available sources and adopting theories across disciplines, I argue that education policy on BRI is a complicated collective that cannot be understood and explained within its own orbit. Education agenda setting has been strongly influenced by external factors so that a more complete understanding needs to go beyond the narrow disciplinary subject field. By placing education at the nexus of wider cultural political economy, we are better positioned to understand how policy has been coordinated across sectors, generating converging and complementary forces with shared interests in advancing the development of the strategic initiative of the BRI.

7.2 Culture

Silk Road and its Cultural Metaphor

For many countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, Silk Road represents a commonly shared historical memory of cultural exchange and close trade relationship. The cultural meanings brought by Silk Road has been interpreted as the Silk Road Spirit as we have previously noted, which was enshrined in the Vison and Actions (Vison and Actions, 2015). From the cultural perspective, the revitalisation of Silk Road is not just simply to resurrect the ancient trade routes but to revive the inherited cultural meanings as a

form of soft basis for promoting international cooperation. The revitalisation of Silk Road echoes the so-called "China Dreams" of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, a concept proposed by President Xi in November 2012, and has been reiterated by the Chinese leaders thereafter at different occasions. Arguably, the BRI is an important step to reclaim China's historical global position with the purpose of national rejuvenation (Yu, 2017). This is not limited to economic and political sphere, but also in a cultural sense as to revive China's great historical traditions of 5000-year civilisation -- what Callahan has termed "nostalgic futurology" (Callahan, 2016). Since the very beginning, President Xi has stressed the importance of balancing both the 'software' and 'hardware' in promoting the development of the BRI.

Rather than seeing connectivity simply as the 'hardware' infrastructure projects, Xi argues that China should revive and celebrate the Silk Road Spirit to influence the 'software' of global governance in terms of norms, ideas and rules (Callahan, 2016), and to leverage its cultural capital in socialising the region:

> *'We should advance multilateral diplomacy, work to reform the international system and global governance, and increase the representation and say of China and other developing countries… We should increase China's soft power, give a good Chinese narrative, and better communicate China's message to the*

Historically, the Chinese had a vast influence over its neighbouring countries, which has been well documented throughout history. The ancient Silk Road was the carrier of cultural, religious, and civilizational spread that enabled the Chinese civilization to meet other world civilizations for cultural exchange and cross-cultural hybridization (Griffiths, 2017). However, China's modern-day cultural influence over its territorial boundary has been quite limited, especially in contrast with its export-heavy position in foreign trade and investment (Ying, 2017; Tang, 2017; Wen & Hu, 2018). So how to reinvigorate a cultural sphere that coexist with the Silk Road for empowering Chinese cultural spread is imperative. Incorporating education as an important cultural infrastructure into the BRI design could be an answer.

Education Going Out: Promoting Soft Power and Boosting Cultural Confidence

A number of scholars suggest that the export of education can be viewed as a form of soft power and a way of advancing cultural diplomacy (Yang, 2010; King, 2010; Knight, 2015; Wu, 2018). In the context of the BRI, People-to-People bond is featured as one of the five key connectivity in all relevant polices, which requires interaction and communication between people of all the countries alongside the Silk Road and is thus regarded as a determining factor for the long-term success of the BRI. Regarding this, one interviewee has offered an explanation:

> *"Most countries along the Silk Road route are emerging economies and developing countries. The total population of region is 4.4 billion, accounting for two third of the global population. The total GDP is estimated at 21 trillion US dollars, approximately 30% of the global share. The region also projects high demand for international trade and cross-border investment, therefore it offers opportunities for further economic growth. Meanwhile, countries within the region display huge difference in terms of history, culture, religion, language, political system, geopolitical and economic conditions. If we want to achieve connectivity, people exchange must be addressed first. Education has a crucial role to play here as it will be through education will people from this vast area improve mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual respect to each other and enhance friendship and mutual connectivity." (Senior Researcher, Tsinghua University)*

Indeed, education is seen as part of the 'software' for breaking the cultural and linguistic barriers to connect minds and hearts beyond border and space. In addition to enhancing intercultural understanding, education is also acting as a knowledge disseminator and cultural ambassador for spreading soft power and enhancing China's public image through cultural diplomacy. Action Plan respond to the specific issues and needs of the BRI education through detailed planning and practical guidance and promote People-to-People connectivity.

Soft power, coined by Nye refers to the capacity to inspire wishes, persuade cooperation, encourage mutual goals and seek mutual benefits in a non-coercive way (Nye, 2004). It contrasts with hard power which typically manifests itself in military might and the mobilisation of economic resources to gain international dominance. Nye (2008) points

out soft power consist of primarily three elements: culture, political values and foreign policy. Recent years has witnessed rapid growth of the Chinese economy, which has facilitated a dramatic increase in its military might and international security presence. The growing hard power has fuelled the perceptions of the 'China Threat' that might counteract the 'peaceful rise' rhetoric China has long been advocating. Chinese policymakers realised that China's rise to great power status cannot only rely on its formidable hard power but must also make use of the soft power (Zhou & Esteban, 2018). Therefore, China is keen to promote its soft power through various means, including cultural exchange, language teaching, public diplomacy and education. As a result, soft power has been gaining considerable momentum in China's official and scholarly communities.

Breaking the language barrier is one of the central concerns addressed in the Action Plan. It is proposed to raise social efforts for establishing more Confucius Institutes, and training more Mandarin teachers. In the eyes of many, the carrier of Chinese language teaching - Confucius Institute is seen as China's ongoing "charm offensive" strategy for promoting its soft power in the international community with its increasing global influence. It is a form of cultural diplomacy, in this regard, it holds equivalent positions to the British Council, Alliance Française, Goethe Institutes and Instituto Cervantes (King, 2010).

As China has enthusiastically mentioned the concept of soft power in public, it is believed that education endeavours including language institutions might well be engaged in enhancing China's international outreach culturally (Gil, 2008; Starr, 2009). Yang (2010) argues Confucius Institute and its associated language teaching practice has an essential role to play culturally in the rise of China when China seeks to establish itself as a major player in world affairs. The task of 'winning hearts and minds' has become increasingly important as a form of 'cultural diplomacy' (Yang, 2010; Knight, 2015). In this case, Confucius Institute is significant in expanding China's international influence and promoting its soft power via language teaching and cultural exchange.

The close alignment between language and education facilitates the construction and expansion of soft power as language is a natural carrier of culture and value. Despite the fact that language-related policy only represents a small proportion in the general education blueprint for the BRI, it demonstrates a systematically planned soft power policy and practice linking education to the exercise of language teaching and learning in expanding China's global cultural influence.

Besides the use of language institutes to launch its cultural project, in a new move, Chinese higher education institutions have sought to run collaborative programmes and campuses aboard. An exemplary case is the recent establishment of Xiamen University in Malaysia, which will be referred to in the next chapter as well. Newly founded institutes offer courses such as Chinese language, Chinese medicine, and Sinology. Knight' (2015) notion of 'knowledge diplomacy' is used to capture the essence of these initiatives; that international education can be used for putative mutually beneficial purposes aimed at strengthening relationships between countries through student and staff mobility, and knowledge exchange. Regarding the newly established Chinese universities' overseas campus, many believe that it marks a distinctive shift in the internationalisation of Chinese higher education, from the previous stage of 'bring in' to the current phase of 'going out'. Thus, it signifies a new period for higher education development in China. China's position as a long-standing semi-peripheral country in the global higher education community is therefore gradually destabilised, in part due to its resilient efforts and commitment to improving its higher education system and encouraging its education providers searching for new opportunities beyond national boundary. In recent years, it seems that we are entering a new era where definitions such as the core and the peripheral are increasingly under reconstruction as the global higher education landscape also experience dramatic changes simultaneously. One of the interviewees highlights the cultural implications of China's outward internationalisation,

"Internationalisation of higher education in China was mainly inward-oriented in the past. In recent years, Chinese universities become more active, proactive and

strategic in their approach for establishing transnational partnerships. This is, of course, individual institutional planning and their own response to the competitive higher education market, but it also corresponding to the national policy in encouraging education provision looking outwards. After all, China wants to build world-class university, and it wants to find a sense of presence in the global higher education community to match its great and rising power statues".

Another interviewee claimed that engaging Belt and Road countries through education creates the possibility to explore the often neglected and under-represented parts of the world,

"Internationalisation have been closely associated with developed countries. In the case of BRI, there are also many developing countries and we have very little knowledge of them. I think BRI offers new opportunities to learn about each other through education, balancing the overt-western internationalisation approach we had in the past. Balanced internationalisation means we need to engage with more countries rather than a few. From this point, education cooperation with BRI countries is complementary in that it allows us to better understand the other parts of the world we don't know much about. Chinese universities' branch campus helps us and developing countries in large to find a sense of cultural confidence. Moreover, I think it means a lot for promoting global cultural diversity as it let the world get to know our 5000-year history, culture and tradition. It is likely that through education more people will accept and recognise us. But this is a long way, we just started, we need experience and we need to indigenise our education provision to cater for local needs. Simply exporting culture and education is not going to work."

Wu and Zha (2018) defines 'outward-oriented internationalisation' as the process of exporting a country's knowledge, culture, norms and education model through higher education internationalisation. This is particularly useful in conceptualising China's Confucius Institute and its universities' overseas campus building strategy. In both cases, China is no longer acting as a receiver of global knowledge but also transformed itself to become a sender of its own, counter-balancing the long-standing education and cultural deficit the country has been experiencing for decades. Most importantly, exporting one's own culture is likely to generate a sense of cultural pride. Symbolically, it 'presents the developing world a recipe for success' and boosts a sense of cultural confidence.

During the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in 2017, President Xi have reflected on the success of the old Silk Road. He suggests that history shows

civilisation thrives with openness and nations prosper through exchange. In the pursuit of the BRI, different civilisation should ensure exchange replace estrangement, mutual learning replace clashes, and coexistence replace a sense of priority. As the old Chinese proverb says: the key to sound relations between states lies in the affinity between their people, which largely stems from mutual understandings (国之交在于民相亲，民相亲在于心相通).

To conclude, it is argued that cultural factors have played an indispensable role in shaping policy discourse and facilitating education development on BRI. The traditional Chinese wisdom, value and philosophy and their applications are clearly transferred into the education policy and practice, which contributes to the promotion of intercultural dialogue and strengthen peace building, mutual understanding, trust and respect between nation states on the BRI. Education is ought to be viewed as a cultural asset conductive to strengthening connectivity and for "winning hearts and minds". Developing intercultural understanding through education would therefore help China in boosting cultural influence, gaining cultural confidence, reserving cultural deficit, and winning cultural acceptance, especially so in the BRI context.

7.3 Politics

When we discuss East Asia in general, we need to position the state at the centre of enquiry. This is a tradition in that politics has always been in command. It would be surprising to make the claim that politics has not made any impact on or indeed penetrate education within the region. The relationship between politics and education is pertinent yet often overlooked in the Chinese context. This part of analysis aims to address this connection by acknowledging the importance of politics in education policymaking. To do so, attention has been devoted to both China's domestic politics and its foreign policy, arguing that the making of the BRI education policy has been to a large extent decentralised with more autonomy granted to lower tier institutions, and

coloured with Chinese foreign policy mentality that is evidenced through an internal, cross-sectoral policy borrowing.

Decentralisation in Policymaking

Policy-making process inevitably involves the politics of power-relations. The traditional assumption regarding China's policymaking features an uncontested top-down approach, with decision-making power solely possessed by a small group of elites from the ruling party whilst the interests of the general public are assumingly systemically excluded. Yet, such conception has been increasingly challenged. For example, Han and Ye (2017) demonstrate how Chinese education policy-making has shifted from Party-dominant practice to central government-driven model in a number of ways, with the increasing participation of both non-governmental actors and professional interest groups in the policy-making process. A reasonable explanation is the trend of decentralisation, which refers to 'the transfer of decision-making authority, responsibility, and tasks from higher to lower organisational levels or between organisations' (Hanson, 1998 p. 112). Since 1993, a series of educational decentralisation policies were published by Chinese authorities to release the rigid central control over higher. As such, one of the distinctive features of China's BRI education policymaking is that it decentralises a large amount of power in decision-making from the 'central' Ministry of Education to provincial and local authorities through the creation of ministerial-provincial mechanism such as creation of co-construction, cooperation, merger, coordination, and transfer mechanisms (Yang & Wang, 2019). This means local education administrations along with many universities at lower tiers are empowered to create, advance, and realise their own individual initiatives, maximising their respective geographical strengths and local characteristics in their pursuits of education development and collaboration on the BRI. It also means social actors, non-profit organisations, specialist groups and enterprise are invited through a variety of activities to promote Chinese education overseas. This has resulted in a massive response across China. Many local administrations have taken initiatives and designed their own education blueprints, employing their respective strengths in

assisting regional education development and cooperation with transnational partners from Belt and Road countries. The Ministry of Education signed memorandum of international cooperation with 14 provinces including Gansu, Ningxia, Fujian, Guizhou and other autonomous regions and municipalities as to establish a ministerial-provincial joint platform for education on the Belt and Road (MOE, 2018). It is this joint flatform that enables policy decisions to be emerged out of an interactive process involving local, regional and state actors through a multi-level governance mechanism. The decentralisation introduces place-based policy making, which prioritise geographical context as the key consideration in policymaking and avoid the mentality of 'state knows best'. Taking local geographical, historical, cultural, social, economic, and institutional factors into consideration, policy makers are in a better position to integrate local needs and concerns, and consequently to promote local education development which maximise the engagement of all local actors and citizens. In sum, the increasing amount of participation and commitments from various governing bodies, actors, institutions across different regions at multiple levels in return strengthened the coordination of the policy implementation in an orderly manner.

The decentralisation of power seems to converge with the global trend in the shifting pattern from government to governance under neoliberal influence (Jessop, 1999). In fact, China's education policy making might be more complicated than many would assume. According to Zeng (2019), the process of policy formation in China starts with key ideas and concepts proposed by politicians, sometimes with ill-defined meanings and the specific strategies for implementation are left to policymakers, scholars, and practitioners. From the perspective of the central government, guiding policy need to be produced in comprehensive format so that it acknowledges the work from all parties involved, as is shown in the case of the comprehensive Action Plan. However, such comprehensiveness could lead to some level of vagueness, contestation, and openness in interpretation. Therefore, central policy often left some space and autonomy for local authorities and actors to participate and engage in ways that they feel comfortable, thus shape the process of policymaking as individuals see how they fit strategically into the

initiative and make decisions about it. The dialectal relationship between local and central depends on the loose structure of policy-making mechanism, the central set the policy direction while the local take specific tasks, and even some necessary concessions to be made occasionally from the central as to legitimise the system, reach consensus and to achieve mutual goals. In the case of education policymaking with regards to the BRI, the job of developing policy slogan and outlining blueprint is largely with the Ministry of Education, more concrete substance is left to local and institutional communities. Thus, we will see numerous projects are emerging rapidly as the result of local and institutional undertakes, in part as political response and commitment to the central call. In this regard, institutions, local authorities, and social actors are not passive recipients or mere implementers of top-down policy decisions. Instead, they react and enact policy initiatives by employing their own agents, making sense of, negotiating, manipulating, and capitalising on their distinctive conditions to achieve their goals to meet multiple demands. Given its importance, the Belt and Road heat in education is sweeping across the country, in both top-down (central policy) and bottom-up (local initiative) approaches. Although the dominant decision-making power still rest with the state, grassroots efforts have been incorporated and becoming increasingly important in shaping the policy-making process, co-constructing an imaginative and emerging education space on the Belt and Road.

Foreign Policy

Since the end of the Second World War, the principle of Westphalian sovereignty was regarded as the internationally recognised norms for maintaining the post-war order. For China, international relations mean a shifting struggle between the two big powers of the Soviet Union and the United States before the Cold War and a constant close alignment with the third world countries. China during this period was also eager to finds its own identity, who as a socialist country didn't want to be the same as the Soviet Union, nor did she like the dispute with Western countries. In 1954, the then Chinese premier Zhou Enlai proposed The Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Five

Principles thereafter), which has become one of the most important political ideologies governing China's international relations throughout the 20th century. Five Principles on one hand is based on the concept of Westphalian sovereignty, and one the other hand proposes China's norms and values based on the principles of mutual-respect, non-interference, equality, mutual benefits, and peaceful coexistence. Zhou and Esteban (2018) argue that Five Principles has become the major source of China's normative power, and it was effectively diffused by Beijing in enhancing its multilateral cooperation across continents. In 2017, President Xi reiterates the importance of upholding Five Principles in implementing the BRI during his speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing:

> *"China will enhance friendship and cooperation with all countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. We are ready to share practices of development with other countries, but we have no intention to interfere in other countries' internal affairs, export our own social system and model of development, or impose our own will on others. In pursuing the Belt and Road Initiative, we will not resort to outdated geopolitical manoeuvring. What we hope to achieve is a new model of win–win cooperation We have no intention to form a small group detrimental to stability, what we hope to create is a big family of harmonious co-existence" (Xi, 2017).*

Xi's speech captured the public attention by articulating China's political preference in executing the BRI, and his message in upholding the principles was clearly transformed into the designing and making of BRI-related policies. In the Vision and Action, the following descriptions are directly relevant,

> *"The Initiative is harmonious and inclusive. It advocates tolerance among civilizations, respects the paths and modes of development chosen by different countries, and supports dialogues among different civilizations on the principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences and drawing on each other's strengths, so that all countries can coexist in peace for common prosperity" (Vision and Action, 2015).*

If Five Principles were China's intellectual contribution to the global governance in the 1950s, the 21st century must have witnessed a new wave of Chinese governing ideas, among those the "community of shared destiny" (命运共同体) deserves special attention.

In 2013 during his state visit to Indonesia, President Xi had not only proposed to establish the 21st Maritime Silk Road, but also spoken about the 'China-ASEAN community of shared destiny' at the Indonesian parliament. The underlining logic was to create a harmoniously egalitarian regional community and highlight the importance of working with other countries in resolving regional and global affairs. This new concept was arguably derived from China's long-standing foreign policy – Five Principles in that it inherited the philosophy of "mutual respect, mutual interest, reciprocity, equality and win-win" in its rhetoric. It then evolved to be one of the central thoughts under Xi's governing regime and was enshrined in the Chinese Constitution in 2018. Although some may argue the meaning of the concept deserve more critical discussion, it is generally accepted that it refers to a viewpoint that the world has increasingly grown into a community where one's destiny is interwoven with that of others (Zhang, 2018). It is therefore suggested that we can only aspire and embrace the future by working with others within the global community to promote common development and prosperity; in other words, nation states are bound together for their shared interest, destiny and responsibly.

The third concept of interest to this analysis is "Beijing Consensus", which is seen as an alternative economic development model as opposed to the "Washington Consensus". Williamson (2012) and Zhang (2011) summarised the main features of "Beijing Consensus" as having a strong state, adopting incremental reform and practice-based reasoning, prioritising stability, and addressing the tangible benefits for the public. It is important to note that education does not exist independently from the wider social environment and political economy where they are situated. Higher education has a relational interaction with external social networks, rather than exist in a vacuum. It is embedded in a social environment where it is being shaped constantly whilst exerting its own agent as force leading to social change. The social political contexts in which education operates could generate huge impact on the vision, mission, and action of higher education. Zha and Hayhoe (2014) believe Chinese universities are, to a large extent, functioning as state's arms for promoting China's social and

economic development, thus being deeply political. The dominant role plays by the state is one defining characteristic in the Chinese higher education system, the state has a predominant role in deciding what universities get in terms of resources and what they do in practice in contrast to the US where the free market seems to have a lot say about those. It is also due to the tight state control and regulation the Chinese universities tend to be much more closely aligned with the state as significant apparatus driving local and national developments compared to their western counterparts in such aspects.

For a relatively long period, the philosophy of Chinese international relations was characterised as 'keeping a low profile in international affairs' since the 1980s. Numerous scholars have nonetheless described the redirection of China's foreign policy from the previous reactive 'bide and hide' to a more proactive one that 'strives for achievement' observed in recent years. President Xi has made substantial changes to the Chinese foreign policy, which is now labelled as proactive, assertive, centralised and globally driven (Callahan, 2016; Yu, 2017; Ren, 2016). Xi's approach was to promote the comprehensive development of China at the international stage that is informed by China's national interest. As a result, foreign policy goals were framed in terms of 'realising the China Dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation', through the achievement of the 'two centenaries' goals (Xi, 2014b). The process in which foreign policy was made no longer restricted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the military and key party leaders, but also involved many different government sectors, local government representatives, financial institutions, and State-owned enterprise. In this regard, foreign policy or public diplomacy encompass not only politics, but also culture, economy, security in its parameter (Callahan, 2016). The successful policy production and implementation demands a strong coordination mechanism that accompanied with internal struggles for power and resources. Jones and Zeng (2019) suggest the complexity of Belt and Road and its policymaking contains various aspirations from different actors across diverse sectors. Regardless of these different viewpoints, one thing indisputable about China's foreign policy is that it aims to increase China's international visibility and its global statues. Meanwhile, the large

amounts of discourses employed in Action Plan such as “mutual understanding”, “mutual respect”, “mutual learning”, “mutual benefits”, “mutual trust”, “win-win”, and “regional peace” are clear signs of Five Principles. The word “common” and “shared” are mentioned throughout relevant policy texts as well, representing the thought of “community of shared destiny”. One example is shown below, which is quoted from Action Plan,

> *“The countries along the routes will work together to deepen mutual understanding, expand openness, strengthen cooperation, learn from each other, to pursue common interests, face our shared future, shoulder common responsibilities, and work concertedly to build a Belt and Road educational community.”*

Taking the above into account, it is clear that there has been a parallel developmental trajectory between China’ foreign policy and its education policy. The ideas, agendas, advocates, and philosophy China has promoted at the international stage are increasingly transformed and merged into its education planning and policy making. Education is one of those sectors that coordinated with foreign policy to collectively assist China’s rise. This gives an explanation as to why we have seen much of the similar rhetoric and expressions shared in policy documents across fields, and why the attitude and sentiment of policy initiatives span across education and international relations are unexpectedly similar as being open, international, and outward-looking. In my view, policy coordination is one of the fascinating facets about the policymaking on the Belt and Road. We can observe a non-exhaustive list of relevant policy areas to include investment, trade, development, research, foreign policy, and education on BRI’s agenda. Policy ideas are informed by political leaders’ thoughts and those ideas were borrowed and travelled across disciplines at all levels, permeating with respective sectoral concerns in the discussions taking place in ordering the sectoral development priority in line with the national agenda. The negotiations and designing of policy across distinct arenas have coordinated flawlessly to acknowledge the central leadership and address mutual concerns, thus marked with similar characters in their expressions and tones due to the nature of internal policy borrowing within the country.

7.4 Economy

Human Capital and Economic Transition

The notion of human capital can be traced back to Adam Smith's The Wealth of Nation in 1776, and it has been developed over time (Harber, 2014). In the contemporary era, human capital refers to the attributes acquired by individuals through education, training, and experience, with which to increase labour productivity and create economic value (Backer, 1993). Neoclassical economists assess the association between levels of education, earning potential and social production. They claim investment in human capital have both private and public returns, education as a form of investment will increase one's performance, improve one's chance of securing better-paid jobs in labour market and therefore contribute to the overall social output, progression and prosperity. The benefits of human capital are not only limited to individuals, but also realised through promoting industrial development, increasing labour efficiency, and facilitating economic growth at social/national levels (Brock & Alexiadou, 2013). The theory is clearly underpinned by strong economic reasonings, which has had a substantial impact on the social understanding of education and shaped the direction of both economic and education policies internationally (Brown et al, 2011; Koo, 2016). It is the tangible economic benefits and promising labour productivity become the legitimate basis and policy justification for governments worldwide to adopt human capital theory. Becker argues 'this is the "age of human capital" in the sense that human capital is by far the most important form of capital in modern economies. The economic successes of individuals, and of whole economies, depend on how extensively and effectively people invest in themselves' (Becker 2002, p.3).

Like many other countries, the Chinese Government understands the importance of education in cultivating human talents. China's adoption of human capital agenda in education has always adhered to the philosophy of pragmatism in its modern history and corresponded to the changing economic conditions at home and aboard over time.

In the post-reform period (since 1978), market-oriented economy gradually takeover the state-planned one, which generate rapid economic growth that structurally altered the proportion of the three main sectors of the Chinese industry over the past four decades. Today, the primary industry has fallen dramatically whilst the second and tertiary industries together take up more than 90% of the total Chinese national GDP (Bie & Yi, 2014). Great changes in economic conditions and industrial adjustment intertwined with enormous social transformation, public demand for education grew significantly at the same time. The Government had to expand the higher education system to cater for the ever-increasing social needs from rising middle-class families, and the fast-developing society also needs well-educated talents to keep its pace for further economic growth.

Since the new millennium, the state's language of framing education in policy terms have been centred around quality, equality, efficiency, and nation building. These themes are not mutually exclusive but are inter-related and independent in many ways (Li, 2017). While the discourses of national rejuvenation remain largely cultural political, the other three are all somehow touch upon and reflect the economic calculation in its orientation. Over the years, policy focus has also been shifted from universal access to education to improvement of quality provision. Such transition might well correspond to the wider changing economic conditions in a rather unexpected way. For long, The Chinese economy was characterised as labour-intensive and export-oriented within the global economic structure. However, the 2008 global financial crisis exerted an external impact on China's economic structure. The crisis deeply hampered the capacity of Chinese exportation as the demand side – the western economy suffered heavily. As a result, the Chinese economy was forced into a restructuring process, scientific innovation and internal consumption replaced exportation and labour-intensive manufacturing to became new driving forces for economic development in the post-crisis era. Much emphasis was placed on innovation in generating new pole of economic growth. One recent example is the "Made in China 2025" project, which is seen as a national agenda to enhance China's innovation

capacity, and production efficiency. The plan aims to transform China from a mass-producer to a quality-producer and to be one of the global leading manufacturers by mid-21st century. The state's overall domestic economic adjustment, industrial restructuring and upgrading attempt to lift the country's economic model from the low-value added type to a more knowledge-based, high-technology attached and innovation-driven one. The success of such transition must be supported by well-educated workforce. Hence, the urgent demand for developing domestic talents in building national capacity for a new economy is turning into an indispensable factor in shaping policy discourses and decisions. From the state's perspective education is now positioned as

> *"the cornerstone of national development and social progress. It is the fundamental way to improve the overall quality of our population and promote the all-round development of the people. Education carries the hope of hundreds of millions of Chinese families for a better life… the strategic goal of realising basic educational modernization by 2020, building a learning society, and turning China into a country with rich human resources" (Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020)*

The conceivable outcome is to turn China into a 'magnet economy' (Brown and Launder, 2006), with large concentration of human talents undertaking high value-added professions. In shorts, economic conditions have exercised and will continue to do so on China's education policymaking, framed by the discourse of developing science and technology, promoting the socialist modernisation and realising the national rejuvenation of great Chinese nation in Xi's era.

Nurturing Talents for the Belt and Road

> *"From my working experience, I think education is compulsory for successful economic collaboration on BRI. Because many BRI projects will be indigenised eventually and that requires a strong educational support. For example, the Chinese high-speed railways are exported into many BRI countries. The receipting countries need specialists who have the knowledge and skills to manage and maintain these trains, thus they need education to do that."*

"language education and area studies should be prioritised. The simple fact about the BRI is that the languages used by participating countries are diverse, and countries within the region are in very different conditions in many ways. We need people who can speak the languages of those countries and who are also familiar with the local situations in politics, economy, culture and religion".

"Chinese companies are eager to expand in BRI region, and they need local talents who are familiar with both China and local environments of destination countries. Such talents are rare now. We see companies, both state-owned and private ones afford to offer scholarship, internships and employment opportunities for students from Belt and Road countries. In the long term, they will grow up to be bridges connecting countries".

The above quotations come from university administration officer, policy analyst and senior researcher, whose reflections clearly and collectively point out the imperative of talent cultivation in serving the development of the BRI. Their concerns about developing talents for the BRI have been addressed by policy initiatives through scholarship schemes, exchange channels and other mechanisms. It may seem that there is little connection between what each of them have emphasised – language education, area studies, professional training, scholarship and enterprise. Yet is is suggested there is an invisible mechanism that linking those rather different themes together, which is the underpinning economic factor in consideration.

Confronting with the highly competitive knowledge economy, countries are steadily caught up in, and actively embracing the global race of human capital – what drives and give rise to economic competitiveness of individual nation states and regional blocs in the 21st century. Regardless of whether the BRI is a national development strategy or is an emerging from of regionalism. If it strives for excellence, it needs a large amount of talent supply. Indeed, economy has penetrated education thoroughly, and they have developed into an indivisible relationship. The dominant rationales for education in economic terms are largely measured by monetary returns, human resource development, effectiveness, efficiency, financing, and funding. Nearly all of these have been acknowledged and protected in the BRI policy documents one way or other, explicitly, or implicitly. The economics in education is realised not only through the

form of rational thinking and calculation in advancing long-term gains, but also in that education itself is a complex 'economy' in its own right – parts of it are progressively heavily commodified as an economically informed venture, a market and an industry that are prevalent around the world (Ball, 2012; Robertson & Dale, 2015). Such intimacy between education and economy made Neave (1988, p. 274) to argue that "education is less part of social policy but is increasingly viewed as a subsector of economic policy".

Globalisation accelerates the spread of knowledge economy discourse and challenges how education is understood traditionally. To trigger and maintain continuous economic growth, education and knowledge is not only essential but they have to be imaged and delivered in new and innovative ways (Dale, 2005). Some of the key focus on human capital formation in national economies have been reflected in the increase in the overall level of higher education participation, funding to the education sector around technology, innovation, and research, together with policies that are oriented towards generating more competitive environment and entrepreneurial individuals (Robertson, 2005). In the case of the BRI, aligning education with enterprise during the process of searching new opportunities aboard certainly coordinate between the two sides of the economic equilibrium, the demand side – the needs of company and the supply side – what should be prioritised in education training. This new way of imagining and organising education is primarily economically understood, as a new form of public-private partnership in bringing the idea of market principles and incorporating new providers to deliver competitiveness at both institutional and national scales. In return, education/ human capital lubricates the flow of capital, business, trade, and other forms of economic activities on the Silk Road route. In addition, higher education internationalisation strategies put forward by individual institutions also engage with the concept of economy, the space for self-governing institutional efforts has created a culture of autonomy/accountability, enabling effectiveness and efficiency, maximising potential outreach of institutes, and optimising financial revenues. Arguably, economy and education has become the two

sides of the same coin, which makes it impossible to separate them throughout policymaking and in practice.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

I begin this chapter by proposing a new perspective of studying the BRI, and the focus is to examine its connection with education, particularly policy. Whilst exploring relevant policy initiatives and tracing the development trajectory of education in the given context, I have adopted a critical research ethos and applying the concepts of critical cultural political economy of education to analyse the conditions on which policy has emerged. By doing so, it benefits from reading education beyond its own scope through positioning the analysis in an interdisciplinary paradigm. In this account, I see the prospects, processes and outcomes of the BRI education policymaking as a highly open, dynamic, complex, changing and contested arena where different actors from different sectors congregate, interact, negotiate, comply and compromise to each other in the process of searching for the best 'converging interest' in line with the national development agenda. Thus, education as a complex social activity cannot be fully explained and justified via any single theory or single lens. The strategic positioning of education into the Belt and Road is best to be seen as a collective unity or ensemble that subject to multiple and contingent determinations of social processes involving meaning making, power relations, and forms of exchange. In problematizing education as a constituent in the making of the BRI, there is a need to go beyond the scope of education disciplinary boundary, and to acknowledge the broader social context that shaping China's resurgence and the variegated cultural political economy substantiating it. Given the strong momentum of BRI, it is highly likely to expect more education-related initiatives to be announced and developed in the foreseeable future. This chapter, however, is to take the very first few steps onto the uncharted territory, depicts the emerging landscape of rapidly changing global education sphere and to illuminate future researchers in their search for what promise to be intellectually stimulating policy research in the years and decades to come.

Chapter 8: Building Belt and Road Educational Community

8.1 Introduction

Focusing on the educational dimension of the BRI, this chapter continues its exploration of China's aspirations, policy strategies, and institutional approaches in establishing a regional higher education area. Whilst the previous chapter concentrates on policy initiatives, this chapter aims to develop broader understandings about how higher education has been a key sector in/for region-building in the context of the New Silk Road by examining practice. It asks how, in what ways and to what extent has higher education been implicated into the BRI, how does education contribute to intercultural connectivity, empower knowledge exchange, and facilitate cross-border collaborations among countries alongside the Silk Route whilst analyses the prospects of regionalising a Sino-centric higher education space. Specific attention has been given to:

- How has the government's policy quest towards building Belt and Road educational community been transformed into practice? Specially, how have higher education institutions responded and reacted to policies in implementation?
- What issues and challenges has the BRI confronted in quest of regional higher education/knowledge space? What are the prospects?

8.2 Higher Education in/for the BRI Region-Building

As China approaches from a semi-peripheral position to the core in the world system, scholars ask what effects will this bring to higher education, universities, internationalisation, and mobility? Will China be leading regional higher education integration and shaping global higher education order in the seemingly arriving Asian century (Kirby, 2014; Peters, 2019)? Kirby and van der Wende (2019) suggest that the rise of China and its unfolding of the BRI has the potential to do so. The chapter argues that the Belt and Road educational community is largely a state-driven and Sino-centric enterprise, and its realisation is contingent upon the involvement of participating

member states, the level of Silk Road regionness, financial robustness and is susceptible to geopolitical dynamics. As Belt and Road constitutes a vast and complex territory with numerous challenges for integration, creating a regional knowledge area will be a long-term process and carries more symbolic and cultural meaning to serve the ideational and political purposes of the BRI. Thus, higher education regionalisation should take local reality and contextual factors into consideration, pluralizing the pathway towards knowledge bloc-building.

8.3 Policy Vision for Belt and Road Educational Community

The Chinese government has explicitly expressed its wishes to establish a "Belt and Road educational community" in Education Action Plan (2016) - a policy proposal and an imagined knowledge centre that reconnect minds and hearts beyond borders, space, and place as to facilitate intellectual exchange and intercultural interactions in the name of retrieving its thousand-year civilisational glory. It has set out to build a Belt and Road educational community involving all Belt and Road countries along the route, specifically aiming to "boost the development of education in our countries and improve the overall leverage of the region's education" (Action Plan, 2016). To this end, it requires China's education sector and actors from different sectors of Chinese society to play a proactive and exemplary role. Then, it identifies cooperation and exchange as the main venue to reach it. At the end of the policy proposal, it says:

> The Ministry of Education of China proposes that we, the Belt and Road countries, channel our energies and enthusiasm into action, scale up efforts to align our strategic plans and coordinate our policies, explore new mechanisms and models for educational cooperation and exchange, further deepen and broaden educational cooperation and exchange, and ensure the quality and effectiveness of all such initiatives. Based on principles of mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual assistance and mutual learning, we shall join hands to promote the development of education and closer people-to-people ties. With these efforts, we will *build an educational community among the Belt and Road countries* together and create a new chapter of beautiful life for all humanity (Action Plan, 2016).

"Belt and Road educational community" (BREC) represents a romanticised social imaginary, a regionalist knowledge building project that is historically, culturally

dependent, and ideationally driven. “Community” might be interpreted as the equivalent for “Area” or “Space”, as seen in the EHEA among other global higher education regionalist projects. By initiating the construction of the BREC, China is willing to “shoulder as many responsibilities and honour as many commitments as possible, and to make a greater contribution to the development of education in the region”. These views and goals expressed indicate that the BRI as an economic development scheme are supported by socio-cultural endeavours, and China is striking a balanced development approach that combines both trade, infrastructure as hardware and education, ideas as software (Xi, 2014).

The highlighted policy texts and references regard education as a constructive force in imagining, empowering, and executing the BRI, and reveal a mindset to create a sense of “togetherness” in pursuit of a communal knowledge space characterised by shared cultural and historic Silk Road heritage. Education is conceptualised as part of the policy suite aimed at transforming the wider outlook the Silk Road, against the backdrop of China’s resurgence and the rapidly changing world politics. The extent to which higher education is implicated in the process of shaping, unfolding, constructing Chinese globalisation, and reinvigorating the Silk Road remains an important question for the state, policymakers, and stakeholders. Facing the increasingly fragile, unstable international environments because of new power competition, rising suspicions, and prejudice among international member states, capitalising on higher education as soft power and cultural diplomacy to safeguard regional stability, as well as cooperation, mutual trust and mutual understandings, cannot be underestimated. It is in this regard that establishing a regional higher education area becomes a much-valued activity. Thus, China expresses its willingness to find “corresponding points” so that more Sino-foreign educational collaboration can be forged between partners who seek common interests. Seeking closer collaboration, China aspires to generate emotional ties and social connections, and in doing so integrate the wider region through knowledge bloc building whilst producing a distinct Silk Road regional epistemology to uphold multipolarity and multilateralism.

8.4 Actions of Constructing Belt and Road educational community

As relevant polices have come into effect since their release, the focal point was then shifted to examining whether any actual educational development on Belt and Road have been made. It is of significance to provide a timely response to such enquiry by examining the extent to which policies are translated into practice. The following section highlights how the policy aspiration for creating the BREC have been translated into efforts in a number of different ways. This section reveals several approaches that have been adopted by various institutions, actors, and stakeholders in implementing the policy idea, and shows some initial achievements.

8.4.1 Internationalisation at home

Following the release of policies, some Chinese institutions responded quickly and became active in driving the development of the BRI education community-building. To them, executing policy directives is not only their commitment to the state, but is also a platform to engage internationalisation and enhance capacity building at institutional level. For instance, Peking University, the most prestigious Chinese institution, has launched a new research institute in part as the university's scholarly contribution to advancing research on the BRI in 2018. The Institute of Area Studies, Peking University (PKUIAS) is a comprehensive academic platform for area studies that has as its main tasks the conducting of academic research, the cultivation of talent, serving as a think tank, and hosting international academic exchanges. The newly establish PKUIAS aims to mobilises, integrates and revitalises the university's rich and diversified resources, with existing networks at home and abroad to construct comprehensive, coordinated and interdisciplinary subject composition. Briefly, Area Studies is an interdisciplinary academic field that synthesizes geographical, cultural, economic, political, sociological, folkloric, human behavioural, and institutional and organizational studies of world countries and regions within one platform. It is comprehensive study that span humanities, social sciences, economics and technological development, constructing comprehensive knowledge system to better

serve the world and its people. PKUIAS will not only benefit the institution in developing new types of academic talents, but also meet the demands of the country in accumulating knowledge and providing support to key countries and regions on the Belt and Road route. Another case is Renmin University's Silk Road School. Founded in Suzhou on April 26, 2018, Silk Road School is a non-independent secondary school affiliated to Renmin University. Its major purpose is to enrol students from Belt and Road countries and regions in a Masters-level degree course The Contemporary Chinese Studies. Students will have the chance to study Chinese culture, politics, economy and law. The programme leverages Renmin University's platform, international operational experience and academic resources to train future leaders for the BRI countries. Silk Road School is a key measure by Renmin University to actively support the Belt and Road Initiative in education and provide a response to policy quest (Silk Road School Renmin University, 2019). Similarly, another top Chinese institution Tsinghua built its One Belt-One Road Strategy Institute in 2017 while Beijing Normal University has also opened a Belt and Road School in 2018. Institutional efforts and local initiatives are becoming indispensable components in the planning, coordination, implementation and development of China's international education in accordance with the Central Government's policy initiative.

Meanwhile, the central government, provinces, cities and universities have been actively engaged in various policy initiatives. Since 2016, the Chinese Ministry of Education has signed memorandum of international cooperation with numerous provinces and other autonomous regions and municipalities to establish a ministerial-provincial joint platform for promoting education collaboration on the Belt and Road (MOE, 2018a). This joint platform system enables policy decisions to emerge through an interactive process involving local, regional and state actors via a multi-level governing structure. The place-based policymaking helps to avoid the mentality of "state knows best", where institutions are better positioned to integrate their own needs and concerns into reforms to maximise their local characteristics in policy coordination and implementation. As a result, a number of Chinese universities have sought

academic and research partnerships with the BRI countries, signing agreements to share resources and research outcomes, establishing research alliances, and build dedicated research centres. This has been particularly evident in China's peripheral regions such as Guangxi, Yunnan, Xinjiang where cross-border higher education partnership is more easily formed.

8.4.2 Regionalising Chinese Language

The growing Chinese economic impact and deepening diplomatic relationship with the Belt and Road countries has triggered an ever-increasing demand for Mandarin Chinese learning in this vast region. Countries, including Cambodia, Pakistan, Thailand and Bangladesh have shown interest in blending language learning with future Belt and Road projects. The popularity of Mandarin Chinese in the Silk Road region has turned out to be a new engine for driving the most recent round of growth in the overall number of Confucius Institutes. As a form of cultural diplomacy, Confucius Institutes constitutes an important aspect of China's foreign policy and international education, with the intention to "winning hearts and minds" through the form and practice of language education.

The primary intention of Confucius Institute is language teaching; indeed, they are often integrated with language centres at universities in different countries worldwide to meet a sharply increasing demand for Chinese language learning. Since the first Confucius Institute which was opened in Korea in 2004, in recent years there have been dramatic developments, with over 511 Institutes established in 140 countries and regions (Confucius Institutes Online, 2017). Liu Yandong, the former Chinese State Councillor emphasised the role of Confucius Institute as a bridge for enhancing international communication and intercultural understanding of minds of people and promoting friendship and cooperation between China and the rest of the world (Liu, 2008). Confucius Institutes are designed to be a platform for language teaching and cultural exchange. Although this official explanation highlights the priority of Confucius Institutes as language training institutions, scholars believe they has also been engaged

in enhancing China's soft power as the Chinese governments have enthusiastically mentioned the concept of soft power in public. The multi-functionality of such Institutes constitutes an important aspect of international higher education through language learning, as language is a natural carrier of culture and value. Arguably, Confucius Institutes are acting agents for Chinese culture and value to be exported as to strengthen its soft power and ultimately increase China's cultural capital. It contributes significantly to the promotion of cross-cultural conversation between China and other nations. It is a global knowledge disseminator and cultural ambassador for China, which also accelerates the process of internationalisation of Chinese higher education by means of language teaching, international collaboration and friendship building. This conceptualisation captures the role Confucius Institute plays in China's global engagement. Nye, who coined the term soft power, has more recently proposed another interesting concept - that of smart power - by combining both hard and soft power into a successful strategy (Nye, 2009). He comments on the over-reliance of hard power as the most direct and visible source of American strength. However, promoting universal values, such as democracy, human rights and development of civil society, are not best aided with the barrel of a gun. Nye's reflections seem to echo with Xi's "hardware" and "software" thesis that inspired China's approach towards its NSR development.

While recent years have witnessed some hesitation among selected western universities in reconsidering their cooperation with Confucius Institute, the Belt and Road region has shown great enthusiasm in hosting them. According to Tian Xuejun, the Chinese Vice Minister of Education, Mandarin Chinese has become one of the most important languages communicated in the BRI region. Currently, more than 154 Confucius Institutes and 149 Confucius classrooms are operating in 54 BRI countries, enrolling more than 460,000 learners (the Diplomat, 2017). Xu Tao, Director of International Cooperation and Exchanges from the Ministry of Education noted languages are fundamental to the development of the BRI since understanding each other's languages is a prerequisite for promoting people-to-people bonds, "We help people in countries along the 'Belt and Road' learn Chinese, and these countries help us learn their

languages. In this way, we give full play to our own strengths and will achieve win-win development at the end" (Hanban, 2016). Tangible plans have been made in reciprocal language learning, including learning languages of limited diffusion. In 2015, 939 Chinese students were dispatched to learn 38 languages in 33 countries located on the NSR. As a leading Chinese language university, Beijing Foreign Studies University also added 11 new foreign languages in their course offering, most of which are tongues of small countries in which the BRI is being promoted. Further endeavours include sending invitations to jointly set up foreign language programmes affiliated with Chinese universities and localise Confucius Institute to accommodate the needs of achieving sustainable, effective and efficient language schooling (Xu & Xing, 2020).

Mandarin Chinese learners have also soared in number beyond the BRI regions. In the US, the number of Mandarin Chinese learner in K-12 Schools has doubled to 400,000 from 2015-2017 (Xinhua, 2017). In the UK, the popularity of learning Mandarin Chinese has translated into a £10-million government funded project, Mandarin Excellence Programme. It recognised Mandarin Chinese as one of the most important language for UK's future, and 5000 students will be aided by this programme to speak fluent Chinese by 2020 (British Government, 2016). The increasing use of Mandarin Chinese as a lingua franca on regional and international stage has become a key feature in regional higher education development and collaboration, promoting cross cultural pollination with different civilisations across continents. In this sense, regionalising Chinese language is a key dimension in constructing the BREC.

8.4.3 Transnational higher education

Several Chinese universities have also sought to set up offshore campus buildings. A good example is Xiamen University's Malaysia Campus. The British media *The Guardian* describes this as the Chinese global outreach strategy at work in promoting its soft power through its overseas education initiatives and to compete with long-standing American, British and Australian offerings. (Guardian, 2017). Besides Xiamen, Soochow University founded a presence in Lao's capital in 2012 and Yunnan

University of Finance & Management co-founded a Bangkok Business School with Rangsit University of Thailand in 2013. The transnational higher education ventures in southeast Asia are likely to gather more support for the Maritime Silk Road and advance China-ASEAN relations. Outside Asia, Tongji University established a campus at the heart of Renaissance - Florence, Italy (Bellini et al., 2016). Tongji University (TU) is a top-ranking university located in Shanghai, originally founded as a German Medical school in 1907. For a long time, TU had various collaborative partnerships with foreign universities, especially with German institutions. In 2006, Chinese and Italian governments initiated educational projects that aimed to promote multifunctional cooperation with universities, institutes and enterprises. TU was involved in such agendas including constant flow of academic exchange, studying abroad programmes and the establishment of China-Italy Design & Innovation Centre (Bellini et al, 2016). Centred at the heart of Renaissance, Florence has a rich cultural heritage and unparalleled artistic assets. American universities have a long-standing interest in Florence, for instance, New York and Harvard university offer courses on Renaissance studies. Florence aspires to embrace new opportunities. Its former major, Matteo Renzi, articulates the city need to host institutions from emerging countries as an ideal complement to the traditional European and American presence (Bellini, 2016). It was under such a background that TU was able to establish its overseas campus in Florence, operated jointly with partner institutions, such as University of Florence, to provide short programmes in art, design, architecture, fashion and preservation of cultural heritage. UT Florence campus does not provide degree courses, though it plans to launch more teaching activities in interior design, graphic design and fashion professional pathway. It also aims to expand its circle of cooperation partner institutes, including other universities in the Tuscan region and the Confucius Institute in Pisa. It is clear that TU Florence campus is exploiting the advantages that Florence can offer and work collaboratively to advance a new form of transnational higher education cooperation in a more art, creativity and design-orientation direction. Peking University also launched a branch of its HSBS Business School in Oxford, UK in 2018. Moreover,

Zhejiang university has also signed an agreement with Imperial College about their future collaboration and campus building in London. Much of the interest in hosting Chinese transnational education programmes are unsurprisingly concentrated in countries involved in the BRI. For developing countries along the BRI they have looking to China for assistance in developing and improving their higher education systems and capacity-building; developed countries such as the UK and Italy have also been strategically planning their future cooperation with China considering the BRI advancement in Europe. Although some of these branch campuses were planned well before the BRI came out, they have nevertheless been incorporated into the BRI agenda or attached a BRI label. The emergence of Chinese transnational higher education is a novel phenomenon compared to western-led offshore establishments in Asia and Middle East. Nevertheless, they illustrate a new form of China's outward-oriented higher education internationalisation and a widening imagination in viewing the country no longer as a receiver of foreign knowledge but also a sender of its own (Wu, 2018; Jokila, 2015; Yang, 2010). This marks a distinctive shift in that China has managed to transform its identity from a traditional "importer" to an emergent "exporter" in international higher education.

8.4.4 Regional University Alliances

On 22 May 2015, the President of Xi'an Jiao Tong University, together with representatives of approximately 100 universities from 22 countries, signed the Xi'an Declaration, for the establishment of University Alliance of the Silk Road (丝绸之路大学联盟) (UASR). The establishment of UASR aims to contribute to the harmonious development of human civilisations and the open collaboration in higher education on the basis of friendship and equality (XJTU, 2015). UASR was led by China's prestigious Xi'an Jiao Tong University (XJTU), which is regarded as one of the top research institutions in China. UASR also captures some of the world's active TNHE institutions, such as the University of Liverpool, University of Hong Kong, National University of Singapore, Milan Polytechnic and the University of New South Wales,

as well as many other higher education institutions spanning across the emerging powerhouses of Asia, the Middle East and Russia. Missing for the moment are the prestigious institutions, such as the Russell Group in the UK, Oxbridge, or the Group of Eight (Australia).

UASR is a non-governmental and non-profit organization aimed at promoting openness and facilitating international cooperation in higher education. UASR's mission is clearly aligned with the Action Plan as to:

> "adopts the theme of building a platform in higher education cooperation and promoting regional openness and development and vows to step up exchanges and collaboration among universities from countries and regions along the Silk Road in institutional exchanges, talent training, joint research, cultural communication, policy studies and medical service etc, enhance understanding and friendship between the young people, foster quality and all-round talents with international visions, and facilitate the economic growth of countries on the New Silk Road Economic Belt and the Eurasian region." (UASR, 2015).

UASR was a direct response to OBOR and its call for education development and international cooperation. Against the backdrop of OBOR and Action Plan in education policy planning, XJTU aims to use its newly established framework as a springboard to invigorate academic initiatives that connect universities along the Road to co-operate in internationalising education, research and innovation (Holloway, 2015). Laurie Pearcy (2015), former Chief Executive of the Australia China Business Council and currently Director of China strategy and development at the University of New South Wales comments: we are "aiming to do what no institution would be capable of doing independently, this alliance recognises that super regional connectivity to China will be vital to the evolution of the research and innovation ecosystems of the future".

Following the formation of UASR, immediate actions were undertaken to advance initiatives. The First Forum for Presidents of UASR was held after the inauguration ceremony to discuss topics around higher education collaboration, regional development, talent training, research partnerships (XJTUa, 2015). 20 Chinese and foreign universities have formed the New Silk Road Law Schools Alliance (新丝路法学

院联盟), with the intention of facilitating academic exchange and research collaboration in legal studies so as to enhance of the rule of law. It is believed that such endeavour will improve mutual understanding of jurisdiction among its alliance members and encourage the movement of legal globalisation, as well as nurture OBOR's legal environment and legal culture (China Daily, 2015; UNSW, 2016). This coordinates and facilitates OBOR's Vision and Actions (2015) in enhancing "mutual recognition of regulations, and mutual assistance in law enforcement" and therefore acting as an important means for fostering legal consensus between different countries on OBOR; prestigious Law schools in leading institutions from China, Hong Kong SAR, Singapore, Australia, Finland, Russia, Brazil, India, Kazakhstan and South Korea are involved.

Xi'an, also known as Chang'an (长安) in ancient China, was the old capital, political and cultural centre during Han (2 Century) and Tang dynasties (6-9 Centuries) when the Old Silk Road started to emerge and prosper. It is generally accepted as the place in the East that sat at the beginning of the historical Silk Road, serving as a symbolic icon for China's cultural historical past. Today, Xi'an is the home of Xi'an Jiao Tong University, who has collaborated with the University of Liverpool in establishing and running the transnational university Xi'an Jiao Tong Liverpool in Suzhou, China. As a result, Xi'an is viewed as an ideal place to rearticulate the Silk Road Spirit that can be traced back to the Old Silk Road route. In 2016, the representative members of the UASR have reached upon "Xi'an Consensus" by making commitments to further promoting openness and collaboration; advocating exchanges and mutual leaning among different cultures; devoting to sustainable development and pursing common prosperity of humankind via higher education (Xi'an Consensus, 2016).

Additionally, a similar initiative - the Asian Universities Alliance (AUA) has been set up by Tsinghua University in 2017. AUA is seen as "an extension of China's OBOR initiative in the higher education sector" (Cabanda, Tan & Chou 2019, 97). The creation of AUA is specially aimed at integrating Asian intra-regional higher education

collaboration, boosting regional higher education growth and global image, and revitalising an imaginary of an Asian knowledge space to reposition Asia in the global research and innovation landscape. AUA brings 15 universities from 13 Asian countries together. The founding philosophy of AUA is that cooperative efforts are becoming essential to addressing regional and global challenges in an increasingly globalised world, as no one can develop in isolation or be able to solve global challenges alone. By creating an Asian knowledge network to host some of the flagship universities in the region, China is seeking to aggregate a collective Asian voice at a global stage. Rather than challenging the West, AUA represents an Asian way of rediscovering connectivity in higher education to jointly build the shared future for the region. UASR and AUA are only two of several emergent knowledge networks on the NSR. Other emerging associations include Chinese Academy of Science-initiated Alliance of International Science Organisation (Peters, 2019), Xiamen University-led The University Consortium of 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, and the reestablishment of The University Alliance of Belt and Road in Dunhuang, Gansu in 2015, among others (Li & Ruby, 2020). It is worth noting that China assumed a leading role in initiating and driving the directions of these regional knowledge alliances, transforming itself from a "rule-taker" to a "rule-maker" in higher education.

Besides the establishment of formal higher education consortia, two consecutive Belt and Road Education Dialogues have been successfully held in Beijing, entitled "research, policy-making and innovation- future higher education and academic mobility" and "Research, Policy-making and Outlook" respectively in 2017 and 2018. Hosted by China's National Institute of Education Sciences, these dialogues drew hundreds of educational officials, scholars and experts from China, international organizations and nearly 40 countries along the Belt and Road together. Belt and Road Education Dialogue is dedicated towards reflecting the current situation of education cooperation while exploring new ways to harness the intellectual and organizational potential of scientific research in the education, foresting deeper exchanges among institutions. Vice Minister of Education, Tian Xuejun attended the event and he

highlighted that such events were major steps forward for the education sector in its effort to fully implement the policy initiative and respond to Chinese leader's concerns regarding education made on several occasions. He also emphasised the importance of the event for international academic exchanges that supported the BRI and pointed out further and steady development is needed to further people-to-people exchanges and educational collaboration (MOE, 2018).

8.4.5 Scholarship and mobility

In Martin Jacques's book- *When China Rules the World* (2009), predicted that the number of international students studying in China would reach 300,000 by 2020, a key aspect in his account of the rise of China as a global power. However, the data released by MOE confirmed there are now some 442,773 international students from 205 countries and regions studying in China in 2016, an 11.35% increase over that of 2015 (MOE, 2017b). According to this source, China is the third largest country for hosting international students behind the USA and the UK, exceeding other traditional popular destinations such as Germany, France, Australia and Canada. This figure includes all kinds of foreign students, for instance exchange students and those who seek for language courses. The number of students who have registered only for formal degree education is 209,966. Yet this rapid expansion is still phenomenal give that in 2006 only 36,386 foreign students were studying in China (Jokila, 2015).

In addition to increasing numbers of foreign students, the makeup of the student population has also diversified. This reflects the changing geopolitics of economic circumstances and foreign policies. Most foreign students are traditionally from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. But today Africa is the fastest growing region, especially after a period of Chinese-African collaboration since 1990s (Yang, 2002). Asian (Koreans, Thai, Japanese, Vietnamese, Indonesian) and North American (America) also constitute a significant proportion (MOE, 2017b).

In order to ostensibly deepen education cooperation, promote people-to-people bonds and cultivate professionals and talents and achieve mutual development, Vision and Actions have made the commitment that 10,000 government scholarships will be provided by the Chinese Government to overseas students from counties along the Belt and Road every year. Since 2017, the Ministry of Education of China has set up the "Chinese Government Scholarship- Silk Road Programme", which is provided to Chinese higher education institutions for recruiting outstanding young students from the BRI countries to purpose their degree studies in China. Its parallel programme is the Erasmus+ programme that recruited students globally to Europe. The Scholarship scheme is generous in that it covers all tuition fees for a during of between 3 to 5 years, with an additional allowance for living costs and a comprehensive medical insurance package. The latest figure shows there is a significant increase of foreign students in China, particularly those from the BRI countries, who are currently accounting for nearly 65% of China's total foreign students. Compared to 2016 figures, the percentage of students from the BRI countries rose 12 %, with a total number of 317,200 (Xinhua, 2018), a significant proportion of which is attributed to the Silk Road scholarship (MOE, 2018b).

Moreover, the Action Plan also stressed the equal importance of sending Chinese students abroad to OBOR countries through the Silk Road Two-Way Student Exchange Enhancement Programme (Action Plan, 2015). China plans to sponsor 2,500 Chinese students to study in the BRI countries every year for three years from 2017 onwards. It is believed that such a scholarship scheme will help to construct valuable education-based partnerships between countries by training industrial leaders and skilful talents, balancing outbound and inbound studies, as well as maintaining the quality and quantity of student exchange.

Although China put considerable effort into recruiting international students, the view is that there is still room for improvement. In 2015, the number of foreign students studying in China and the US are 400,000 and 1 million respectively. The discrepancy

will be more evident if we take the factor of population into account. This also suggests that the BRI provided new opportunities for foreign students to study China, and those scholarship schemes have been constructive in bridging higher education partnerships between nation states, facilitating student and academic mobility, strengthening China's export of expertise and soft power, and enhancing people-to-people bond within the Silk Road region. These various endeavours reinforce China's rising statues as an emerging regional centre in higher education, contributing to the construction of the BREC.

8.4.6 Aid to Africa

China-African relations and policies on foreign aid can be traced back to the early 1960s during the first Premier Zhou Enlai's visit to Mali and Ghana, who outlined "Five Principles Governing Foreign Aid" (He, 2005 cited in Wang, 2013). But it was not until the new millennium that China's role in Africa has become more visible. In 2000, The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) was held in Beijing, which marked a milestone in China-Africa relations. It prioritised equality and mutual benefits as the core mechanism for pragmatic cooperation. Since then, China has made efforts to assist African countries in social and economic developments. In education, China has granted more scholarships to African students to study in China, sent specialists to help Africa to improve its higher education quality, established communication channels for cultural studies and increase funds for training professional of various disciplines (FOCAC, 2000; Yuan, 2019).

This cooperation has been approved successful over time, so that the relationship between the two regions has been gradually strengthened. Meanwhile, more African students are studying in China to gain new knowledge and learn the language. King (2006) describes this form of foreign aid as shaped by the "Chinese model" – in that it focuses on training human capital via higher or vocational education sectors for the purpose of economic and social advancement. This is distinctively different from the traditional donor-recipient relationship prominent in Western discourses. He also

suggests that the Chinese model of educational aid is based on mutual benefits gained through bilateral cooperation. This win-win approach to aid has received a high degree of acceptance and recognition in Africa (King, 2006).

Following the footstep of the Tanzania Zambia Railway that was built in the 1970s, recent years have witnessed a new round of the so-called "Railway Diplomacy" (Lauridsen, 2020). China has gained increasing presence in East Africa by helping several countries to build railways. The most recent discussion has been focused on Mombasa-Nairobi Railway and Addisababa-Djibouti Railway. Costing 4 billion US dollars and providing 30,000 local jobs, the Mombasa–Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway is one of China's main infrastructure construction projects in Africa, connecting the capital city Nairobi to the port city of Mombasa. It is also the biggest infrastructure project in Kenya for the last 50 years, which need specially trained professional to maintain. Thus, educational aid and cooperation play an essential role regarding this railway infrastructure development. Responding to the BRI and the Action Plan to "deepen cooperation on cultivation and training of talent" and the "training leading talent and technicians for countries along the routes" (Action Plan, 2016), the China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) in collaboration with Beijing Jiao Tong University, has launched a scholarship programme for qualified high school graduates in Kenya to allow them enrol Railway Engineering studies in China, with a specific focus on training railway-related knowledge and skills.

China's aid to Africa has led to a proliferation of debates and questions regarding China's higher education agenda. Nevertheless, China has successfully increased its international visibility through such cross-border educational activities. China's educational aid illustrates a change of paradigm and a widening imagination of internationalising higher education by exporting cultural and economic capital to increase soft power. China is on longer acting as a receiver of foreign knowledge but also a sender of its own knowledge, language and culture, thus repositioning itself as a knowledge core for less developed region such as Africa. Given the trans-continental

coverage of the BRI, King (2020) suggests education and human resources development between the two regions have complemented or even exceeded previous commitments made by FOCAC *VI and VII.*

8.5 Towards a Silk Road higher education area: challenges and prospects

Various initiatives have gathered strong momentum in turning the Belt & Road region into a nascent educational community, with substantial and concrete outcomes produced as discussed above. However, there are also considerable issues and challenges lie ahead. The prospect of the emergent higher education area is contingent on certain conditions and is susceptible to several factors. The following section addresses relevant concerns associated with the further development of the BREC and offers important insights and implications.

Constructing the BREC reveals an underlining assumption that the Belt and Road has been conceptualised as a regional space. Understanding the level and progression of Belt and Road region-building is fundamental to analysing higher education regionalisation. Silk Road as a geographic area is not to be taken as a "natural" or "given", rather it is a shaped, created and recreated territory throughout history and human activities. The revival of Silk Road is also a process of "region in the (re)making". At present, the BRI do not possess a high level of regionness as being a relatively young entity. In Hettne and Söderbaum's (2000) terms, regionness is understood in parallel to "stateness" and "nationness" or as in a region for itself. Higher level of regionness indicates a more integrated, structured and institutionalised regional existence whereas lower level of regionness is by and large a loosely defined unit (Hettne, 2005). Importantly, higher education regionalisation has a large degree of path dependency (Chao, 2014). This suggests the extent to which higher education develops is contingent upon the level of regionness of the given geographical, political or social

region. One participant from a research-intensive higher education institution elaborated on this view:

> *The thing about regionalisation is that politics and economy tend to happen prior to higher education. Higher education relies on the political economy of region-building. If the former is not well developed, then it is hard for the latter to catch up.*

As a nascent regionalising project, the BRI lacks institutional mechanisms and governing structures in support of deepening regional higher education integration. For example, although China has signed agreements on the mutual recognition of higher education degrees with 54 states, including 24 BRI countries, most of which are done on a bilateral basis instead of having them approved by a multilateral body that could facilitate all BRI-related academic degree accreditation (State Council, 2020). The same applies to higher education quality assurance, approaches that ensure the quality provision of single institution, system or jointly running programmes are currently absent. Compared to more established regions such as the EU, the BRI does not have an institutionalised structure in place to systemically integrate the Belt & Road region, as to increase both the level of its regionness and regional higher education interdependence. Thus, the current low level regional integration prevents higher education to be further regionalised, at least institutionally. To fully establish a region-wide governing architecture to address this problem will be a long-term process that would require sustained efforts in wider Belt & Road region-building.

Another challenge is financing. Higher education, to a large extent, is considered a public good in China and many countries alongside the NSR. Given its public nature, it would be risky to adopt a marketized approach in knowledge region-building. The Chinese state would have to assume a major role in financing. Being the initiator, China has set up numerous special funds to promote higher education regional development, as is evidenced in the Silk Road scholarship and various institutional monetary incentives elaborated earlier. More recently, work has been done in collaboration with international and regional organisations by providing funds to shape relevant research agenda. Examples are UK-China-BRI countries Education Partnership Initiative by

British Council and Chinese Ministry of Education (British Council, 2020); and The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO)' Silk Road Research Grant sponsored by Chinese National Commission (UNESCO, 2021). Acknowledging these Chinese investment, it is unclear whether the BRI countries have made any similar attempt to boost regional academic exchange and collaboration. As the policy proposer China has taken a major responsibility in financing. However, it would be ill-advised for the Chinese government to bear the cost alone. After all, all beneficiaries need to contribute so as to ensure the mutually shared knowledge community is sufficiently resourced and can move forward more sustainably. However, the BRI countries display contrasting differences in their economic status, so that coordinating members states to enable a mutually satisfying funding scheme may be challenging. Additionally, concerns also arise regarding how to balance education investment at home and aboard. The view is that internationalisation promoted by the BRI only benefits elite institutions in an increasingly differentiated, diversified, and stratified Chinese higher education system. It risks downplaying domestic issues; universities at lower tier may see themselves becoming less important and irrelevant, exacerbating existing social inequities.

Envisioning the future, the BREC is unlikely to be solely sustained or determined by the will and effort of its initiator but rather is more subject to a set of factors independent of Chinese domestic politics and policies. In essence, building a shared knowledge community would need to be a mutual effort, demanding all those involved to work collectively and cooperatively to realise the common good. To that end, China must gain support from Silk Road countries, as the success of the regional higher education space is contingent upon the political willingness and active involvement of all participating member states. So far, the BRI has been embraced by a large number of countries in Asia, Europe and Africa, with many showing their enthusiasm through signing memorandums with China, giving it an advantage in jointly implementing the initiative and achieving the BREC. Nevertheless, geopolitics is a variable factor associated with uncertain futures. Despite its initial success, the key to further

development lies in consistent joint efforts and close collaboration between nations under a stable environment. The changing world politics could be a threat to regional cooperation and stability. It is specially so given that present US-China tensions may pressure small countries to pick side, making them to reconsider their participation in the name of national security under the current geopolitical dynamics. With similar geopolitical factors at work, it appears that EHEA is moving backwards due to the Brexit effects. On the other hand, the intensified economic relations China has with the BRI countries could counteract the geopolitical unpredictability. Being the largest trading partner of 143 countries worldwide, China now represents more of an opportunity to many members in the international community. Hence, increasing economic ties China has developed with the world could be a great enabler of keeping socio-cultural interactions to continue.

Focusing on the vast landmass of both the Belt and the Road, the BRI extends an Asian-originated initiative to a nascent interregional one which consists of Asian and European components and touches upon parts of Africa and beyond. The scope and scale of the BRI contains numerous civilisations whose cultural, linguistic, religious heritage and political economic systems are distinct and variegated. Having realise this, China is by no means only promoting its own culture, language or forms of governance. Central to the success of the BRI and regional higher education is the recognition of the intra and inter-regional diversity, Asian/European complexity, and reality, so is the ability to construct a multicultural, open and inclusive entity that celebrates these differences. As a "Sino-Centric" project, the BRI has been infused with Chinese governing philosophy and foreign policy narratives, examples can be seen through "win-win" discourse and "community of shared destiny". Expressions like these emphasise mutual benefits, communal spirit, and equal statues of partnership, laying an epistemic foundation for intercultural communication to happen on a mutually respected and equal basis. Considering the successful experience from higher education Europeanisation, selective inter-regional education policy borrowing should be encouraged to aid the growth and institutionalisation of Silk Road higher education area,

with critical reflection on contextual sensitivity. Besides the cultural matter, several interviewees also mentioned the importance of adopting information technology in constructing an online knowledge Silk Road. How to incorporate the latest technological development to revolutionise future learning spaces is a heated topic. The emergence of 5G, artificial intelligence, quantum computing, big data will be the backbones of the 21st century economy, and development will be increasingly technology-driven, so digitalising the Silk Road for producing an educational community represents an innovative and revolutionary approach to reimaging and reshaping higher education regionalisation. One participant said,

> *The future of education is closely linked to internet, to make use of internet, MOOC, online education is a trend. We need pilot test and apply mature techniques to the BRI educational development.*

8.6 Insights, Implications and Concluding Remarks

Having analysed the conditions, challenges and prospects facing the BREC, the chapter makes final remarks on the implications of these developments. First, higher education regionalisation can be understood as the outcome of heterogenous processes and phenomena that take different forms and shapes. The way in which higher education is implicated in regionalising projects is essentially subject to specific contexts, realities and conditions. The European case of regionalism is often taken as exemplary of an institutionalised approach serving the political agenda of European integration. This model needs to be taken cautiously as to whether it is applicable or desirable for other emergent world regions. This is because the rationales and conditions for higher education regionalisation varies greatly across regional blocs. As a result, complete integration and harmonisation may not always be the preference for other regions, and the absence of complete integration ought not to be read as the absence of higher education regionalism either. Indeed, the shape and form of regionalism, as this chapter argues, is dependent on the politics of actors involved. I have suggested that for the moment the BREC does not seek ultimate integration as a target considering the

complexity involved in the Belt and Road region, instead maintaining a certain level of regional collaboration, coordination and convergence in higher education is sufficient and presentable under the current circumstances. Meanwhile, compared to top-down institutionalised approach in constructing knowledge space, the BRI has shown that an actor-led, agency-driven, bottom-up approach has resulted in fruitful outcomes equally. Arguably, China's attempt to build a Silk Road educational community pluralises governing models in knowledge bloc-building by diversifying the pathway towards higher education regionalisation. An important takeaway is that regions must find their own paths and directions that best support their needs and serve their development interests, having major contextual and contingent factors considered.

Second, the BREC forms part of the larger NSR project, so it should be contextualised in relation to the wider social background that giving rise to the BRI. To regionalise and transnationalise highly diverse higher education systems is an important step towards revitalising the cultural Silk Road. Establishing BREC is also about implementing President Xi's political slogan "community with shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体). In other words, the BREC is intrinsically cultural and political. Leader's thoughts were borrowed and travelled across sectors, permeating and penetrating respective sectoral concerns in ordering development priorities in line with national agenda whilst attempting to revive a civilisational glory (Xu, 2021). Community（共同体）is a motto derived from Chinese domestic politics, and a connotation to peaceful co-existence along the Silk Road. It carries important symbolic and cultural meanings to serve the ideational and political purposes of the BRI. Interpreting BREC quite literally might result in a loss of the insights into its meanings shared by practice. To China, BREC is the application of its governing philosophy and ideology in the field of education, where its policy rhetoric means as much as its practical implications in that it aims to shape a new set of norms, values and discourses to influence the regional epistemology. Last, it also may not be immediately clear what impact the BREC is likely to have on the academic environment and knowledge production between regions. It is believed that the BREC has potentially increased the

intellectual and physical traffic for countries that were previously neglected, such as those in Central Asia region (Leskina & Sabzalieva, 2021). As development further intensify, there is a possibility for the Belt and Road evolve to be a mega knowledge and research Zone similar to those found in the European and North American spaces. If that is the case, the Silk Road is likely to recalibrate the existing global knowledge hegemony. Being still a relatively recent development, the BREC brings new dynamics shaping the movement of global higher education regionalism. As these developments are evolving and dynamic in nature, future research is needed to capture the periodic change to better reflect the latest insights and characteristics, contributing towards greater understanding of the phenomenon of higher education regionalisation both in theory and practice.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

The thesis set out to shed light on whether it was possible to see the emergence and development of China's BRI and to ask about its implications for regional politics and regional higher education development. It thus examined the extent to which the BRI might be understood as an emergent form of region-building within the broader context of East Asian regionalism, exploring how higher education as a sector has been implicated into the BRI policymaking process and investigates the specific educational initiatives and activities that have contributed to the making of a Belt and Road educational community. This concluding chapter discusses the findings presented in the earlier chapters, thereby reviewing the major contributions of this study. This chapter concludes the thesis by reflecting on the limitations of the research and identifying directions for future research on the BRI, education and relevant areas.

9.2 Recap of Findings

In this section, the reviewing of the research findings of this study are laid out according to the three research questions. I aim to recap and review the findings, in order to assess the contribution and limitations of this study in what follows.

My first research question asks: How can we describe and understand China's Belt and Road Initiative? I started this research with the objective of producing knowledge about the revitalisation of the Silk Road, asking what it is and what it means for China and education. As the topic is relatively newish, embarking on a research project like this seemed to be an ambitious goal. A starting point would be to sketch out the research terrain of the New Silk Road, examining what scholars have said about this grand project. But what I wanted to do is to construct a theoretical framework that would allow me to better understand and explain the BRI as it seems to be unfolding and is being constructed over time. To this end, this study provides a framework for

understanding the BRI, including its rationales and motivations driving its development, Chapter 5 in particular suggested that understanding of the BRI should be broadened beyond the current geopolitical and geo-economic framings and paradigms; this involved, placing it within the context of the changing East Asian political economy and shifting regional politics as well as global transformation of power relations. By conceptualising the formation of the BRI as a nascent regionalising project informed by new regionalism theory, this study asks whether we can see the BRI as a rising power's strategy to construct an alternative regional order that serves the rising power's interests and needs. At the core of the theorisation of the BRI as a region-building project is the combination of endogenous and exogenous factors; that is, the transformation of the Chinese state from inside, and China's proactive response to the external changing regional environment from outside. It argues such a regionalisation initiative does not occur in isolation but is subjected to both internal and external influences. As such, the BRI regionalising project can be viewed in relation to both China's rise as a result of state transformation and the wider East Asian/Eurasian political and economic reconfiguration. The thesis has also aimed to capture those dynamics that have shaped this regionalising venture, with new set of ideas and provocations such as "the community of shared destiny for humankind" to be incorporated during the regionalising process. The thesis argues that the BRI as a regionalising initiative is China's attempt to reconstruct and restore a historically and culturally embedded social imaginary that reunites the ancient and historical Silk Road region, empowering the region to work together for realising a more inclusive and multilateral international system.

Having laid out a theoretical foundation for the BRI as an emergent region, the thesis also investigated the role education plays in driving the BRI's regional development. Two main research questions were proposed. How, in what ways and with what consequences is education being incorporated into the Belt and Road Initiative? And: How is China's education policy and strategy within the context of the Belt and Road played out in regional, national and institutional settings, and what impact it is likely to

have? It addressed these by examining relevant government policies and analysing the way in which education has been involved into the BRI policymaking process. This objective was motivated by my long-standing interest in the politics-education nexus, and in particular, the ways in which education is implicated in the processes and dynamics of politics that have shaped and transformed the contemporary global power relations.

A major finding is that this research has identified education as one of the components that is being mobilised to constitute the BRI construction as an important mechanism to achieve people-to-people connectivity. Education as a key sector has been clearly brought into the BRI regionalising process, and its significance cannot be taken only as a spill-over of the BRI economic regionalisation. Rather it functions as a form of soft power in establishing the BRI region from cultural and ideational perspectives. As such, this study contributes to our understanding of an emerging BRI-education link.

In addition, this study explored the formation of education policy in relation to the critical cultural political economy of education in its theorisation and analysis. It shows how education policy has been positioned, produced and coordinated in relation to the wider cultural, political and economic dynamics in shaping the BRI planning and development. In what follows, this study examines the implications of the BRI education policy for constructing a regional knowledge space. It argues that as the BRI continues to develop, various kinds of educational initiatives also happened within the BRI context, either at national level, subnational level or supranational level is making up a new regional higher education community in a collective manner responding to China's policy quest for building the Belt and Road educational community. Nevertheless, the analysis has shown several challenges that might hinder the further development of this regional higher education area. These include whether the BRI can manage to secure sufficient and sustainable financial resources for continued investment, the willingness and cooperation from participating member states, the level of regionness in the general BRI regionalisation process, and the contingent factor of

the rapidly changing geopolitics within the BRI region and beyond. However, these developments illuminate an overlapping higher education regional space in the making driven by China in ways that are constituting East Asia and Eurasia regions. In doing so, they are making a contribution to the scholarly literature, on the one hand, and our understanding of global regionalism and higher education region-building, on the other.

9.3 Reflections and Limitations

This research t project has proven to be both challenging and rewarding. By shaping the research focus on China's BRI as a region-building project and linking it to the discussion on higher education regionalism, I have been pushed to read, think and test out my ideas around several inter-related subjects across multiple disciplines whose intersection have received limited attention in the literature, and are relatively under-explored. Conducting interdisciplinary research across border, over space and through time, has been a challenge. First of all, given the nature and the broader scope of the phenomenon under investigation, I have had to make practical decisions about how to carry out this research, which involved considerations around issues such as what materials and resources were available to me, who might be the key respondents during the fieldwork trip, and what theoretical framework might be of interest in guiding the research design and development. Covid also played havoc with my research plans as it also limited my ability to travel to destinations along the Belt and Road. Thus, the research process itself became very much an intensive learning experience for me, not only because we had very limited knowledge about the BRI due to its novelty, but also the lack of scholarly attention in this area and related to this it was difficult to undertake a thorough literature review. Secondly, although I have travelled half the planet from the UK to China, and joined the Academic Silk Road Consortium in the Netherlands, to explore the subject, broaden my contacts, and enrich my knowledge, the number of research participants in this study is still limited. Fortunately, I had the chance to talk to some leading scholars and experts in top institutions in China and obtained some valuable data. This has been complemented by outsiders' views through my

engagement with European scholars when I participated in the 2019 and 2021 Utrecht Summer School in the Netherlands, organised by Prof. Marijk van der Wende, a renowned scholar of higher education internationalisation; and through my participation in a number of international conferences during which I was able to gather some invaluable feedback and insights regarding my research project from various places such as the US, Hong Kong, Singapore.

In this respect, having had the chance of integrating various perspectives in forming an understanding of the topic under investigation is very valuable. Additionally, it is worth noting that the findings of this research may be somehow restricted by various factors such as the time limit, the fact that I am the only one who collected, analysed and interpreted data, my positionality and the implicit and explicit subjectivity. These concerns largely relate to the extent to which my personal background, academic interests, language skills have shaped the way in which I designed and implemented this research project, as well as how I managed to access empirical data. Being a native Chinese speaker, I had the advantage of being able to draw in Chinese language sources including policy documents using my native language and translated them into English medium. Consequently, the ability to read and communicate in the Chinese language has greatly facilitated my comprehension of how the BRI and its educational components are perceived domestically. Other limitations derive from being a sole researcher were huge. If the study could have been done by a team of researchers, I have confidence that data collected would be more diverse, rich and representative.

Last, having been undertaking this research for the last four and half years, I have gained personal and professional developments in several aspects. The most significant attainment is that I learned to become an independent learner throughout this PhD process. My knowledge around regionalism, globalisation and their impact on higher education development, and East Asia region-building has also been strengthened. By engaging with different theories and debates, I have gained increasing knowledge and insights on my research subjects. For instance, by adopting critical cultural political

economy of education theoretical framework, I was able to analyse how education policy production in China has been tied to various mechanisms and dynamics that beyond the education scope and sphere. I have also used New Regionalism Theory to explain the formation of a BRI-centric region, with both inside and outside dimensions to be insightfully articulated. I also learned how individuals working in higher education institutions perceive policy initiatives, as well as how they translate, interpret and enact such policies in their daily working life. With the expertise and experience that I have gained from conducting this research, I have become more confident to carry out independent research that might involve diverse stakeholders in different contexts, and to be able to synthesise and communicate insights to the wider audience.

A note on Covid-19. The outbreak of Covid-19 has been a major disruption to my studies, I left Cambridge in March 2020 following the university's request that all international students ought to go back to their own country as the outbreak hits the UK. As a result, my engagement with the rest of my PhD work has been reset as an online only mode. It is essential to document this major event that occurred halfway of my studies, as I believe its impact on all of us has been proved to be profound and lasting. Acknowledging that physical presence in Cambridge is not possible also meant increasing difficulty in obtaining necessary support that would otherwise regard as normal and integral. It is for this reason, I consider this unexpected incident to be a factor that might have shaped the way how I handle my research progress, interacted with my data and my colleagues.

Taken together, these reflections of my PhD learning journey and the limitations I have identified speak back to me about the challenges of doing social science research, that is such research has always been shaped by external conditions, as it is by researchers' own decisions, backgrounds, philosophical standing, and theoretical perspectives. It is for this reason that my research findings could only be taken as a partial rather than a whole, I recognise that my way of approaching this research through specific theory and methods are just one of the many possible routes, thus I am also mindful of the

fallibility of my findings. However, as I submit this thesis, I hope the arguments presented in this study can make a contribution to the gradual advancement of our knowledge of the BRI regionalisation and the actors, agendas involved for a BRI higher education regionalism.

9.4 Directions for Future Research

After reviewing the findings of the research and discussing the limitations and reflections, I raise a few points pertaining the directions for future research on this topic. First, I suggest that future research ought to proceed by addressing the limitations which were acknowledged in the previous section. Indeed, the BRI-education research agendas would be served best by employing a variety of different research approaches, in different contexts, with different data collection and data analysis procedures. More research is needed to explore possible challenges and risks of the BRI educational community building for China and all the dependent countries in light of the rising geopolitical tensions under the current global climate. This also means more empirical analysis of higher education region-building and higher education internationalisation in countries other than China is needed in the future. In a similar vein, policy studies regarding how the BRI-education is perceived by relevant stakeholders, communities and officials in the BRI countries is equally important. After all, the vision of constructing a regional knowledge community may be derived from a single country's initiative, its success depends on collective and communal efforts from all those who are involved.

Second, the interplay between education and world politics remains an interesting question in higher education scholarship. Studying how education is implicated in global power restructuring through the rise of regions is one of the many possible ways to demonstrate the increasing link between education and global political movement, time is ripe for researchers to explore other possibilities in strengthening this link via various theoretical innovations and methodological contributions. Extending my own study on China's BRI and higher education regionalism to a much wider research

agenda that involves and provokes the dialogue between knowledge, power and politics can be an intellectually stimulating endeavour that will further contribute to our knowledge and understanding of interdisciplinary thinking on education studies.

The BRI-education nexus is an ongoing and evolving phenomenon, destined to remain changeable and contested. Although I have attempted to capture some of the moments within this changing landscape of higher education on the Eurasian continent, there are still many unknowns that deserve deeper exploration. As of 2021, China has become a major political and economic player on the world stage with its power projected to grow in the coming decades. Meanwhile, parts of the Western world has witnessed a shift towards populism, xenophobia nationalism, socioeconomic protectionisms, and isolationism. In this ever polarised and volatile global environment, it might be pertinent to rethink the value of education and its capacity in transforming mind and hearts, as well as mitigating differences and divisions. In this respect, education as a sector has been presented with a unique opportunity to bring the glue the BRI region together. The BRI itself should be seen as the defender of multilateralism, and its implications for China, the region, the world and of course higher education deserves ongoing attention.

References

Acharya, A. (2003). Will Asia's Past Be Its Future? *International Security, 2003/2004, 28*(3), 149-164.

Acharya, A. (2004). How Ideas Spread: Whose Norms Matter? Norm Localization and Institutional Change in Asian Regionalism. *International Organization, 58*(2), 239-275.

Altbach, P. G. (2004). Globalisation and the university: Myths and realities in an unequal world. In National Education Association (Ed.), *The NEA 2005 almanac of higher education* (p. 63-74). Washington, DC: National Educational Association.

Altbach, P. G., & de Wit, H. (2015). Internationalization and Global Tension: Lessons From History. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 19*(1), 4-10.

Altbach, P. G., & Knight, J. (2007). The Internationalisation of Higher Education: Motivations and Realities. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*(3/4), 290-305.

Anderson, B. (2016). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* London: Verso.

Aoyama, R. (2016). "One Belt, One Road": China's New Global Strategy. *Journal of Contemporary East Asia Studies, 5*(2), 3-22.

Appadurai, A. (2000). Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination. *Public Culture, 12*(1), 1-19.

Archer, M., R, Bhaskar., A, Collier., Lawson, T. & Norrie, A. (1998). General Introduction. In M, Archer., R, Bhaskar., A, Collier., T, Lawson & A, Norrie. (Eds.), *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (pp. 3-15). London: Routledge.

Arrighi, G. (2007). *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the Twenty-First Century.* London: Verso.

Ball, S, J. (1990). *Politics and policy making in education.* London: Routledge.

Ball, S, J. (2008). *The Education Debate*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Ball, S, J. (2012). *Global Education Inc.* London: Routledge.

Barraclough, G. (1967). *An Introduction to Contemporary History.* Harmondsworth:

Penguin.

Becker, G.S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education (3rd ed).* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Beerkens, E. (2003). Globalisation and Higher Education Research. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 7*(2), 128-148.

Beeson, M. (2018). Geoeconomics with Chinese characteristics: the BRI and China's evolving grand strategy. *Economic and Political Studies, 6*(3), 240-256.

Bell, L., & Stevenson, H. (2006). *Education policy: process, themes and impact*. London: Routledge.

Bellini, N., Pasquinelli, C., Rovai, S., & Tani, S. (2016). The Local Embeddedness of Foreign Campuses: The Case of Tongji University in Florence. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 20*(4), 371-385.

Bernstein, T. P. (2010). Introduction: The complexities of learning from the Soviet Union. In T.P. Bernstein, & H. Li (Eds.), *China learns from the Soviet Union, 1949-present* (pp. 1-23). Toronto: Lexington Books.

Bhaskar, R. (1975). *A Realist's Theory of Science.* London: Verso.

Bhaskar, R. (1979). *The Possibility of Naturalism.* London: Routledge.

Bhaskar, R. (1998). Philosophy and scientific realism. In M, Archer., R, Bhaskar., A, Collier., T, Lawson & A, Norrie (Eds.), *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (pp.16-47). London: Routledge.

Bhaskar, R. (2011). *Reclaiming Reality: A Critical Introduction to Contemporary Philosophy.* Milton Park, Abington: Routledge.

Bhattacharyay, Biswa N., and Prabir De. (2009). *Restoring the Asian Silk Route — Toward the Vision of an Integrated Asia.* Asian Development Bank Institute Working Paper Series No. 140. June 2009. Tokyo.
https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/155995/adbi-wp140.pdf

Bie, D-R., & Y, M-C. (2014) The context of higher education development and policy response in China. *Studies in Higher Education, 39*(8), 1499-1510.

Blanchard, J-M, F., & Flint, C. (2017). The Geopolitics of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative. *Geopolitics, 22*(2), 223-245.

Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C. (2000). Critical Discourse Analysis. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 29,* 447-466.

Bohman, J. (2005). "Critical Theory." Stanford University. Stanford University, 08 Mar. 2005. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/

Borzel, T. (2011). Comparative Regionalism: A New Research Agenda. No. 28, August, KFG The Transformative Power of Europe, Freie Universitat Berlin.

Bowe, R., Ball, S., & Gold, A. (1992). *Reforming education and changing schools: Case studies in policy sociology.* London: Routledge.

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: thematic analysis and code development.* Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Breslin, S. (2009). Understanding China's Regional Rise: Interpretations, Identities and Implications. *International Affairs, 85*(4), 817-835.

Breslin, S., & Higgott, R. (2000). Studying Regions: Learning from the Old, Constructing the New. *New Political Economy, 5*(3), 333-352.

British Council. (2020). *UK China Belt and Road (BRI) Education Partnership Initiative.* Retrieved December 12, 2020, from https://www.britishcouncil.cn/en/programmes/education/higher/UK-China-BRI

British Government. (2016). Pupils across England start intensive lessons in Mandarin. Retrieved June 27, 2018, from website: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/pupils-across-england-start-intensive-lessons-in-mandarin

Brock, C., & Alexiadou, N. (2013). *Education around the World: A Comparative Introduction.* London: Bloomsbury.

Brown, A., Fleetwood, S., & Roberts, J. M. (2002). The marriage of critical realism and Marxism: Happy, unhappy or on the rocks? In A, Brown., S, Fleetwood & J, M, Roberts (Eds.), *Critical realism and Marxism* (pp. 1-22). London: Routledge.

Brown, P., & Lauder, H. (2006). Globalisation, knowledge and the myth of the magnet economy. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 4*(1), 25-57.

Brown, P., Hugh, L., and Ashton, D. (2011). *The Global Auction: The Broken Promises of Education, Jobs and Incomes*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. (2016). *Social Research Methods (5th Edition).* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cabanda, E., Tan, E. S., & Chou, M-H. (2019). Higher education regionalism in Asia: what implications for Europe. *European Journal of Higher Education, 9*(1), 87-101.

Callaghan, M., & Hubbard, P. (2016). The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: Multilateralism on the Silk Road. *China Economic Journal, 9*(2), 116-139.

Callahan, W. A. (2016). China's "Asian Dream": The Belt Road Initiative and the new regional order. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics, 1*(3), 226-243.

Casarini, N. (2016). When All Road Lead to Beijing. Assessing China's New Silk Road and its Implications for Europe. *The International Spectator, 51*(4), 95-108.

Central Committee and State Council (2016). 关于做好新时期教育对外开放工作的若干意见[opinions on the work of the opening-up of education in the new era]. Retrieved March 4, 2019, from http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2016-04/29/content_5069311.htm

Central Committee and State Council (2019a). 中共中央、国务院印发《中国教育现代化2035》[The CCPC and State Council Publishes 'China's Education Modernisation 2035 Plan']. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2019-02/23/content_5367987.htm

Central Committee and State Council (2019b). 中共中央办公厅、国务院办公厅印发《加快推进教育现代化实施方案（2018－2022 年）》[The CCPC and State Council publishes 'Implementation Plan for Speeding up Education Modernisation (2018-2022)']. Retrieved August 28, 2020, from http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-02/23/content_5367988.htm

Centre for China and Globalisation. (2017). *Annual Report on the Development of Chinese Students Studying Aboard (2016) No5,* Retrieved 13 November, 2017 from website: http://en.ccg.org.cn/annual-report-on-the-development-of-chinese-students-studying-abroad-2016-no-5/

Chao, R. J. (2014). Pathways to an East Asia higher education area: A comparative analysis of East Asian and European regionalization processes. *Higher Education, 68*(4), 559-575.

Chen, A. L. Q. (2021). The Belt and Road Initiative as a variegated agglomeration of multi-scalar state spatial strategies. *Territory, Politics, Governance.* https://doi.org/10.1080/21622671.2020.1870544

Chen, B., & Guo, L. (2018). 一带一路建设背景下我国高等教育国际化的转型与升级 [The Transformation and Upgrading of Higher Education Internationalization in China under the Background of 'the Belt and Road' Construction, 国家教育行政学院院报 [Journal of National Academy of Education Administration], 9-15.

Chen, L., & Huang, D. (2013). Internationalisation of Chinese Higher Education. *Higher Education Studies, 3*(1), 93-105.

Cheng, Y., & Koh, S. Y. (2022). The 'soft infrastructure' of the Belt and Road Initiative: Imaginaries, affinities and subjectivities in Chinese transnational education. Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography, doi: 10.1111/sjtg.12420

China Daily. (2015). Chinese and foreign law schools launch New Silk Road alliance. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-12/11/content_22693518.htm

Chou, M-H., & Ravinet, P. (2015). The Rise of 'Higher Education Regionalism': An Agenda for Higher Education Research. In J. Huisman., H. de Boer., D. D. Dill., & M. Souto-Otero (Eds.), *Handbook of higher education policy and governance* (pp. 361-379). Palgrave: Basingstoke.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education (7th edition)*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Collier, A. (1994). *Critical Realism: An Introduction to Roy Bhaskar's Philosophy*. London: Verso.

Corbett, A. (2005). *Universities and the Europe of Knowledge. Ideas, Institutions and Policy Entrepreneurship in European Union Higher Education Policy, 1955-2005.* London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Confucius Institutes Online. (2017). Retrieved 22 November 2017 from website:

http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

Cox, R. W., & Sinclair, T. J. (1996). *Approaches to world order.* In Cambridge Studies in International Relations. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Crossley, M., Auther, L., McNess, E. (2016). *Revisiting Insider-Outsider Research in Comparative and International Education.* Didcot: Symposium Books.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The Foundations of Social Research.* London: Sage Publications.

Cui, J. (2019). 一带一路倡议下高等教育研究主题的转向 [The transformation of themes of higher education research under 'the Belt and Road' initiative], 高校教育管理 [Journal of Higher Education Management], 13 (5), 8-17.

Dale, R. (1994). Applied education politics and political sociology of education? Contrasting approaches to the study of the recent education reform in England and Wales. In D, Halpin. & B, Troyna (Eds.), *Researching education policy: Ethical and methodological issues,* (pp. 31-41). London: Falmer Press.

Dale, R. (2005). Globalisation, knowledge economy and comparative education, In *Comparative Education, 41*(2), 117-149.

Dale, R., & Robertson, S. L. (2002). The Varying Effects of Regional Organisations as Subjects of Globalisation of Education. *Comparative Education Review, 46*(1)*,* 10-36.

Danermark, B., Ekstrom, M., Jakobsen, L., & Karleeon, J. C. (2002). *Explaining Society: Critical realism in the social science.* London: Routledge.

De Wit, H. (1999). Changing Rationales for the Internationalisation of Higher Education. In *International Higher Education*, Centre for International Higher Education. Boston: Boston College. Retrieved 13th November, 2017 from the Website: https://ejournals.bc.edu/ojs/index.php/ihe/article/viewFile/6477/5700

Deem, R., Mok, K. H., & Lucas, L. (2008). Transforming Higher Education in Whose Image? Exploring the Concept of the "World-Class" University in Europe and Asia. *Higher Education Policy, 21*(1), 83-97.

Dellios, R. (2017). Silk Roads of the Twenty-first Century: The Cultural Dimension. *Asia & the Pacific Policy Studies, 4*(2), 225-236.

Demetriou, C. (2009). The Realist Approach to Explanatory Mechanisms in Social

Science: More than a Heuristic? *Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 39*(3), 440-462.

Denscombe, M. (2003). *The Good Research Guide (2nd edition).* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Dent, C. (2008). *East Asian Regionalism.* London: Routledge.

Diem, S., Young, M. D., Welton, A. D., Mansfield, K. C., & Lee, P-L. (2014). The intellectual landscape of critical policy analysis. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education, 27*(9), 1068-1090.

Dieter, H., & Higgott, R. (2000). East Asia looks to its own resources, *Financial Times,* 16 May.

Du, M. (2016). China's "One Belt, One Road" Initiative: Context, Focus, Institutions and Implications. *The Chinese Journal of Global Governance, 2,* 30-43.

ECPR. (2021). Rising China, New World Politics and International Relations in Higher Education. https://ecpr.eu/Events/Event/PanelDetails/10701

Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative. (2016). The Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html

Enders, J. (2004). Higher education, internationalisation, and the nation-state: Recent developments and challenges to governance theory. *Higher Education, 47*(3), 361-382.

Ennew, C., & Yang, F. J. (2009). Foreign Universities in China: a case study. *European Journal of Education, 44 (1),* 21-36.

Fairclough, N., & Wodak, R. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis. In T. van Dijk (Ed.), *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction (*pp. 258-284). London: Sage Publications.

Fairclough, N. (2001). The discourse of New Labour: critical discourse analysis. In M. Wetherall., S, Taylor, & S, Yates (Eds.), *Discourse as data. A guide for analysis.* London: Sage Publishers.

Fairclough, N. (2013). Critical discourse analysis and critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies, 7*(2), 177-197.

Feng, Y. (2013). University of Nottingham Ningbo China and Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University: globalisation of higher education in China. *Higher Education, 65*(4), 471-485.

Ferdinand, P. (2016). Westward ho- the China dream and 'one belt, one road': Chinese foreign policy under Xi Jinping. *International Affairs, 92*(4), 941-957.

Feuer, H. N., & Hornidge, A.-K. (2015). Higher education cooperation in ASEAN: building towards integration or manufacturing consent? *Comparative Education, 51*(3), 327-352.

Figge, L., & Martens, P. (2014). Globalisation Continues: The Maastricht Globalisation Index Revisited and Updated. *Globalizations, 11*(6), 875-893.

Fleetwood, S. (2017). The critical realist conception of open and closed systems. *Journal of Economic Methodology, 24*(1), 41-68.

Fletcher, A. J. (2017). Applying critical realism in qualitative research: methodology meets method. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 20*(2), 181-194.

Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing Research Methodology*. London: Sage Publications.

Flick, U. (2014). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research (5th edition).* London: SAGE publications.

FOCAC. (2000). *Programme for China- Africa cooperation in economic and social development*. Retrieved 22 November 2017 from Web site: http://www.focac.org/eng/wjjh/hywj/t157834.htm

Frankopan, P. (2015). *The Silk Roads: A New History of the World.* London: Bloomsbury.

Fukuyama, F. (2016). *Exploring the Chinese model, project syndicate.* Retrieved June 25, 2018 from website: https://www.project-syndicate.org/onpoint/china-one-belt-one-road-strategy-by-francis-fukuyama-2016-01?barrier=accesspaylog

Gil, J. (2008). The promotion of Chinese language learning and China's soft power. *Asian Social Science, 4,* 116-122.

Global Alliance for International Education. (1999). *Trade in Transnational Education Services.* Washington D. C.: Global Alliance for Transnational Education.

Gong, X. (2019). The Belt & Road Initiative and China's influence in Southeast Asia. *The Pacific Review, 32*(4), 635-665.

Goodman, D. S. G. (2004). The Campaign to "Open up the West": National, Provincial-

Level and Local Perspective. *The China Quarterly, 178 June,* 317-334.

Gorski, P. S. (2013). What is critical realism? And why should you care? *Contemporary Sociology: A Journal of Reviews, 42*(5), 658-670.

Greenbaum, T. L. (1998). *The Handbook for Focus Group Research. (2nd edition).* London: Sage Publications.

Griffiths, R. T. (2017). *Revitalising the Silk Road: China's Belt and Road Initiative*. Leiden: HIPE Publications.

Grix, J. (2010). *The Foundations of Research*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Gu, J. (2007). Development of transnational higher education: Concepts and strategies. Shanghai: Xuelin.

Guardian. (2017). "Going Global": China exports soft power with first large-scale university in Malaysia. Retrieved 22 November, 2017 from website: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jul/07/going-global-china-exports-soft-power-with-first-large-scale-university-in-malaysia

Haas, E. (1958). *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social, and Economic Forces 1950-1957.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Haas, E. (1964). *Beyond the Nation State: Functionalism and International Order.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Hamieri, S., & Jones, L. (2016). Rising powers and state transformation: The case of China. *European Journal of International Relations 22*(1), 72-98

Han, S., & Ye, F. (2017). China's education policy-making: a policy network perspective. *Journal of Education Policy, 32*(4), 389-413.

Hanban (2016). Teaching Mandarin to the world. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from http://english.hanban.org/article/2016-11/08/content_663604.htm

Hanban (2018). Confucius Institute/Classroom. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from website: http://english.hanban.org/node_10971.htm

Hanson, E. M. (1998). Strategies of educational decentralisation: Key questions and core issues. *Journal of Educational Administration, 36*(2), 111-128.

Harber, C. (2014). *Education and International Development: theory, practice and*

issues. Didcot: Symposium Books.

Harman, G. (1984). Conceptual and theoretical issues. In J. R. Hough (Ed.), Educational policy: An international survey (pp. 13-27). London: Croom Helm.

Harvey, D. (2001). *Spaces of Capital.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Harvey, L. (1990). *Critical Social Research.* London: Unwin Hyman.

Hay, C. (2002). *Political Analysis.* New York: Palgrave.

Hayhoe, R. (1984). Chinese-Western scholarly exchange: Implications for the future of Chinese education. In R. Hayhoe (Ed.), *Comparative Chinese education* (pp. 205-267). New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Hayhoe, R. (1989). *China's universities and the open door*. London: M.E. Sharpe.

Hayhoe, R. (1996). *China's universities, 1895-1995: A century of cultural conflicts.* Routledge.

Hayhoe, R. (2005). Peking University and the spirit of Chinese scholarship. *Comparative Education Review, 19*(4), 575-583.

He, L. (2016). Transnational Higher Education Institutions in China: A Comparison of Polcy Orientation and Reality. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 20*(1), 79-95.

Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., & Perraton, J. (1999). *Global Transformations. Politics, Economic and Culture.* Cambridge: Polity Press.

Hettne, B. (2002). The Europeanisation of Europe: Endogenous and Exogenous Dimensions. *Journal of European Integration, 24*(4), 325-340.

Hettne, B. (2005). Beyond the 'new' regionalism. *New Political Economy, 10*(4), 543-571.

Hettne, B., & Söderbaum, F. (2000). Theorising the Rise of Regionness. *New Political Economy, 5*(3), 457-472.

Higgott, R. (1997). De facto and de jure regionalism: The double discourse of regionalism in the Asia Pacific. *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations, 11*(2), 165-183.

Higgott, R., & Stubbs, R. (1995). Competing Conceptions of Economic Regionalism:

APEC versus EAEC in the Asia Pacific. *Review of International Political Economy, 2*(3), 516-535.

Holloway, S. (2015). World View: China's Silk Road Initiative. Retrieved June 25, 2018 from website: https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/internationalisation/news/articles/world-view-chinas-silk-road-initiative

Houston, S. (2010). Prising Open the Black Box: Critical Realism, Action Research and Social Work. *Qualitative Social Work, 9*(1), 73-91.

Howarth, D. (2009). Power, discourse and policy: articulating a hegemony approach to critical policy studies. *Critical Policy Studies, 3*(3-4), 309-335.

Hu, D., & Shi, Z. (2018). 一带一路倡议与中国高等教育国家化的深度融合 [The BRI and Chinese higher education internationalization integration], 高教探索 [Higher Education Exploration], 7, 10-16.

Huang, F. (2003). Policy and practice of the internationalization of higher education in China. *Journal of studies in International Education, 7*(3), *225-240.*

Huang, F. (2007). Internationalisation of Higher Education in the Developing and Emerging Countries: A focus on Transnational Higher Education in Asia. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11 (3/4),* 421-432.

Huang, Y. (2016). Understanding China's Belt & Road Initiative: Motivation, framework and assessment. *China Economic Review, 40,* 314-321.

Huisman, J., & van der Wende, M. (2004). The EU and Bologna: Are Supra- and International Initiatives Threating Domestic Agendas? *European Journal of Education, 39*(3), 349-357.

Jacques, M. (2009). *When China Rules the World.* London: Penguin Books.

Janks, H. (1997). Critical Discourse Analysis as a Research Tool. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 18*(3), 329-342.

Jessop, B. (1999). The Changing Governance of Welfare: Recent Trends in its Primary Functions, Scale and Modes of Coordination. *Social Policy and Administration, 33*(4), 348-359.

Jessop, B. (2004). Critical Semiotic Analysis and Cultural Political Economy. *Critical*

Discourse Studies, 1(2), 159–174.

Jessop, B. (2006). *Spatial Fixes, Temporal Fixes, and Spatio-Temporal Fixes.* In *David Harvey: A Critical Reader*. Edited by N, Castree & D, Gregory, pp.142-166. Antipode Book Series. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Jessop, B. (2009). Cultural Political Economy and Critical Political Studies. *Critical Policy Studies, 3*(3), 336–356.

Jokila, S. (2015). The internationalisation of Higher education with Chinese characteristics: Appadurai's ideas explored. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education, 35*(1), 125-139.

Jones, L., Hameiri, S. (2021). Fractured China: How State Transformation is Shaping China's Rise. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jones, L., & Zeng, J. (2019). Understanding China's 'Belt and Road Initiative': beyond 'grand strategy' to a state transformation analysis. *Third World Quarterly, 40*(8), 1415-1439.

Jupp, V. (2006). Documents and Critical Research. In R. Sapsford. & V. Jupp. (Eds.), *Data Collection and Analysis* (pp. 298-316). London: Sage Publications.

Kaczmarski, M. (2017). Two Ways of Influence-building: The Eurasian Economic Union and the One Belt, One Road initiative. *Europe-Asia Studies, 69*(7), 1027-1046.

Kang, D. C. (2010). Hierarchy and Legitimacy in International Systems: The Tribute System in Early Modern East Asia. *Security Studies, 19*(4), 591-622.

Kawai, M. (2005). East Asian economic regionalism: progress and challenges. *Journal of Asian Economics, 16,* 29-55.

Kedzierski, M. (2016). English as a medium of instruction in East Asia's higher education sector: a critical realist Cultural Political Economy analysis of underlying logics. *Comparative Education, 52*(3), 375-391.

Kellner, D. (2002), Theorizing Globalization, *Sociological Theory*
Vol. 20, No. 3 (Nov, 2002), pp. 285-305

Kim, S. S. (2004). Regionalization and Regionalism in East Asia. *Journal of East Asian Studies, 4*(1), 39-67.

Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2005). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative

research. In N. K. Denzin., & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research (3rd edition)* (pp. 303-342). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

King, K. (2006). *Aid within the wider China-Africa partnership: A view from the Beijing Summit.* Retrieved December 29, 2015, From Web site: http://www.cctr.ust.hk/materials/conference/china-africa/papers/King,Kenneth.pdf

King, K. (2010). China's cooperation with Africa, and especially South Africa, in education and training. A special relationship and a different approach to aid? *Journal of International Cooperation in Education, 13*(2), 73-87.

King, K. (2020). China–Africa Education Cooperation: From FOCAC to Belt and Road. *ECNU review of Education, 3*(2), 221-234.

Kirby, W. (2014). The Chinese Century? The Challenges of Higher Education. *Daedalus, 143*(2), 145–156

Kirby, W., & van der Wende, M. (2019). The New Silk Road: implications for higher education in China and the West? *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society, 12*(1), 127-144.

Kishun, R. (1998). Internationalisation in South Africa. In P, Scott (Ed), *The Globalisation of Higher Education* (pp. 58-69). Buckingham: Open University Press.

Kivunja, C., & Kuyini, A. B. (2017). Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts. *International Journal of Higher Education, 6*(5), 26-41.

Knight, J. (1997). Internationalisation of higher education: a conceptual framework. In J, Knight., & H, De Wit. (Eds), *Internationalisation of Higher Education in Asia Pacific countries* (pp. 5-19). Amsterdam: European Association for International Education.

Knight, J. (2003). *GATS, Trade and Higher Education. Perspective 2003: Where Are We?* The Observatory on Borderless Education. (pp. 13-28). Paris: OECD.

Knight, J. (2004). Internationalization Remodeled: Definition, Approaches, and Rationales. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 8*(1), 5-31.

Knight, J. (2006). Crossborder education: An analytical framework for program and provider mobility. In J. C. Smart (Ed), *Higher Education: Handbook of theory and practice* (pp. 345-395). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.

Knight, J. (2012). A Conceptual Framework for the Regionalization of Higher

Education: Application to Asia. In J. N. Hawkins., K. H. Mok., & D. E. Neubauer (Eds.), *Higher Education Regionlisation in Asia Pacific* (pp. 17-35). New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Knight, J. (2013). Education hubs: international, regional and local dimensions of scale and scope. *Comparative Education, 49*(3), 374-387.

Knight, J. (2015). Moving from soft power to knowledge diplomacy. *International Higher Education,* 80, 8-9.

Knight, J., & Woldegiorgis, E. T. (2017). *Regionalisation of African Higher Education: Progress and Prospects.* Rotterdam: Sense Publishers.

Kojima, K. (2000). The "flying geese" model of Asian economic development: origin, theoretical extensions, and regional policy implications. *Journal of Asian Economics, 11*(4), 375-401.

Koo, A. (2016). Expansion of vocational education in neoliberal China: hope and despair among rural youth. *Journal of Education Policy, 31*(1), 46-59.

Lauridsen, L, S. (2020). Drivers of China's Regional Infrastructure Diplomacy: The Case of the Sino-Thai Railway Project. *Journal of Contemporary Asia, 50*(3), 380-406.

Law, W. W. (1995). The Role of the State in Higher Education Reform: Mainland China and Taiwan. *Comparative Education Review, 39* (3), 322-355.

Lawson, T. (1995). A Realist Perspective on Contemporary "Economic Theory". *Journal of Economic Issues, 29*(1), 1-32.

Lawson, T. (1996). Developments in Economics as Realist Social Theory. *Review of Social Economy, 54*(4), 405-422.

Lawson, T. (1997). *Economics and Reality*. London: Routledge.

Lawson, T. (1998a). Closed and Open Systems, Deductivism and Teaching. *Review of Social Economy, 56*(3), 356-376.

Lawson, T. (1998b). Economic science without experimentation. In M, Archer., R, Bhaskar., A. Collier., T. Lawson., & A, Norrie (Eds), *Critical Realism: Essential Readings* (pp. 144-186). London: Routledge.

Leskina, N., & Sabzalieva, E. (2021). Constructing a Eurasian higher education region: "Points of correspondence" between Russia's Eurasian Economic Union and China's Belt and Road Initiative in Central Asia. *Eurasian Geography and Economics,* https://doi.org/10.1080/15387216.2020.1866997

Levinson, B. A. U., Sutton, M., & Winstead, T. (2009). Education policy as a practice of power: Theoretical tools, ethnographic methods, democratic options. *Educational Policy, 23*(6), 767-795.

Leong, S. (1999). The East Asian Economic Caucas (EAEC): "formalised" regionalism being denied", in Bjorn Hettne, Andras Inotai and Osvaldo Sunke (eds) National Perspectives on the New Regionalism in the South, London: Macmillan.

Li, A., & Ruby, A. (2020). The Belt and Road Initiative and Higher Education. *International Higher Education, 103,* 18-20.

Li, J. (2017). Educational Policy Development in China for the 21st Century: Rationality and Challenges in a Globalising Age. *Chinese Education and Society, 50*(3), 133-141.

Lim, T. W., Chan, H. L., Tseng, H-Y., Lim, W. X. (Eds.) (2016). *China's One Belt One Road Initiative.* London: Imperial College Press.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

Lindberg, L. (1966). *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lingard, B., & Ozga, J. (2007). *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Education Policy and Politics.* Abington: Routledge.

Liu, J. (2012). Examining massification polices and their consequences for equality in Chinese higher education: A cultural perspective. *Higher Education, 64*(5), 647–660.

Liu, W., & Dunford, M. (2016). Inclusive Globalisation: unpacking China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Area Development and Policy, 1*(3), 323-340.

Liu, Y. (2008). Joint participation and equal cooperation: Create a new outlook for the development of Confucius Institutes. *Confucius Institute* 1: 11-5.

Locke, J. (1979). *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lomer, S. (2017). Soft power as a policy rationale for international education in the UK: a critical analysis. *Higher Education, 74*(4), 581–598.

Ma, J., Zhao, K. International student education in China: characteristics, challenges, and future trends. *Higher Education 76*(4), 735–751.

Marginson, S. (1999). After globalization: emerging politics of education. *Journal of Education Policy, 14*(1), 19-31.

Marginson, S. (2018). National/Global Synergy in the Development of Higher Education and Science in China since 1978. *Frontier of education in China, 13*(4), 486-512.

Marginson, S., & McBurnie, G. (2004). *Cross-border post-secondary education in the Asia-pacific region.* Paris: OECD.

Marginson, S., & Rhoades, G. (2002). Beyond National States, Markets, and Systems of Higher Education: A Glonacal Agency Heuristic. *Higher Education, 43*(3), 281-309.

Marginson, S., & van der Wende, M. (2006). To Rank or To Be Ranked: The Impact of Global Rankings in Higher Education. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*(3/4), 306-329.

Marginson, S., & Yang, L. (2020). China Meets Anglo-America on the New Silk Road: A Comparison of State, Society, Self, and Higher Education. In M, van der Wende., W. C. Kirby., N. C. Liu., S, Marginson (Eds.), *China and Europe on the New Silk Road: Connecting Universities Across Eurasia* (pp. 255-283). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Marginson, S., & Yang, L. (2021). Individual and collective outcomes of higher education: a comparison of Anglo-American and Chinese approaches. Globalisation, Societies and Education, doi/full/10.1080/14767724.2021.1932436

Maringe, F., & Foskett, N. (2010). *Globalisation and Internationalisation in Higher Education*. London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Marsh, D., & Furlong, P. (2002). A Skin, not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science. In D, Marsh & G, Stoker (Eds.), *Theory and Methods in Political Science* (pp. 17-41). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Mason, J. (2002). *Qualitative Researching (2nd edition)*. London: Sage Publications.

May, T. (2011). *Social Research: issues, methods and process. (4th edition).* Maidenhead: Open University Press.

McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2007). *Transnational education: Current issues and future trends in offshore higher education.* London: Routledge.

McBurnie, G., & Ziguras, C. (2009). Trends and future scenarios in programme and institution mobility across borders higher education to 2030. In *Globalisation Volume 2*. Paris: OECD.

Meyer, S. B,. & Lunnay, B. (2013). The Application of Abductive and Retroductive Inference for the Design and Analysis of Theory-Driven Sociological Research. *Sociological Research Online, 18*(1), 1-12.

Ministry of Education. (2003). Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Cooperation in Running Schools. Retrieved on 17th November 2017 from website: http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/news/index/3

Ministry of Education. (2016). *Education Action Plan for the Belt and Road Initiative.* Retrieved May 15, 2018, from https://eng.yidaiyilu.gov.cn/zchj/qwfb/30277.htm

Ministry of Education. (2017a). The list of approved transnational institutions and programmes. (In Chinese). Retrieved on 17th November, 2017 from website: http://www.crs.jsj.edu.cn/index.php/default/approval/orglists/2

Ministry of Education. (2017b). Statistics regarding Foreign Students Studying in China 2016. Retrieved on 22nd November, 2017 from website: http://www.moe.edu.cn/jyb_xwfb/xw_fbh/moe_2069/xwfbh_2017n/xwfb_170301/170301_sjtj/201703/t20170301_297677.html

Ministry of Education (2018a). *Educational opening up to provide services for the Belt and Road.* Retrieved September 10, 2020, from http://en.moe.gov.cn/Specials/Review/Facts_2147443481/201806/t20180626_341024.html

Ministry of Education. (2018b). Brief report on Chinese overseas students and international students in China 2017. Retrieved June 7, 2019, from http://en.moe.gov.cn/documents/reports/201901/t20190115_367019.html

Mitchell, D. (2021). Making or Breaking Regions: China's Belt and Road Initiative and the Meaning for Regional Dynamics. *Geopolitics, 26*(5), 1400-1420.

Mittelman, J. H. (1996). Rethinking the "New Regionalism" in the Context of Globalization. *Global Governance, 2*(2), 189-213.

Mittelman, J. H. (2000). *The Globalisation Syndrome: Transformation and Resistance*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Mittelmeier, J., Rienties, B., Gunter, A. & Raghuram, P. (2020). Conceptualizing Internationalization at a Distance: A "Third Category" of University Internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 25*(3), 266-282.

Mok, K. H. (1999). Education and the market place in Hong Kong and Mainland China. *Higher Education, 37*(2), 133–158.

Mok, K. H. (2007). Questing for Internationalization of Universities in Asia: Critical Reflections. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 11*(3-4), 433-454.

Mok, K. H. & Xu, X. (2008). When China Opens to the World: A Study of Transnational Higher Education in Zhejiang, China. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 9*(4), 393-408.

Muhr, T. (2010). Counter-hegemonic regionalism and higher education for all: Venezuela and the ALBA. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 8*(1), 39-57.

Nair, D. (2009). Regionalism in the Asia Pacific/East Asia: A Frustrated Regionalism? *Cotemporary Southeast Asia, 31*(1), 110—142.

National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce. (2015). *Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.* Retrieved April 16, 2018, from http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/publications/2017/06/20/content_281475691873460.htm

Neave, G. (1988). Education and Social Policy: Demise of an Ethic or Change of Values? *Oxford Review of Education, 14*(3), 273-283.

Neumann, I. B. (1994). A Region-Building Approach to Northern Europe. *Review of International Studies, 20*(1), 53-74.

Nye, J. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. New York, NY: Public Affairs.

Nye, J. (2009). Smart Power: Combing Hard and Soft Power. *Foreign Affairs, 88*(4), 160-163.

Obama, B. (2015). *Remarks by the President in State of the Union Address, The White House, January 20, 2015.* Retrieved June 25, 2018 from Website: https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/20/remarks-president-

state-union-address-january-20-2015

Olssen, M., Codd, J., & O'Neill, A. M. (2004). *Reading Education Policy in Global Era in Education policy: Globalisation, Citizenship and Democracy.* London: Sage Publishing.

Opinions on the Work of the Opening-Up of Education in the New Era. (2016). The Oppenheim, A. N. (1992). *Questionnaire, design, interviewing and attitude measurement.* London: Pinter Pub Ltd.

CPC Central Committee and the State Council of People's Republic of China. Retrieved March 12, 2019 from website: http://www.gov.cn/home/2016-04/29/content_5069311.htm

Outline of China's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020). (2010). Ministry of Education. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from website: http://old.moe.gov.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/info_list/201407/xxgk_171904.html

Palit, A. (2017). India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions of China's Maritime Silk Road. *Geopolitics, 22*(2), 292-309.

Pearcy, L. (2015). A bold step along the new Silk Road. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: https://newsroom.unsw.edu.au/news/general/bold-step-along-new-silk-road

Peters, M. A. (2019). The Chinese Dream, Belt and Road Initiative and the future of education: A philosophical postscript. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 52*(6), 586-592.

Peters, M. A., & Besley, T. (2018). China's double first-class university strategy: 双一流. *Educational Philosophy and Theory, 50*(12), 1075-1079.

Pinna, C. (2009). EU-China relations in higher education: Building bridges in global cultural dialogue. *Asia Europe Journal*, 7*(3-4)*, 505-527.

Ploberger, C. (2017). One Belt, One Road - China's new grand strategy. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies, 15*(3), 289-305.

Polit, D. F., & Beck, C. T. (2014). *Essentials of nursing research: Appraising evidence for nursing practice (8th ed.).* Philadelphia, PA: Wolters Kluwer/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.

Porpora, Douglas. (2015). *Restructuring Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Prunty, J. J. (1985). Signposts for a Critical Educational Policy Analysis. *Australian Journal of Education, 29*(2), 133-140.

Qi, X., & Zheng, J. (2019). 文化使命，教育理念与战略抉择 - 关于一带一路语境下中国高等教育发展方向的思考 [Cultural Mission, Educational Vision and Strategic Choice – Thinkings on Chinese higher education development under the Belt and Road Narratives], 辽宁教育行政学院学报 [Journal of Liaoning Educational Administration Institute], 5, 4-10.

Ravenhill, J. (2002). A three bloc world? The new East Asian regionalism. *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific, 2*(2), 167-195.

Ravenhill, J. (2009). East Asian Regionalism: Much Ado about Nothing? *Review of International Studies, 35,* 215-235.

Ravenhill, J. (2010). The 'new East Asian regionalism': A political domino effect. *Review of International Political Economy, 17*(2), 178-208.

Reeves, J. (2018). China's Silk Road Economic Belt Initiative: Network and Influence Formation in Central Asia. *Journal of Contemporary China, 27*(112), 502-518.

Ren, X. (2016). China as an institution-builder: the case of the AIIB. *The Pacific Review, 29*(3), 435-442.

Ren, Y., & Qiu, Y. (2019). 经济测度视角下我国与一带一路沿线国家高等教育的合作战略研究 [Higher Education Cooperation Strategy Between China and Countries Along 'The Belt and Road' from Perspective of Economic Measurement], 黑龙江高教研究 [Heilongjiang Researches on Higher Education], 9, 305, 15-20.

Reuters. (2017). *China's Xi to promote globalisation at Davos, not 'war and poverty'.* Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-davos-meeting-china-idUSKBN14V0AV

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2009). *Globalizing Education Policy*, London: Routledge.

Robertson, S. L., & Dale, R. (2009). *Globalisation and Europeanlisation in Education.* Oxford: Symposium Books.

Robertson, S. L., & Dale, R. (2015). Towards a 'critical cultural political economy' account of the globalising of education. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 13*(1), 149-170.

Robertson, S. L. (2005). Re-imagining and rescripting the future of education: global knowledge economy discourses and the challenge to education systems. *Comparative Education, 41*(2), 151-170.

Robertson, S. L. (2012). *Global governance of teacher's work: reflections on a cultural political economy of education.* Paper presented at: The Annual Conference of the Comparative and International Education Society, San Juan, Puerto Rico, April 23-27.

Robertson, S. L., Olds, K., Dale, R., & Dang, Q. A. (Eds.). (2016). *Global Regionalism and Higher Education: Projects, Processes and Politics.* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Rozman, G. (1991). *The East Asian Region: Confucian Heritage and its Modern Adaptation.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Sayer, A. (1992). *Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach (2nd edition).* London: Routledge.

Sayer, A. (2000). *Realism and Social Science.* London: Sage Publications.

Sayer, A. (2001). For a Critical Cultural Political Economy. *Antipode, 33*(4), 687–708.

Scobell, A., Lin, B., Shatz, H. J., Johnson, M., Hanauer, L., Chase, M. S., Cevallos, A. S., Rasmussen, I. W., Chan, A., Strong, A., Warner, E., & Ma, L. (2018). *At the Dawn of the Belt and Road: China in the developing world.* Santa Monica, California: Rand Corporation. https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2200/RR2273/RAND_RR2273.pdf

Scott, P. (1998). *The Globalisation of Higher Education*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Scott, P. (2005). Opportunities and Threats of Globalisation. In G. Jones, P. McCarney and M, Skolnik (Eds.), *Creating Knowledge, Strengthening Nations: The Changing Role of Higher Education.* (pp. 42-55). Toronto: Toronto University Press.

Seiler, R. (2016). Human Comminutions in the Critical Theory Tradition. *Course Materials on Communication Studies 441: Cultural Studies in Communication Files.* Retrieved August 6, 2018, from website: http://people.ucalgary.ca/~rseiler/critical.htm

Serra, N., Spiegel, S., & Stiglitz, J. E. (2008). Introduction: From the Washington Consensus Towards a New Global Governance. In N. Serra & J. E. Stiglitz (Eds.), *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered: Towards a New Global Governance* (pp. 3-13). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Silk Road School Renmin University. (2019). Online information. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from website: http://srs.ruc.edu.cn/English/About/AboutUs/index.htm

Simons, M., Olssen., & Peters, M. (2009). *Re-reading education policy.* Rotterdam: Sense.

Söderbaum, F. (2003). Introduction: Theories of New Regionalism. In F. Söderbaum & T. M. Shaw (Eds.), *Theories of New Regionalism* (pp. 1-21). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Söderbaum, F., & Sbragia, A. (2010). EU Studies and the 'New Regionalism': What can be Gained from Dialogue. *European Integration, 32*(6), 563-582.

Starr, D, (2009). Chinese language education in Europe: The Confucius Institutes. *European Journal of Education, 44*(1), 65-82.

State Council. (2020). China forges agreements with 54 countries on mutual recognition of higher education degrees. Retrieved November 11, 2020, from http://english.www.gov.cn/statecouncil/ministries/202009/05/content_WS5f5397c7c6d0f7257693b956.html

Steger, M. B. (2002). *Globalism: The New Market Ideology.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Steger, M. B. (2003). *Globalisation: A Very Short Introduction.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Steinmetz, G. (1998). Critical Realism and Historical Sociology: A Review Article. *Comparative Studies in Society and History, 40*(1), 170-186.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2002). *Globalization and Its Discontents.* New York: Norton.

Stubbs, R. (2002). ASEAN Plus Three: Emerging East Asian Regionalism. *Asian Survey, 42*(3), 440-455.

Sum, N-L., & Jessop, B. (2013). *Towards a Cultural Political Economy: Putting Culture in its Place in Political Economy*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Summers, T. (2016). China's 'New Silk Roads': sub-national regions and networks of global political economy. *Third World Quartly, 37*(9), 1628-1643.

Tang, X., & Jing, L. (2017). 一带一路背景下公共外交与中国国家形象构建 [Public diplomacy and the building of China's national image under the Belt and Road Initiative], 公共外交季刊 [Public Diplomacy Quarterly], 22-27.

Tang, Z. (2017). Implications in the era of building Confucius Institutes from a global perspective. *Chinese Education & Society, 49*(6), 385-390.

Taylor, S. (1997). Critical Policy Analysis: exploring contexts, texts and consequences. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, 18*(1), 23-35.

Taylor, S. (2004). Researching educational policy and change in 'new times': using critical discourse analysis. *Journal of Education Policy, 19*(4), *433-451*.

Taylor, S., Rizvi, F., Lingard, B. and Henry, M. (1997). *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change, London:* Routledge.

Terada, T. (2003). Constructing an 'East Asian' concept and growing regional identity: from EAEC to ASEAN+3. *The Pacific Review, 16*(2), 251-277.

The Asian Development Bank. (2009). *Infrastructure for a Seamless Asia.* Retrieved September 13, 2018, from website: https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/159348/adbi-infrastructure-seamless-asia.pdf

The Economist. (2014, Nov 11th). Why China is creating a new 'World Bank' for Asia. Retrieved 15th December 2021 from website: https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2014/11/11/why-china-is-creating-a-new-world-bank-for-asia

The Diplomat online. (2017). One Belt, One Road, One Language? Retrieved 25th November 2017 from website: https://thediplomat.com/2017/05/one-belt-one-road-one-language/

The Wall Street Journal. (2015). *Obama: If We Don't Write Trade Rules, China Will.* Retrieved June 25, 2018 from Website: https://www.wsj.com/video/obama-if-we-dont-write-trade-rules-china-will/2E2F928C-1747-435D-9CAB-EB3346FDEEB9.html

Torres, C. A. (2008). *Education and neoliberal globalization.* New York: Routledge.

Trow, M. (1973). Problems in the transition from elite to mass higher educationBerkeley: Carnegie Commission on Higher Education.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2001). *Code of good practice in the provision of transnational education*. Bucharest: Author.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2014). Silk Roads: the Routes Network of Chang'an – Tianshan Corridor. Retrieved December 2, 2021, from https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1442/

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). (2021). *The Silk Roads Programme.* Retrieved March 12, 2021, from https://en.unesco.org/silkroad/

UNSW. (2016). Chinese and foreign law schools launch New Silk Road alliance. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://www.law.unsw.edu.au/news/2016/01/chinese-and-foreign-law-schools-launch-new-silk-road-alliance

USAR. (2015). USAR Introduction. Retrieved June 25, 2018, June from website: http://uasr.xjtu.edu.cn/About_UASR/UASR_Introduction.htm

van der Wende, M. C. (2002). *Higher Education Globally: Towards New Framework for Research and Policy, in the CHEPS Inaugurals*. Enschede: CHEPS.

van der Wende, M., Kirby, W. C., Liu, N. C., & Marginson, S. (2020). *China and Europe on the New Silk Road: Connecting Universities Across Eurasia.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Väyrynen, R. (2003). Regionalism: Old and New. *International Studies Review, 5*(1), 25-51.

Vision and Actions on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. (2015). National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of

China. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html

Vukasovic, M. (2013). Change of higher education in response to European pressures: conceptualization and operationalization of Europeanization of higher education. *Higher Education, 66*(3), 311-324.

Wade, R. (1996). Japan, the World Bank, and the Art of Paradigm Maintenance: The East Asian Miracle in Political Perspective. *New Left Review I, 217*, 3–36.

Wang, L. (2013). Going global: the changing strategy of internationalisation of education in China. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management. 35*(3), *305-315.*

Wang, Y. (2014). China's economic challenges: grappling with a New Normal. *Global Asia, 9*(4), 12 -17.

Wang, Y. (2016). Offensive for defensive: the belt and road initiative and China's new grand strategy. *The Pacific Review, 29*(3), 455-463.

Wang, Y. (2018). 一带一路彰显改革开放的世界意义 [The Belt and Road Initiative Reflects Worldwide Significance of China's Reform and Opening-Up], 太平洋学报 [Pacific Journal], 26 (9), 1-12.

Waugh, D. C. (2007). Richthofen's 'Silk Roads': Towards the archaeology of a concept. *The Silk Road, 5*(1), 1-10.

Webber, D. (2001). Two funerals and a wedding? The ups and downs of regionalism in East Asia and Asia-Pacific after the Asian crisis. *The Pacific Review, 14*(3), 339-372.

Wen, W., & Hu, D. (2018). The Emergence of a Regional Education Hub: Rationales of International Students' Choice of China as the Study Destination. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 23*(3), 303-325.

Winter, T. (2021). Geocultural Power: China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Geopolitics, 26*(5), 1376-1399.

Whiting, Van R. (1993). The Dynamics of Regionalization: Road Map to an Open Future? In P. H. Smith (Ed.), *The Challenge of Integration: Europe and the Americas* (pp. 17-49). Miami, FL: North-South Centre

Williamson, J. (2012). Is the "Beijing Consensus" now dominant? *Asia Policy, 13,* 1-

16.

Wilson, J. D. (2019). The evolution of China's Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank: from a revisionist to status-seeking agenda. *International Relations of Asia-Pacific, 19*,147-176.

Wodak, R. (2001). What CDA is about – a summary of its history, important concepts and its developments. In R. Wodak & M. Meyer (Eds.), *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis.* London: Sage Publications.

World Bank (1993). *The East Asian Miracle: Economic Growth and Public Policy*. Washington, DC: World Bank

Wu, H. (2018). Three dimensions of China's "outward-oriented" higher education internationalization. *Higher Education, 77*(1), 81-96.

Xi, J. (2013). *President Xi Jinping Delivers Important Speech and Proposes to Build a Silk Road Economic Belt with Central Asian Countries.* Retrieved December 2, 2021, from http://www.china.org.cn/node_7064105/content_30468580.htm

Xi, J. (2014a). *The Central Conference on Work Relating to Foreign Affairs was Held in Beijing: Xi Jinping delivered an important address at the conference.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1215680.shtml

Xi, J. (2014b). *New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation.* Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml

Xi, J. (2014c). *On the Governance of China.* Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

Xi, J. (2017). *Work Together to Build the Silk Road Economic Belt and The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.* A keynote speech at the opening ceremony of the Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation in Beijing, China, May 14, 2017. Retrieved March 22, 2019, from website: http://www.xinhuanet.com//english/2017-05/14/c_136282982.htm

Xi, Y., Guo, J., & Li, H. (2010). *Study on the Characteristics and strategies of the Internationalisation of Chinese Universities.* (pp. 115-117). Beijing: People's Publishing House of China.

Xi'an Consensus. (2016). USAR Xi'an Consensus. Retrieved June 25, 2018, from

website: http://uasr.xjtu.edu.cn/About_UASR/Xi_an_Consensus.htm

Xi'an Jiao Tong University. (2015). XJTU Initiated the University Alliance of the New Silk Road (UANSR). Retrieved June 25, 2018, from website: http://en.xjtu.edu.cn/info/1043/1706.htm

Xiamen University Malaysia Online. (2017). Retrieved November 22, 2017, from website: http://www.xmu.edu.my/a/5.html

Xie, L. (2018). 一带一路与全球治理的关系 [The Interaction Between the Belt and Road Initiative and Current Global Governance System: A Typology Analysis], 世界经济与政治 [World Economics and Politics], 34-58.

Xinhua. (2017). Interview: American students learning Mandarin reach 400,000: U.S. program head. Retrieved June 27, 2017, from website: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2017-08/28/c_136559843.htm

Xinhua (2018). More students from Belt & Road countries study in China. Retrieved March 12, 2019, from website: http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/2018-04/30/c_137147510.htm

Xu, B. (2021). From massification towards post-massification: Policy and governance of higher education in China. *International Journal of Chinese Education, 10*(3), 1-14. DOI: 10.1177/22125868211046032

Xu, B. (2021). Understanding China's Belt and Road Initiative: A Cultural Political Economy Approach. *Beijing International Review of Education, 3*(1), 56-71.

Xu, B., & Xing, Q. (2020). A Review of Confucius Institute: Theoretical Understanding, Developments, Challenges and Localization. In Q. Q. Xing (Ed.), *Research on Localization of Confucius Institutes* (pp. 36-56). Beijing: China Social Science Press.

Xue, L., Su, J., & He, J. (2007). *A Research Report on the strategy of Chinese Universities in International Science and Technology Cooperation and Exchanges.* Beijing: People's Publishing House of China.

Yang, P., & Wang, R. (2019). Central-local relations and higher education stratification in China. *Higher Education, 79*(1), 111-139.

Yang, R. (2002). University internationalisation: its meanings, rationales and implications. I*ntercultural Education, 13*(1), 81-95.

Yang, R. (2003). Globalisation and higher education development: a critical analysis. *International Review of Education, 49*(3-4), 269-291.

Yang, R. (2006). What counts as 'scholarship'? Problematising education policy research in China. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 4*(2), 207-221.

Yang, R. (2008). Transnational higher education in China: Contexts, characteristics and concerns. *Australian Journal of Education, 52*(3), 272-286.

Yang, R. (2010). Soft power and higher education: An examination of China's Confucius Institutes. *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 8*(2), 235-245.

Ye, M. (2015). China and Competing Cooperation in Asia-Pacific: TPP, RCEP, and the New Silk Road. *Asian Security, 11*(3), 206-224.

Yilmaz, S., & Li, B. (2020). The BRI-Led Globalization and Its Implications for East Asian Regionalization. *Chinese Political Science Review, 5*, 395-416.

Ying, W. (2017). Review of the Confucius Institutes' strategy for the dissemination of Chinese culture. *Chinese Education & Society, 49*(6), 391-401.

Yu, H. (2017). Motivation behind China's 'One Belt, One Road' Initiatives and Establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. *Journal of Contemporary China, 26*(105), 353-368.

Yuan, T. (2019). Revisiting China's Africa policies and educational promises: towards a global convergence of development in the post-2015 era? *Globalisation, Societies and Education, 17*(5), 658-673.

Zeng, J. (2019). Narrating China's Belt and Road Initiative. *Global Policy, 10*(2) 207-216.

Zha, Q., & Hayhoe, R. (2014). The "Beijing Consensus" and the Chinese Model of University Autonomy. *Frontier of Education in China, 9*(1), 42-62.

Zha, Q. (2003). Internationalisation of Higher Education: towards a conceptual framework. *Policy Futures in Education, 1*(2), 248-270.

Zha, Q. (2009). Diversification and homogenization: how governments and markets have combined to (re)shape Chinese higher education in its recent massification process. *Higher Education, 58*(1), 41–58.

Zha, Q. (2011). China's move to mass higher education in a comparative perspective. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education, 41*(6), 751- 768.

Zhang, D. (2018). The Concept of 'Community of Common Destiny' in China's Diplomacy: Meaning, Motives and Implications. *Asia and the Pacific Policy Studies, 5*(2), 196-207.

Zhang, W. (2011). *The China wave: Rise of a civilizational state.* Hackensack, NJ: World Century Publishing.

Zhang, X. (2017). Chinese Capitalism and Maritime Silk Road: A World-Systems Perspective. *Geopolitics, 22*(2), 310-331.

Zheng, J., Kapoor, D. (2021). State formation and higher education (HE) policy: An analytical review of policy shifts and the internationalization of higher education (IHE) in China between 1949 and 2019. *Higher Education, 81*(2), 179–195.

Zhou, W., & Esteban, M. (2018). Beyond Balancing: China's approach towards the Belt and Road Initiative. *Journal of Contemporary China, 27*(112), 487-501.

Zhou, Y., Wu, Z., Xu, W., & Liu, P. (2018). 一带一路沿线国家与我国的高等教育战略合作探究 [An exploration of the BRI and China higher education strategic collaboration], 世界教育信息 [Journal of World Education], 3, 19-25.

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
Faculty of Education

Appendix **A: Participant Information Sheet and Consent Form**

Researcher: Bowen Xu, PhD candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge

- **Introduction**

You are invited to participate in a research study of China's Transnational Higher Education and One Belt One Road. This Participant Information Sheet will help you decide if you'd like to take part. It sets out why we are doing the study, what your participation would involve, what the benefits and risks to you might be, and what would happen after the study ends. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study. We will go through this information with you and answer any questions you may have. If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to sign the Consent Form. You will be given a copy of both the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form to keep.

- **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate China's education policy initiatives and transnational higher education developments in relation to One Belt One Road. The focus of this research includes several aspects, it aims to examine how education policy planning has been transformed into practice as well as how does this transformation been mediated by various forces from cultural, political and economic domains in various regional/national contexts. The findings of this research will lead to a PhD thesis that I am currently pursuing, and some of the findings might also be published in academic journals.

- **Description of study procedure**

I would like to seek your cooperation by participating in a one-to-one interview. I hope you will find that this is a worthwhile area of research and agree to cooperate in the interview.
The responses collected from the interview will form the basis of my research project. The interview will be audio taped and I would endeavour to maintain anonymity of your contribution in the interview. The interview would take about 30 to 45 minutes and would be at a time suiable to you. The interview will be taped and transcribed for later analysis.

- **Confidentiality**

I emphasise strongly here that the information obtained will be used in the strictest and confidential manner. All documentation relating to this study would have pseudonyms used in order to protect the identities of the participants. All material collected will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. Your identity will not be disclosed in the material that is published in general. However, in exceptional cases, you will be given the opportunity to review and approve any material that is published about you. No other person besides me and my supervisors will be able to see and access the audio copy and transcript of the interview. The audio copy and transcript of the interview will be destroyed after the end of the project.

- **Rights as participants**

You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, or you have any problems or concerns that occur as a result of your participation at any time feel free to contact me or my supervisor. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* and you have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process.

- **Contact for further information**

If you have any questions or would like to receive further information about the research project, please contact me or my supervisor at:

Researcher: Bowen Xu, PhD Candidate, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.

[Email redacted]

Supervisor: Professor Susan L. Robertson, Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge.

[Email redacted]

- **Consent form**

If you would wish or agree to participate in the interview, kindly fill in the attached consent form. I thank you for taking time in to read the information sheet. Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed

materials deemed necessary by the study investigators.

I declare that I:

- I confirm that I have read the information above. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving any reason upon 3 months after the interview by written notice to the researcher.

- I understand that data collected will be only used for the purpose of this study, confidentiality will be strictly adhered, and all data will be destroyed at the end of this project.

- I agree to be interviewed by researcher for the purpose of this study.

Participant
Name:
Signature:
Date:

Appendix B: Research Ethics Review Checklist for Faculty of Education

Question: Who needs to complete this checklist?
Answer: Any student or member of staff on the Faculty of Education's payroll who is planning to undertake empirical or nonempirical research. Note: Do not fill in this form if you are already ***completing the Cambridge University Psychology Research Ethics form.***

Question: What documentation should be provided?
Answer: (a) This form, completed and signed; (b) A short summary of proposed methods (attach separately or paste into Section A) or relevant sections (only) of original proposal; (c) Copies of information and consent forms/letters for participants or those providing documents/data for your analyses. (c) is compulsory where your research involves collecting information directly from children, young people or adults (teachers, parents, school leaders, others) and is often applicable when conducting documentary or secondary data analysis.

This documentation should include evidence of attending to relevant key issues in the box below.

Key aspects of research ethics

- Are the data relevant and necessary for the particular purpose?
- What are the proposed uses of the data and how long will data be kept?
- Where will data be securely stored and who will have access?
- How will participant identities and personal information be protected?
- Does *information to participants and gatekeepers* make explicit the research focus and what their involvement entails?
- Are timelines, procedures, ethics and withdrawal of consent outlined?
- What will participants gain from the research? Will outcomes be shared? How?

Note re. EU General Data Protection Regulation May 2018. Most academic research is exempt from some sections of the European GDPR legislation, assuming it is being carried out "in the public interest". However some important conditions apply and these are detailed in the **Appendix** to this document. Ethical good practice remains important independent of legal requirements of course.

The Faculty's Three Stages of Ethical Clearance

Stage 1 involves you in completion of this Ethics Review Checklist. This is the first stage of three. It will help you (and others) decide to what extent you need to become involved in the second and third stages. When you have completed it you (and the Faculty) will be in a position to make this judgement. Approval by an independent 'knowledgeable person of standing' is required in all cases.

Further details are provided in Section C.

Stage 2 will involve you in discussing any ethical dimensions of your research in some depth with another 'knowledgeable person of standing'; this is a very likely outcome of completing the checklist. Further details are provided in Section C.

Stage 3 will involve you in obtaining formal 'ethical clearance' through the Faculty of Education's procedures; some projects will need to proceed to this stage. Further details are in Section C.

Section A: Details of the Project

Project Title: Transnationalising China' Higher Education via One Belt One Road

Name of Researcher(s): Bowen Xu

Position in Faculty: Doctoral student

Email redacted

Usual contact address: Faculty of Education/Downing College

Phone number redacted

Students Only

Course of study: PhD in Education

Supervisor's name: Susan Robertson

Supervisor's email: email redacted

Supervisor's contact address: MAB 214

Outline of (empirical/non-empirical) methods *(staff and students)*

Is a project summary or funding proposal attached which details the proposed methods? NO

If NO, please add a project methods summary paragraph here:

The methods employed in this research are 'qualitative', which include document analysis, interviews and observation. Documentary sources forms an important aspect in this research method design, which include academic and non-academic publications, websites, records, letter, memos, diaries to government publications. The semi-structured interviews will also be used in this research, allowing researcher to bring pre-determined questions into the interviewing process while simultaneously creating possibility for exploring new ideas throughout the interviewing

process, thus affording the opportunity for creating new insights and exploring particular theme further in depth. Additionally, researcher is positioned as both participant and observer, seeking to observe the behaviours, listen to conversations and engage with key informants for generating insights for this research.

Changes to design

Do you understand that:

a) any substantive change in your research plans that would change the details appended will require you to lodge a revised summary of methods?
YES

b) any substantive change in your research plans that would change your answers to any of the questions on this form will require you to submit a revised form to the knowledgeable person of standing for approval of the revised plans? YES

Section B: Checklist

Most of the questions on this checklist deliberately offer you just two answers ('yes' or 'no'). You will probably find that you can answer many of the questions unequivocally one way or the other. However, sometimes you may wish there was an 'it depends' response category. If you find yourself in this position, please give the answer which suggests that, at this preliminary stage, there might be an ethical issue requiring more discussion at Stage 2, and explain the issue very briefly underneath.

Code of Practice relating to Educational Research

1a. Have you read the *Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research* (2018) of the British Educational Research Association (BERA)? (if you have not yet read them, the latest version is available at http://bit.ly/BERAethics2018)

1b. Is this Code relevant to the conduct of your research? YES

If you have answered 'no', please briefly explain why:

1c. Do you agree to subscribe to the Code in carrying out your own research?
YES

2. Are there any aspects of your proposed research which, in the context of BERA's Code of Practice, might give rise to concern amongst other educational researchers? NO

If you have answered 'yes', please briefly list possible causes for concern below:

3a. Will you be analysing an existing data set that has already been collected by someone

else (i.e. secondary data analysis)? YES

b. If you answered YES: can you confirm that the data you will be using are *either*

- already available in the public domain for anyone to analyse;
or
- you have been given permission by the owner of the data set to undertake your own analysis and report the results [1]

YES

4. Will you be collecting your own research data for the study (through such techniques as interviewing people, observing situations, issuing questionnaires etc.)
YES
If you have answered NO to question 4, you may proceed to Section C and need not answer any further questions in this section.
Obtaining 'Informed Consent'

5. Are you familiar with the concept of 'informed consent'? (if you are not familiar with this concept you should first consult the following source: page 9 of the BERA guidelines above). YES

6. Does your research involve securing participation from children, young people or adults where the concept of 'informed consent' might apply? YES

Permission is likely to be needed to report any information about people or institutions that is not in the public domain, and which you have been able to obtain due to your privileged access to the research site(s) in whatever capacity. [2]

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 6 above, please answer the following questions.

7a. Do you believe that you are adopting suitable safeguards with respect to obtaining 'informed consent' from participants in your research in line with the Code of Practice? YES

7b. Will all the information about individuals and institutions be treated on an 'in confidence' basis at all stages of your research including writing up and publication? No

7c.

---

[1] *This permission should only be given if the owner of the data can make it available for secondary analysis on the basis of the informed consent they obtained from their original participants.*

[2] *Professional work (such as teaching) can involve the collection of evidence to better understand problems/issues and to evaluate innovative practice - leaving practitioners with the question of when these activities become formal research requiring informed consent. This comment is meant to highlight how the collection of data for public reporting* ***beyond the institution*** *(e.g.* ***in a thesis****) should be considered as a key criterion for deciding when informed consent is required.*

I. Will all the information collected about the institution(s) where research is based be presented in ways that guarantee the institution(s) cannot be identified from information provided in the report?

NO

Note: in a thesis written by a researcher about a research context where they have a publicly acknowledged role, it is difficult to disguise the identify of the institution whilst also providing the expected detail of the researcher's relationship with the research context. [3]

II. If not, has the appropriate responsible person given approval for the research on the understanding that the identity of the institution cannot be protected in the report of the research.

YES/No

III. Will all the information collected about individuals be presented in ways that guarantee their anonymity?

Note: a person with a named role, or having a specific set of reported characteristics that is unique in the research context, cannot be assured of anonymity when the identity of the research site cannot be protected.

YES

IV. If not, have these issues been explained to the relevant participants (and appropriate gatekeepers in the case of children or other vulnerable participants).

7d. Will your participants be informed before the study that they may withdraw consent during the research if, for whatever reason, they felt this to be necessary? YES

---

[3] *At present the implicit assumption is that anonymity is always desirable*, and is always achievable. In many studies these assumptions are sound. However, a practitioner (e.g. teacher) reporting research into their own practice/institution in a thesis would normally need to be explicit about their professional relationship to the research context to give an authentic account of their research. As the staff lists of many educational institutions are in the public domain and often readily found by a web search, a thesis by a named member of staff allows the institution to be readily identified from the name of the thesis author.*

Given that an institution can readily be identified, this also has consequences for the degree of anonymity that can be promised to participants - for example those with named roles such as Head of Year 11, Student Voice Coordinator, Head Prefect, etc, or those identifiable from detailed reported characteristics.

** Some institutions or participants may welcome being acknowledged by name in a thesis, and their views should be taken into account and balanced against other considerations.*

8. The Involvement of Adults in the Research

8a. Will your research involve adults? YES

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 8a above, please answer the following questions; otherwise please proceed to Question 9.

8b. Will these adults be provided with sufficient information *prior* to agreeing to participate in your research to enable them to exercise 'informed consent'? YES

8c. Will the adults involved in your research be in a position to give 'informed consent' themselves with respect to their participation? YES

8d. Will these adults be able to opt out of your research in its entirety if they wish to do so by, for example, declining to be interviewed or refusing to answer a questionnaire? YES

8e. Will these adults be able to opt out of parts of your research by, for example, declining to participate in certain activities or answer particular questions? YES

9. The Involvement of Children, Young People and other potentially Vulnerable Persons in the Research

9a. Will your research involve children, young people or other potentially vulnerable persons (such as those with learning disabilities or your own students). NO

If you have answered 'yes' to Question 9a above, please answer the following questions; otherwise move to Question 10.

In educational and social research 'informed consent' regarding access is often given by a 'gatekeeper' on behalf of a wider group of persons (e.g. a head or class teacher with respect to their pupils, a youth worker working with young people, another person in an 'authority' position).

9b. Who will act as the 'gatekeeper(s)' in your research?
Please list their position(s) briefly below and, where this is not self-evident, describe the nature of their relationship with those on whose behalves they are giving 'informed consent'. The researcher cannot act as the gatekeeper (see 9g below).

9c. Will you be briefing your 'gatekeeper(s)' about the nature of the questions or activities you will be undertaking with the children, young people or other potentially vulnerable persons involved in your research?

9d. If another person (such as a teacher or parent of a child in your study) expressed concerns about any of the questions or activities involved in your research, would your 'gatekeeper(s)' have sufficient information to provide a brief justification for having given 'informed consent'?

9e. If unforeseen problems were to arise during the course of the research, would your 'gatekeeper(s)' be able to contact you at relatively short notice to seek advice, if they needed to do so?

9f. Could your 'gatekeeper(s)' withdraw consent during the research if, for whatever reason, they felt this to be necessary?

9g.
i. Are you undertaking research into your own professional context/institution (e.g. with students in a school where you work)?

If you answered 'YES' then you should identify (in 9b above) a suitable senior person who has agreed to act as an independent point of contact for participants to act as the gatekeeper, and answer the following two questions:

ii. Will you ensure that other people in the research context are aware of the identity of the gatekeeper?

iii. Will you take reasonable precautions to ensure that research participants (and where appropriate their parents/guardians) know that they should contact the gatekeeper (and not you) if they have any concerns about the research?

Other Ethical Aspects of the Research

10. Will it be necessary for participants to take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time? (e.g. covert observation of people in public places)
NO

11. Will the research involve the discussion of topics which some people may deem to be 'sensitive'? (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, certain matters relating to political attitudes or religious beliefs)
NO

12. Does the research involve any questions or activities which might be considered inappropriate in an educational setting? NO

13. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind? NO

14. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?
NO

15. Could the research involve psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?
NO

16. Are there any other aspects of the research that could be interpreted as infringing the norms and expectations of behaviour prevailing in educational settings?
NO

17. Are there any other aspects of the research that could be to the participants' detriment?
NO

18. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?
NO

19. Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses or compensation for time) be offered to participants?
NO

Section C

What Further Steps to Secure Ethical Clearance are Required?

Stage 1 Clearance

Interpretation of Results

If any of your answers coincide with the response options having a coloured background, then please add details of your plans under relevant items (or refer to specific sections/pages of your proposal). In this case you should assume that further discussion involving Stage 2 procedures is required because some aspect of your proposed research is likely to be 'ethically sensitive'. In practice, many issues can be resolved at this stage.

Members of staff should be especially careful about research involving their own students (question 9g).

If you have ticked 'yes' in response to one or more of questions 10 to 20, both Stage 2 ***and*** *Stage 3 clearance will definitely be required.*

Stage 2 Clearance

Any 'ethically sensitive' responses identified by the researcher during completion of the form or

subsequently by the knowledgeable person (see below) should be discussed in detail before the form is signed.

Stages 1 and 2: Approval

All researchers need to have this form approved and signed by a 'knowledgeable person of standing'. That person should first raise with the researcher any queries or concerns they have, even where the researcher considers that Stage 1 clearance is sufficient. S/he should also review the additional documentation provided and suggest modifications if needed, before giving approval.

In the case of *students* within the Faculty, this person will, in almost every case, be the person supervising your research.

Members of Faculty *staff* will need to exercise some care in selecting such a person. S/he is likely to be someone with considerable experience of research in a cognate area to your own and quite likely to be one of the more senior members of the Faculty. S/he should not be someone who is also involved in the research nor someone with whom you regularly collaborate (whether in relation to research, teaching or administration). The test, in every case, should be whether an outsider would judge the person chosen to be 'independent'.

On completion of the discussion, the 'knowledgeable person of standing' is asked to choose one of the following three responses, to delete the other two and to affirm their views by adding their signature.

a) I have discussed the ethical dimensions of this research and, as outlined to me, I do not foresee any ethical issues arising which require further clearance.

or

b) There may be some ethical issues arising from this research. I think it would be prudent for the researcher to seek further advice and, possibly, Stage 3 clearance.

or

c) Ethical issues arise in this research which require further discussion; my advice is that Stage 3 ethical clearance should be sought.

and

I have reviewed the summary of proposed methods and any consent/information sheets provided and hereby approve them.

Name: Bowen Xu . . . . . Date of discussion: 2018/08/20. . . . . .

Signature of 'knowledgeable person of standing' . . . . . .

Lodging this form

It is your responsibility as the researcher to lodge this form with the appropriate body *well in advance of undertaking your research*.

Students should provide their supervisors with a copy that can be lodged with other papers their supervisors are keeping about their work. If Stage 3 clearance is required, supervisors will take steps to initiate these procedures. Approved ethics forms are routinely required to be submitted with doctoral registration reports and with final theses for all postgraduate students.

Members of staff should lodge a completed copy of this form with the Faculty Research Office. They should draw attention, albeit briefly in the first instance, to the nature of any outstanding issue(s). The Director of Research will then advise on the appropriate Faculty procedures to be followed to enable the research to be considered for Stage 3 clearance.

All researchers should be aware that Stage 3 discussions could involve them in making modifications to their research design or proposed procedures and may, in certain circumstances, result in ethical clearance being withheld.

Appendix: General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 and Applicability to Academic Research

These parts of GDPR apply to research. Researchers will need adequate data management plans/arrangements in order to meet the following data handling and security principles.

Personal data must be

- Processed (i.e. collected, handled, stored, disclosed and destroyed) fairly, lawfully and transparently.
- Adequate, relevant and limited
- Accurate (and rectified if inaccurate)
- Processed securely

Individuals have these rights:

- to be informed of how their personal data are being used
- to receive copies of their personal data in a machine readable and commonly-used format (right to data portability)
- to object: to processing (including profiling) of their data that proceeds under particular legal bases; to direct marketing; and to processing of their data for research purposes where that research is not in the public interest.
- not to be subject to a decision based solely on automated decision-making using their personal data.

Exemptions to other aspects of GDPR legislation apply if these conditions are met:

1) The data processing is undertaken with a view to publication of some academic (or journalistic, literary and/or artistic) material that would be in the public interest.
2) There is a reasonable belief that compliance with the part of the GDPR that is exempted would be incompatible with the academic purpose.
3) Appropriate technical and organisational safeguards exist to protect the personal data e.g. data minimisation, pseudonymisation, or access controls.
4) The processing will not result in measures or decisions being taken about individuals.
5) There is no likelihood of substantial damage or distress to the data subject from the processing.

Under these circumstances

Consent is not legally required – although ethical practice usually requires it of course.
Personal data collected for other purposes can be used for research ones and can be kept indefinitely
A subject's right to access to personal data does not apply if the research results will be made public in an anonymised form
Subjects do not have the right to have their inaccurate personal data rectified or erased.

This Appendix offers a brief summary only. For more information, see the Research Integrity and Information Compliance webpages of the University site: https://www.research-integrity.admin.cam.ac.uk/academic-research-involving-personal-data (especially Sections C1 and D2).

Please note that it is the researcher's responsibility to read in full and comply with the GDPR legislation; failure to do so incurs very large fines for the institution.