

Cultural Relations between China and the Member States of the European Union

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Introduction

Cultural relations, foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy are often thought of as synonymous, but while cultural relations include foreign policy and diplomacy, they in fact go far beyond the scope of purely governmental activities. They comprise much more than foreign cultural policy, in which culture is used mainly as a tool to promote the interests of one country and frequently reflects the domestic policies of whichever political party happens to be in power. Cultural relations encompass the mutual influence and exchange of cultures on and between two (or more) states or nations as well as both private and public initiatives to promote the culture of the individual state or nation and to organize cultural exchanges.

Foreign cultural policy is conducted by governments, while cultural diplomacy, as the concrete business of the government institutions involved,¹ deals with intergovernmental negotiations of cultural treaties, conventions, agreements and exchange programmes. Cultural diplomacy may facilitate the transfer of ideas that can influence the partner country, but this is not necessarily the only way that this transfer takes place. Important ideas that have exerted an influence on a foreign culture have frequently taken other paths. Buddhism, Christianity and Marxism, Western literature and philosophy did not come to China, and Daoism, Confucianism and Chinese literature did not come to the West by means of cultural diplomacy, but they do form an essential part of cultural relations.

This article focuses primarily on the foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy of China and the EU member states since the 1980s as part of the concept of cultural relations. The first part discusses the meaning of foreign cultural policy and diplomacy. The second outlines the developments that have taken place between the EU member states and China; the third covers the relations between the EU and China. In the fourth part, I briefly return to the role of European philosophy in China since the 1980s. In conclusion, I outline some strategic goals for a cultural policy towards China.

Culture

When we speak of cultural relations, foreign cultural policy and cultural diplomacy we have to work with a clear understanding of culture,

1. Cf. J. M. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations*, Key Concepts in International Relations 3 (London and Boston: Allen & Urwin, 1986), pp. 2 ff.

at least of the domestic culture. The classic definition was provided by the 19th-century English anthropologist Edward Tylor: "Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society."²

This definition of culture served anthropologists in the Anglo-Saxon world well for some 50 years. But further reflections on the nature of culture led to a multiplication and diversification of the definition.³ The sheer number of definitions clearly shows that, even today, there is no agreement about what culture and cultural policy actually comprise.⁴

Two basic concepts of culture can be distinguished: the "traditional concept of culture" and the "enlarged concept of culture." The traditional concept of culture mainly includes the fine arts, philosophy and spiritual manifestations (religion, transcendental philosophy), while the aspects of everyday life (housing, working and living, industrial and popular culture) are disregarded. In contrast to culture, these aspects are frequently referred to as civilization, a concept which is oriented more on practical daily life and its material technologies. In the understanding of traditional culture, the fine arts and culture are to a large extent synonymous. Moreover, the distinction between culture and civilization can mainly be found in the German intellectual tradition,⁵ but also, as we will see, in the Chinese intellectual tradition.

The enlarged concept of culture comprises all forms of human manifestations of social, material and also spiritual culture. The term was introduced by Dahrendorf in 1970, but actually only reflected the more Anglo-Saxon understanding of culture. Dahrendorf suggested leaving behind the cultural concept of "madrigal choirs" and moving forward to an enlarged concept of culture (*erweiterter Kulturbegriff*) which would encompass environmental problems as well as arts and literature and the human conditions of life in general.⁶

2. Edward Burnett Tylor, *Primitive Culture* (London: John Murray, 1871), first paragraph.

3. The American anthropologists Kroeber and Kluckhohn cite 164 definitions of culture, ranging from "learned behaviour" to "ideas in the mind," "a logical construct," "a statistical fiction," "a psychic defence mechanism" and so on. A. L. Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn, *Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, MA: The Peabody Museum, 1952).

4. Cf. Wolfram Kuschke, "Kultur und internationale Politik," in Wichard Woyke (ed.), *Handwörterbuch Internationale Politik* (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1986), pp. 306 ff.

5. On the derivation of the concept of culture and civilization in Germany, cf. the essay by Michael Pflaum, "Die Kultur-Zivilisations-Antithese im Deutschen," in *Europäische Schlüsselwörter. Wortvergleichende und wortgeschichtliche Studien*, Vol. III, *Kultur und Zivilisation* (Bonn and München: Hueben, 1963–1967), pp. 288–427. Also Norman Elias, *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, 2 vols. (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1976), vol. I, *Über den Entwicklungsgang des Gegensatzpaares: "Zivilisation" und "Kultur,"* pp. 7–10.

6. Quoted in Hansgert Peisert, *Die auswärtige Kulturpolitik des Deutschen Reiches und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1978), p. 52.

Chinese Culture

A clear definition of Chinese culture (*Zhongguo wenhua*) is very difficult. When we speak of China's cultural influence on her neighbouring countries, we mainly think of language, social and political thought (usually Confucianism), and not so much of social behaviour or material things. In this context, the term culture has a very narrow meaning. That is also true when we look at the discussions on Chinese and Western culture among Chinese intellectuals since the end of the 19th century. The classic *tiyong*-concept⁷ was based on a narrow understanding of culture. It mainly meant Chinese learning (*Zhongxue*), referring to the Chinese classics, and it classified Western learning (*xixue*) as a kind of low-grade and outward "civilization." This dichotomy between culture (*wenhua*), which was understood as spiritual (*jingshen*), and civilization (*wenming*), which was seen as material (*wuzhi*), clearly pointed to a general perception of culture that was similar to the distinction between culture and civilization made by German intellectuals at the end of the 19th century. And it is this dichotomy that has run throughout the Chinese perception of Western culture, which is mainly European culture, from the late 19th century to today.

Foreign Cultural Policy

Foreign cultural policy was first implemented by the nation states in the 19th century. France had already developed the organizational structure of cultural diplomacy by the end of the 19th century,⁸ where the projection of French culture became identified with the interests of foreign policy. Most other countries have followed the French example.⁹

In Germany, the term "Auswärtige Kulturpolitik" (external cultural policy) appeared for the first time in 1912/13. The then Reichskanzler Bethmann-Hollweg indicated that foreign cultural policy served to support the interests of power politics.¹⁰ During the First World War, foreign cultural policy can be classified as propaganda, and it played an important role in the policies of all states. In contrast, the Weimar Republic revealed the beginnings of a different foreign cultural policy based on mutual information, not just cultural exports, while foreign cultural policy under National Socialism was nothing more than racist propaganda.

After the Second World War and in the wake of decolonization,

7. *Zhongxue weiti, xixue weiyong*: Chinese learning as substance (essence), Western learning for application, originated by the scholar Feng Kuei-fen (1809–74), a slogan to be made famous a generation later.

8. The *Alliance Française* was founded in 1883 to teach French in the French colonies, the Lay Mission for non-religious teaching overseas was established in 1902, while the *Office National* for school and university exchanges and also the Bureau for Schools and French Foundations Abroad were set up in 1910, with the latter an administrative unit within the foreign ministry. Cf. Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations*, p. 23.

9. *Ibid.*

10. See Manfred Abelein, *Die Kulturpolitik des Deutschen Reiches und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Köln and Opladen: Westdeutschen Verlag, 1968), pp. 106–107. See also Peisert, *Die auswaertige Kulturpolitik des Deutschen Reiches*.

cultural diplomacy became an important instrument for promoting economic relations and the business of one's own country. In 1967, the then German foreign minister Willy Brandt minted the concept of foreign cultural policy as the "third pillar of foreign policy."¹¹ Since the late 1980s, and especially after 1989, the question of human rights as an essential part of relations with non-democratic states has become an important topic of discussion, with foreign cultural policy again possibly falling into the category of propaganda.¹²

The Socialist Foreign Cultural Policy

In all socialist countries, in the past as well as in the present, cultural policy lies at the core of party policies based on Marxism-Leninism which defined culture as "class culture" and always thought of it as the culture of the "ruling class". Furthermore, culture was merely regarded as a weapon of "class struggle" at home and of the international "class struggle" in relations with other countries. If, in the perception of either one's own traditional class culture or Western culture, negative aspects could be identified, i.e. if certain ideas might question the state's authority or even jeopardize the rule of the party, then of course they had to be isolated, combated and finally eradicated.

After the founding of the PRC in 1949, the perception of Western culture and the resulting cultural policy was also determined by the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Consequently, after 1949, the Chinese government banned all foreign cultural institutions on the mainland, thus disrupting cultural relations with Western countries, and started numerous campaigns against Western cultural influence among its subjects.

From this point on, Chinese communist foreign cultural policy can be classified in the category of cultural propaganda. Its clear objectives were to promote the international position of the People's Republic of China, to support "proletarian revolution" and "anti-imperialist struggles" in other countries and to influence public opinion in Western countries for the most part, but also in Japan, in order to attain international diplomatic recognition.¹³

When Deng Xiaoping introduced a new policy on culture in 1979,¹⁴ he

11. The two other pillars were diplomacy and economic relations. Quoted in Hans Arnold, *Auswärtige Kulturpolitik. Ein Überblick aus deutscher Sicht* (München and Wien: Hanser, 1980) p. 106.

12. German foreign minister Kinkel may have been expressing the opinion of many of his colleagues when, in 1996, he pondered in public on the "common interest between foreign cultural work and export trade." Kinkel, 14 February 1996, *Mitteilungen für die Presse*, ed. by Pressereferat of the Foreign Ministry. However, Kinkel was only repeating what British diplomats had already stated on a variety of occasions, e.g. in 1929: "... to those who say that this extension (of cultural influence) has no connection with commerce, we reply that they are totally wrong" (quoted from Mitchell, *International Cultural Relations* p. 19).

13. The only but still comprehensive and very informative study of this topic so far is by Herbert Passin, *China's Cultural Diplomacy* (New York: Praeger, 1963).

14. Opening speech at the Fourth Congress of Chinese Writers and Artists, in *Deng Xiaoping wenxuan* (Beijing, 1983) p. 182. See also Geremie Barmé, *In the Red. On Contemporary Chinese Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp. 20 f.

indeed advocated free debate between different points of view and academic schools. However, at the same time he emphasized the binding character of Mao Zedong's cultural policy, in which literature and art must serve the workers, peasants and soldiers. The limits of this new cultural policy soon became evident. After the opening up of the country the Party initiated numerous campaigns to contain the rising influence of Western culture, and these campaigns targeted Chinese intellectuals and returning students "indoctrinated" by "decadent" Western culture. Intellectuals who used the limited academic freedom after 1978 to study Western philosophy and who established intellectual positions that did not toe the Party line were persecuted. Western culture itself became a target, and the campaigns against "spiritual pollution" and "bourgeois liberalism" in 1983–84 and 1986 were a foretaste of the events of 1989.

Western culture and domestic politics were clearly linked in the struggle between the reformist faction around Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, and the conservatives. The denunciation of the television series *River Elegy* (*He shang*), which began after the fall of Zhao Ziyang in 1989, clearly showed that the political leadership still perceived Western culture as a threat to the political system and one-party rule.¹⁵

Over ten years later, Western culture still remains a sensitive issue on the Chinese mainland. On the one hand, it is possible to observe the rapid emergence of non-official cultural currents or countercultures – "underground culture," "dissident culture" and "Internet-based culture" – that have developed in the wake of economic modernization and the opening up of the country. Not only do these reflect the rising cultural contacts with Western countries, they are also cultural phenomena that are a necessary accompaniment on the path to modernity.

On the other hand, the political leadership has begun to emphasize the role of traditional Chinese culture as a bulwark against these cultural phenomena and the tide of Western influence. The promotion of traditional culture should help to stabilize the political system, while modern cultural currents – avant-garde art, all kinds of non-conformist cultural activities, non-governmental cultural activities and so on – are still regarded as potentially dangerous. In this context, traditional European culture, especially in its classical manifestations, is welcome – as long as it does not provoke unorthodox and critical thinking, while traditional Chinese culture serves to broaden the political legitimacy of the Party, at home as well as abroad, at a time when the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism is on the wane.

15. See Christina Neder, *Flusselegie – Chinas Identitätskrise. Die Debatte um die chinesische Fernsehserie He shang 1988–1994* (*River Elegy – China's Identity Crisis. The Debate on the Chinese Television Series He shang*) (Dortmund: Projekt Verlag, 1996). Briefly also Barmé, *In the Red*, pp. 23 f.

Cultural Relations with EU Member States

Beginning in the 1960s, China's cultural relations with other countries followed the "Theory of Intermediate Zones" (*zhongjiandidai*) developed by Mao Zedong in 1964.¹⁶ The term Second Intermediate Zone (*di-er zhongjiandidai*) was reintroduced in 1972 to justify closer relations with mainly European countries such as France, Germany and the United Kingdom, but also with Japan. Cultural relations with West European countries were based on cultural agreements and cultural exchange (*jiaoliu*), but not on co-operation (*hezuo*). Co-operation was reserved solely for socialist countries.

The number of cultural exchanges increased rapidly after the opening up of the country. Between 1978 and 1999, the PRC sent more than 230 cultural delegations abroad and received more than 400 from all over the world. Some 138 countries had signed cultural exchange agreements with the PRC, including all of the EU member states, resulting in more than 400 executive plans.¹⁷

United Kingdom and China. As with other European countries, cultural and artistic exchanges between China and Britain became increasingly frequent from 1978. Both countries signed an Educational and Cultural Co-operation Agreement in London in 1979, and a cultural, educational and scientific exchange programme every two years. While from 1972 to 1979 China and Britain worked together on only ten projects, the number increased to 72 in 1986. Projects included a film week and retrospective film exhibition in each country and the exchange of delegations and personnel involved in drama, fine arts, publication, photography, education, library science and gardening.

1986 showed the first highlight in British-Chinese cultural relations. The first Festival of Chinese Arts opened in February 1986 in London, featuring exhibitions of Chinese paintings, calligraphy, photographs, Chinese music and lion dance performances in the City of London and eight London boroughs. The BBC and the Chinese Ministry of Radio, Film and Television jointly organized a TV teaching programme in Beijing, underlining the importance of English as the most widely learned foreign language in China, followed by Japanese, German and French. The same year, China and Britain also signed a scholarship agreement, under which China sent 400 Ph.D. students and visiting scholars to Britain in 1987.¹⁸

The 1980s also saw the renaissance of Shakespeare in China. The Old Vic Theatre had already given its Chinese premiere of Shakespeare's

16. The First Intermediate Zone contained the developing countries and the Third World, the Second Intermediate Zone some capitalist countries, but not the United States and the USSR.

17. *Beijing Review*, 6 September 1999, p 14 f.

18. Xinhua, 7 October 1986.

Hamlet in Shanghai in October 1979.¹⁹ The first Shakespeare Festival took place in Beijing and Shanghai in April 1986. Chinese artists staged 24 plays, including *King Richard the Third*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Several plays were presented in Chinese opera modes: *Macbeth* as *kunqu* and *Othello* as Beijing opera. The first was even included in the programme of the 1987 Edinburgh Festival. A second Shakespeare Festival followed in 1994.²⁰

The events in 1989 seem to have had no direct influence on British-Chinese cultural relations, although there were fewer reports on cultural events in the following years. In 1991 both sides again signed a co-operation agreement for three years, but between 1992 and 1997 only a few events were reported in the media. Cultural relations intensified in January 1998 with the British Education Exhibition, the largest of its kind held in China in recent years.²¹ The Chinese Symphony Orchestra and Chinese opera troupes staged concerts in London, followed by a Chinese modern pottery art exhibition.²² In the same year the British National Theatre and the Royal Academy of Music performed in China. One major event was the British Law Week, from 6–10 October. More than 400 British and Chinese lawyers, legislators and academics discussed the Chinese and British law system and took part in mock trials. The Week was complemented by television shows and documentaries relating to British law.²³

On the invitation of the Chinese Ministry of Culture a delegation of media business leaders went to China in April 1999 in a bid to open the huge market to British films, music and television. Among the delegation was also for the first time the BBC Worldwide director Rupert Gavin. The BBC faced particular difficulties since its World TV channel was taken off the air because it would not allow its news coverage to be interfered with by the Chinese government. The cultural trade mission coincided with a tour by the British Royal Ballet, which gave eight performances, including Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.²⁴

Cultural trade with Western countries generally has been limited by Chinese restrictions on the amount and content of Western productions.²⁵ China restricts imports of films to about 70 a year, with half coming from America.

19. Xinhua, 1 November 1979. During the 1950s and 1960s more than 500,000 copies of translations of Shakespeare were published, but because of the Cultural Revolution any events related to English theatre were forbidden.

20. See Jane Lai and Dorothy Wong, "Shakespeare in China: bringing home the Bard," in *East-West Dialogue*, Vol. IV, No. 2/Vol. V, No. 1: *Chinese and European Literature: Mutual Influence and Perspectives*, June 2000, pp. 120–130, p. 125.

21. Xinhua, 9 January 1998.

22. FBIS Daily Report: China, 18 October 1999.

23. *Beijing Review*, 9–15 November, p. 34; *South China Morning Post*, 8 October 1998, p. 7.

24. FBIS Daily Report: China, 5 May 1999.

25. BBC Online Network, Monday 26 April 1999, 3:40 GMT.

France and China. In the 1930s, France had as many as 24 cultural associations in China. But at the beginning of the 21st century, the French cultural representation shares the same fate as all European cultural representations in mainland China: it is still very limited and restricted.

Cultural relations between France and China gained momentum in 1978 when two of Ba Jin's novels were published in French.²⁶ One year later, the famous novelist himself led a Chinese writers' group to Paris. A major French cultural event that took place in China in 1978 was an exhibition of French oil paintings at the Grand Palace. The show, the first of its kind to be held in China after 1949, was jointly sponsored by the Foreign Ministry and the Director's Office of the Museums of France.²⁷ A second art exhibition followed in September 1980: organized by the Pompidou National Art and Culture Centre of France, this was the first large exhibition of overseas modern art ever in China.

In February 1980, the French Foreign Minister François Poincet announced that a French-Chinese Centre and some other cultural organizations would be established in Paris to foster further cultural co-operation. The Cultural Agreement signed in October 1981 led to the display of Dunhuang murals in France and exhibits of the Versailles Palace and the Louvre Palace in China in the following year. A film exchange agreement followed in 1983, which for the first time made it possible for French films to be screened in Beijing and some provinces.

In September 1989, the *Alliance Française* opened a *centre franco-cantonais de formation linguistique* in Guangzhou. The next branch was opened in Shanghai, where the *Alliance* rented an office on the Bund. Classes started in 1992. In 1993, relations cooled considerably when France decided to sell 60 Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets to Taiwan and also to upgrade its office in Taiwan. January saw Beijing order France to close its consulate in Guangzhou. Then, when an exhibition of works by the French sculptor Auguste Rodin, including 62 sculptures and 26 sketches, the most important retrospective of Rodin's work ever presented abroad, was opened on 15 February 1993, no Chinese ministers attended the ceremony. The Chinese side obviously wanted to express its discontent with France over its improving ties with Taiwan and sent only the director of international relations for the Chinese Ministry of Culture, Wu Chunde, and Zhu Muzhi, president of the Chinese Association for Cultural Exchanges with Foreign Countries.²⁸

However, relations improved at the end of 1993 when the Chinese side finally granted a long-hoped-for request to broadcast a French-language

26. *The Family*, written in 1931 and translated by the French writer Michelle Loi, a Trotskyist who visited China shortly after the Cultural Revolution, and *The Cold Night* (1946) translated by the French scholar M. Y. Lallitte. Ba Jin, a former anarchist, started his first novel *Doom* in Paris and completed it at Chateau Thierry in 1928. Cf. NCNA, 30 April 1978.

27. NCNA, 14 February 1978.

28. FBIS-CHI-93-013, 18 February 1993, p. 14. See also Christopher Nesshoever, *Die Chinapolitik Deutschlands und Frankreichs zwischen Aussenwirtschaftsfoerderung und Menschenrechtsorientierung (1989 bis 1997)* (Hamburg: Mitteilungen des Instituts für Asienkunde, 1999).

programme on Chinese television.²⁹ But when Jiang Zemin visited France in September 1994 and was pressed by François Mitterrand on the issue of establishing a French cultural centre in Beijing, he abruptly turned down the French president. As France had stopped selling arms to Taiwan earlier that year, Mitterrand had obviously hoped for some concessions.³⁰ In the end, Paris had to wait two more years.

After a long absence, the *Alliance Française* eventually established a new branch in Beijing.³¹ Including Hong Kong, the *Alliance Française* now has seven offices in China, of which Hong Kong is the largest with an intake of 2,500 students per term, followed by Beijing (1,000), Shanghai (600), Guangzhou (250) and Macau,³² and two branches in Taiwan (Taipei and Kaohsiung).

Cultural exchange activities have increased over the last few years. In 1998, 146 Sino-French cultural events were held, of which 90 per cent were non-governmental, and 18 Chinese groups performed in France.³³ However, a major row erupted when a premiere production of an ancient Chinese opera was cancelled in Paris after Shanghai authorities refused to let the cast leave the country. *The Peony Pavilion*, a masterpiece of *kunqu* opera that dates back to the 16th century, was scheduled to open on 19 November as a highlight of the Paris festival. The Shanghai authorities regarded the production as “ideologically unsuitable and pornographic” and stopped the company travelling to New York for the premiere and then on to Paris. With sets and costumes already shipped, the Shanghai authorities offered an abridged version. Paris rejected it, with the French organizers insisting on presenting the production rehearsed in Shanghai. The French Foreign Ministry tried to convince the Chinese organizers, but “the Shanghai Municipal Cultural Bureau ... made it impossible for the 53 members of the Shanghai Kunju Opera Company to come to France.”³⁴

However, cultural relations seemed to get back on track in 1999. Staged in France from 1 to 12 September, the China Cultural Week Paris '99 was the largest exhibition of Chinese culture to have been held in Europe in the past 50 years. The event was jointly organised by UNESCO and the information office of the Chinese State Council.³⁵ China sent a 320-strong delegation that included government officials, scientists, scholars, artists and craftsmen, as well as Ding Guangen, PB member and minister of propaganda, who opened the festival.

An example of the different perceptions of cultural relations in France and China (and not only in France, but even within China) is offered by the Chinese writer Gao Xingjian, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000. Born in 1940, Gao studied French at the Beijing

29. *Ibid.* p. 202.

30. FBIS-CHI-94-198, 13 October 1994, Hong Kong *Eastern Express*, 11 October 1994, p. 9.

31. See also “Alliance Française à Nouveau Pékinise,” *Paroles*, September 1996.

32. *Ibid.* No figures for Macau are available.

33. *Beijing Review*, 6 September 1999, pp. 14 f.

34. *South China Morning Post*, 25 September 1998.

35. *Beijing Review*, 6 September 1999, pp. 11 ff.

Foreign Language Academy and started writing during the Cultural Revolution. Because his wife denounced him to the authorities, he had to burn his manuscripts and he was sent to a re-education camp. After the Cultural Revolution, he worked as a French translator at the Chinese Writers' Association, visiting France for the first time in 1978 or 1979. In 1985, the *Beijing Daily* was still hailing him as a leading reformer of Chinese drama, and in the same year he went to France again, from where he returned only briefly in 1986 before finally settling down there in 1987. He now has French citizenship.

Because his play *The Flight* deals with the events of 1989, he suddenly became *persona non grata* in China.³⁶ After the announcement that he had been awarded the Nobel Prize, Chinese representatives immediately denounced the committee's decision as politically motivated, and the censors deleted articles praising Gao from Internet portals on the mainland. At the same time, Gao was enthusiastically celebrated in Taiwan and Hong Kong.

In general, Chinese literature in France and exchanges between authors seem to be less important, similar to the situation with Germany. The number of Chinese books translated into French since the 1980s amounts to 50 by the Gallimard publishing house and about 40 by other publishers. The most prominent Chinese authors still seem to be the old classics Lao Zi, Kongzi (Confucius), Zhuangzi, Pu Songling and Li Bai, and the modern classics Lu Xun, Guo Morou, Ba Jin and Mao Dun, complemented by erotic literature like the *Chronique indiscrete des mandarins*, *Tout pour l'amour* and *Cent poemes d'amour de la Chine ancienne*.³⁷

Germany and China. It was only after 1972 that co-operation in scientific and cultural areas developed between the two sides. The first limited student exchanges – involving just ten students – started in 1973–4. The Max Planck Society signed an agreement with the Chinese Academy of Sciences in April 1974.

Two important exhibitions of Chinese art were then presented in Germany, one on traditional Chinese painting (in Bonn) and the other on modern Chinese woodcutting (in Berlin and six other German cities).³⁸ The first agreement for cultural exchange between the Federal Republic and the PRC was signed in 1977 and emphasized enhanced co-operation in the fields of language studies, higher education, music and sport, and also the exchange of visiting scholars.³⁹ Following the opening up of China after 1978, cultural relations with (West) Germany developed

36. SCMP, NZZ, FAZ, 13 October 2000. SCMP, 23 October 2000.

37. Examples taken from catalogues kindly provided by Lucie Bernier of France in Taichung. The list is incomplete of course.

38. *Holzschnitt im Neuen China* (Modern Chinese woodcutting). The exhibition was supported by the West Berlin government. It started in Berlin and went to five German cities. See also the exhibition catalogue *Holzschnitt im Neuen China*, ed. by Werner Meissner (Berlin: Gesellschaft für Verständigung und Freundschaft mit China, 1976).

39. "Geschichte und Gegenwart der deutsch-chinesischen Kulturbeziehungen," in Rüdiger Machetzki (ed.), *Deutsch-chinesische Beziehungen. Ein Handbuch* (Hamburg: Institut für Asienkunde, 1982), pp. 21 ff.

rapidly. However, agreements on technological-scientific co-operation continued to outnumber those on arts and social sciences, as is also the case with other countries.

In charge of cultural exchanges on the Chinese side are the Ministry of Cultural Affairs (formerly the State Commission for Education before it was renamed in 1996), the provincial governments, the universities, the Academy of Science and the German-Chinese Friendship Association (founded in 1992). On the German side it is the German Embassy, the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), the *Goethe-Institut*, various foundations (Humboldt, Duisberg, Volkswagen, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft etc.), cultural associations such as “Haus der Weltkulturen,” and two Chinese-German friendship societies (GDCF, GVFC). The legal foundation for the exchange between the two countries is the cultural co-operation agreement of 1979, which has been followed up by a biennial cultural exchange programme.

One major breakthrough in German-Chinese cultural relations was the establishment in 1988 of a branch of the *Goethe-Institut* in Beijing, the first of its kind in China. However, the Chinese side insisted that the *Goethe-Institut* should only be a branch and language institute (*Gedexueyuan fenyuan*) and should not be allowed to start any cultural activities, but only conduct language teaching (thus a German language training institution rather than a cultural institute). Beijing wanted to contain the influence of foreign culture and also to avoid other countries asking to establish similar cultural institutes, such as the *Alliance Française* and the British Council. A further particular feature was that the State Education Commission should have the right to approve all activities in advance, and that the Institute should have two directors, one German and one Chinese. Approval of this agreement seems to have slipped through in 1988 during the brief period of liberalization under Party secretary Zhao Ziyang, who was later deposed. The foundation of the institute was even more remarkable as the 1950 Central Committee resolution prohibiting all foreign cultural institutions had not yet been repealed.⁴⁰

Cultural relations suffered a brief setback in 1989. Members of the *Goethe-Institut* in Beijing and German students had to be evacuated, language classes were stopped and cultural events in planning were delayed. The German Foreign Ministry recommended reducing any cultural co-operation and even considered closing the *Goethe-Institut*.⁴¹ The German Bundestag adopted a resolution stating that only those cultural projects that “directly benefited the people” should be continued,⁴² and following the resolution the *Goethe-Institut* remained open, with its

40. See the excellent study by Christiane Büchner, *Die Arbeit des Goethe-Instituts in der Volksrepublik China*, MA Thesis, Free University Berlin, 1997, p. 35.

41. *China aktuell*, No. 6 (1989), pp. 423–27.

42. Resolution of the German Bundestag, 15 June 1989, in *Auswärtiges Amt (Foreign Ministry) (ed.), Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Dokumente von 1949 bis 1994* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1995), pp. 591–93.

director arguing that established and useful contacts might otherwise be interrupted. Despite attempts by the Beijing government to reduce contacts between students and foreigners and its instruction that students and professors had to stay away from the *Goethe-Institut*,⁴³ it appears that the educational institutions did not follow these instructions, and language courses were resumed as early as the autumn of 1989.

In 1993, a further breakthrough seemed to have been made when a new cultural exchange programme was signed: for the first time the Beijing government agreed that a foreign cultural institution could organize cultural activities on Chinese soil.⁴⁴ However, it turned out that the agreement actually made things more complicated: from then on, the *Goethe-Institut* had to ask for the approval of the Ministry of Culture for all its activities. This procedure turned out to be more time-consuming than before, and it became more difficult to organize any cultural activities at all. In addition, the *Goethe-Institut* also had to seek the approval of the German embassy, and relations between the embassy and the institute were sometimes not without friction. The situation was compounded by the fact that the then director of the *Goethe-Institut*, Kahn-Ackermann, had already enraged Chinese authorities: not only had he refused to co-operate with state-sponsored artists as demanded by the Chinese, but he had instead established intensive contacts with independent artists. He even met the dissident Wei Jingsheng, upon his release from gaol, in his residence.⁴⁵

No wonder, then, that in 1994 the Beijing government imposed a freeze on the activities of the *Goethe-Institut* in Beijing, still the only foreign cultural centre allowed on mainland soil.⁴⁶ In September of that year, the Ministry of Culture rejected the institute's entire autumn programme. Then, following pressure from the ministry, a photography workshop and an arts exhibition due to have been held in September had to be cancelled. An important exhibition on Max Ernst was also thrown out, when the guests were already on their way to Beijing and the invitations had been issued. The institute's losses from the cancellation of this exhibition amounted to 100,000 *renminbi*.⁴⁷

The annual programme for 1995 was accepted, but that for 1996 was again rejected. Cultural relations between both countries deteriorated further in 1996 because of what the Chinese side called a "provocation"

43. Report of the Subcommittee of the German Bundestag for foreign cultural policy 1993, p. 50, and material kindly provided by Hans-Joachim Engler, Berlin.

44. It seems that this concession was compensation for the aborted deal that saw Germany decide not to sell submarines to Taiwan. The DAAD was allowed to open an office in Beijing in the same year.

45. See Werner Meissner, *Hongkonger Notizen – ein politisches Tagebuch (Hong Kong Notebook – a Political Diary)* (Munich: edition global, 1996), pp 197 f.

46. Even the "brother country" of the German Democratic Republic had jealously tried to get an institute without success. In 1987, Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer (GDR) failed to get Chinese approval for an East German cultural centre. See Werner Meissner (ed.), *Die Deutsche Demokratische Republik und China, 1949–1990: Politik, Wirtschaft und Kultur. Dokumente (The German Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of China, 1949–1990. Politics, Economy and Culture. Documents)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 300 f.

47. FBIS-CHI-94–198, 13 October 1994, Hong Kong *Eastern Express*, 11 October 1994.

during the three-week “China heute” (“China today”) cultural festival in Munich. 180 Chinese artists were invited to represent “China today,” but in May 1996 the Ministry of Culture cancelled the festival and the artists were not allowed to leave China. The Chinese side complained that it had not been informed that dissidents and critics of the Chinese Government, including Harry Wu, Han Dongfang and Wei Jingsheng’s sister, would be participating in related seminars at the same time.⁴⁸ The *Goethe-Institut* came under fierce attack, as it was one of the main organizers of the festival, and the Chinese side even aired the possibility that the *Goethe-Institut* both in Beijing and in Hong Kong could be closed down.

Since 1978, nearly all German universities and institutes of higher learning seem to have established contacts with Chinese partners. The exact number of co-operation agreements can only be estimated. The only concrete figure comes from the federal state of North-Rhine Westphalia: 39 academic institutions reported intensive contacts with Chinese partners, usually based on co-operation agreements. The DAAD funded 675 students in 1998, 414 of which were newly enrolled. In addition, the DAAD provided 332 stipends, with a further 116 provided by other German foundations.⁴⁹ The DAAD also financed 25 lecturers in China, bringing the number of German lecturers in the PRC to 48.⁵⁰

Recent highlights of German-Chinese academic co-operation include the China-German University, which opened on 18 February 1998 in the Tongji University in downtown Shanghai and which is mainly funded by German companies such as Volkswagen, Siemens and Dresdner Bank. The university is a graduate school offering three areas of study: automation, economics and information technology.⁵¹ In October 2000, a Chinese-German Centre for the promotion of science was opened in Beijing by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, Germany’s leading research foundation) and the Chinese Science Foundation. The focus of the Centre is natural science and engineering, not the social sciences. It facilitates co-operation between Chinese and German scientists, but is also open to other European organizations. The German side contributed DM5 million to the establishment of the centre, including the building.⁵²

Other EU member states. The UK, France and Germany are the strongest partners of China in the EU, economically, and also culturally. Because foreign cultural policy is based on financial resources mainly provided by the governments, the number of sponsored cultural events in the foreign country and scholarships etc. frequently depends on the budget of the Foreign Ministry, and because foreign cultural policy is

48. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 12 June 1996.

49. Figures taken from *Kulturpolitischer Jahresbericht 1998. Land VR China, Hauptstadt Peking*. Foreign Ministry, Federal Republic of Germany.

50. Christina Neder, “Deutsch-Chinesische Wissenschafts- und Kulturbeziehungen,” *Asien*, Nr. 75 (April 2000), p. 140.

51. Xinhua 18 February 1998

52. *DFG Press-Info*, 16 October 2000. The funding was provided by the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft, a donor association for German science.

Table 1: **Student Numbers**

<i>Chinese students in the EU</i>		<i>EU students in China</i>
Austria	197	13
Belgium	531	20
Denmark	NA	NA
Finland	500	50
France	1200–2000	632
Germany	11000*	350
Greece	10–15	6
Ireland	300	NA
Italy	175	70
Netherlands	NA	NA
Luxembourg	15	5
Portugal	NA	12
Spain	100	37
Sweden	235	78
UK	10000	150
Total	24–25000	1414

* Approx. 6000 students officially enrolled in universities and 5000 others, e.g. scientists and students, enrolled in preparatory language courses. The number has also been confirmed by the Chinese embassy in Germany.

Source:

“EU China students exchange 1998–99,” figures provided by China Desk, European Commission.

believed to promote trade relations, the economically stronger countries are naturally in a better position. Among the other European countries especially Italy, Belgium, Sweden, Spain and the Netherlands developed intensive cultural relations with China. But even smaller countries like Denmark, Finland, Greece and Portugal have been successful in developing their cultural ties with China. The development of relations normally follow the same model as with the larger countries, and include co-operation agreements, academic exchanges, numerous exhibitions and arts performances.

As regards student exchange Germany seems to be the main destination for Chinese students who go to Europe, followed by the United Kingdom, France and, surprisingly, Belgium, Finland and Ireland. The overall number is 24–25,000 Chinese students, compared with approximately 1,400 students from EU countries who study in China.

Cultural Relations between China and the EU

While agreements with EU member states include cultural exchanges in the traditional meaning, agreements with the EU mainly focus on academic exchanges and human resource training. A number of co-operation projects in these fields of “enlarged culture” have been

launched between the EU and the PRC since 1984. Beginning in March of that year, the EEC Commission decided to allocate ECU 3.5 million (about US\$3 million) from its programme for assistance for non-associated countries to a management training project in the PRC. The project was the largest undertaken by the EEC and the PRC and aimed at expanding the Beijing Business Administration Centre through the launch of an MBA programme.⁵³ One year later, the programme was inaugurated and it educates Chinese managers, directors, engineers and college teachers for the degree of Master of Business Administration.⁵⁴

The general aims of this programme and the ones mentioned below are established on the basis of the EU's China policy as stated in the Commission's Communication "Building a comprehensive relationship with China," issued in 1998. They include support for China's ongoing social and economic reforms and its transition to an open society through the promotion of an EU-China dialogue on key issues in education and training. The targets of this strategy are academics, university students, young business people, civil servants, professionals and opinion leaders in the media and culture. Further, the co-operation in this field also focuses on regional programmes as a means to support further integration of China into the world.

The EU also considers co-operation in the field of human resources and people-to-people exchanges between the EU and China as the first pillar of economic co-operation, as defined in the Communication entitled "Towards a new Asia strategy" issued in 1994.⁵⁵ The strategy defines three aims:

- to improve mutual understanding;
- to define and facilitate a framework for co-operation; and
- to give an impulse to business-to-business contacts.

These aims are promoted by means of exchanges between individuals, academics and education institutions, and they have been detailed in different communications concerning China, most recently in "Building a comprehensive partnership with China."⁵⁶

Current EU programmes for China concentrate on four fields – higher education; business and management training; training of government officials; and basic and vocational education – and they include:⁵⁷

- The Junior Managers' Exchange Programme, which incorporates internships in Chinese enterprises and language training for junior European managers;

53. FBIS-0309/84-G1.

54. Xinhua, 3 March 1985.

55. Communication from the Commission: COM (1994) 314 Final 17 July 1994, "Toward a new Asia Strategy."

56. COM (1998) 181 Final 25 March 1998, "Building a Comprehensive Strategy with China."

57. This information is based on "EU-China Resources Co-operation and People-to-People Exchange, Background," note kindly provided by Ana Gonzalo, EU China Desk. Thanks also go to Professor D. Müller, Ruhr-University, Bochum, for providing additional material.

- The Higher Education Programme, involving networking and training activities between European Studies Centres in Europe and China;
- The vocational training programme, which provides training for technicians and builds up the capacity of training centres in China;
- The EU-China Academic Network, a forum for conferences and networking for EU-China specialists;
- The China Europe International Business School in Shanghai, which offers MBA programmes (regular and executive) and executive courses for Chinese managers;
- Basic Education in Gansu, which builds institutions for educating and training civil servants in education and secondary trainers in Gansu province.⁵⁸

In addition to these activities the following programmes have been launched in 2000:

- The China Europe International Business School, Phase II, which will continue the EU's support of the school's main activities, visiting professors, scholarships;
- The training of Chinese officials, designed to facilitate contacts between the China National School for Administration and parallel EU schools and national and European administrations;
- Scholarships 2000, a new comprehensive programme which will allow 2,000 Chinese students to obtain a diploma or to complete research in Europe.

In addition to above bilateral programmes, the PRC is allowed to participate in the following co-operation programmes on a regional basis under the umbrella of the Asia-Europe programme:

- EABIP: Europe Asia Business Internship Programme, which provides internships for young executives from Japan and China in European enterprises and internships for young European executives in Japanese and Chinese enterprises;
- Asia-Link, a new regional programme in preparation that will be launched in 2000 with the main components being mobility, information and EU-Asia Studies.⁵⁹

European studies on the Chinese mainland. One major aspect is the field of academic exchanges is the promotion of European studies by the EU. In May 1996, Brussels and Beijing signed a co-operation agreement on higher education that would establish six European Studies Centres in mainland China. Approximately US\$12.5 million was earmarked by the Commission of the European Union for this plan.⁶⁰ The Handbook of the

58. *Ibid.*

59. *Ibid.*

60. The EU-China Higher Education Co-operation Programme was agreed in May 1996 by the EU, Directorate General 1, and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation (MOFTEC) of the People's Republic of China.

Co-operation Programme (1998) states that the main aim is to “strengthen European Studies in China,” while the overall objective is to promote a greater interest in and understanding of the European Union in China.⁶¹

The Academic Committee of the EU selected six institutions in the People’s Republic of China that were already home to European Studies Centres for financial support in the programme: the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Fudan University, Nankai University, Renmin University, Sichuan University and Wuhan University. Five other institutions also receive financial support (East China Normal University, Guangdong Foreign Studies University, Jilin University, Beijing University and Shandong University). Furthermore, with the help of the European Commission, several European Documentation Centres have been established, seven in the People’s Republic, with two in Hong Kong, two in Beijing and others in Shanghai, Tianjin, Chengdu and Wuhan, as well as one in Macau.⁶² Taiwan (2) and Singapore (1) also possess European Studies Centres.

Beyond Diplomacy

The impressive number of agreements and exchange students, and the large amount of money spent following these agreements between China and EU member states or the EU commission, should not overshadow the fact that cultural relations consists of much more than cultural diplomacy. Looking back at the cultural relations in the past, it becomes obvious that the flow of ideas independent of any promotion by the state can exert an even greater influence on the development of the target country and its political culture than cultural diplomacy. And it is for this reason that many governments have always tried to squeeze out or to prohibit the spread of foreign ideas on their soil and among their subjects and thus to reduce cultural relations to mere cultural diplomacy.

Chinese cultural influence on European intellectuals was evident in the 17th and 18th centuries. For Voltaire, China was a model of political and philosophical organization, while Leibniz called China the Europe of the East. Notwithstanding these questionable judgements, Chinese culture

61. Handbook, *EU-China Higher Education Co-operation Programme EU China*, pp. 4–5.

62. European Studies Centres (ECS) exist in Beijing (Institute of European Studies, CASS, Renmin University, Beijing University, and Qinghua University), Tianjin (Nankai University), Shanghai (Fudan University, Shanghai Academy of Social Science), Wuhan University and Sichuan Union University. Shandong University has a Centre for International Studies, while East China Normal University and Guangdong University of Foreign Studies each have a Centre for International Studies with a focus on Europe. Yunnan University has an ECS, and Jilin University a Centre of EU Law. Singapore has a European Studies Programme at the National University of Singapore, while Taiwan has a Graduate Institute of European Studies at Tamkang University and an Institute of European and American Studies at Nankang, Academia Sinica. In Macau there is the Instituto de Estudos Europeus de Macau. In Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Baptist University launched a European Studies Programme in 1994–95.

played a highly influential role in Europe during these centuries.⁶³ That changed in the 19th century when Western culture began to present a challenge to Chinese civilization. After that, the cultural relations between the two regions became unbalanced. The main flow of ideas was from Europe to China, with rather fewer currents travelling in the opposite direction. Daoist ideas were well received by German philosophers and writers (for example Eucken, Heidegger, Hesse, Döblin and Brecht), but Chinese thought as a whole never challenged the essence of Western civilization and culture. On the other hand, during the first half of the 20th century in China, controversies raged over the differences between Chinese and European thought, which, many believed, showed the need to embrace Western culture. Even the partial adoption of Marxism in China, an ideology that had been rejected by the Europeans themselves, reflected the European influence after 1949. Marxism, Liberalism and European philosophy in general contributed to the emergence of modern China not so much as a result of foreign cultural policy, but because of the influx of foreign ideas.

Therefore, I will briefly consider European philosophy and its relevance in cultural relations between China and Europe since the 1980s. As already indicated, the period during the first Chinese republic was characterized by numerous controversies concerning all aspects of European culture, while the period between 1949 and 1978 saw a far-reaching dismissal of European culture. The party tried to eradicate Western influence with the exception of natural sciences and Marxism. However, since the beginning of the 1980s, the policy of the “Four Modernizations” triggered a new and completely unexpected move to adopt Western, mainly European, thought. Following the opening up of the country, Chinese intellectuals started translating numerous philosophical books and articles into Chinese and they published an even greater number of their own studies on Western, mainly European, philosophy.

Recent studies on the adoption of European thought in China provide statistical evidence of these developments: between 1984 and 1997 more than 12,000 books and articles have been published in the mainland on Western, primarily European, philosophy.⁶⁴ They include about 450 trans-

63. Among the numerous studies of Chinese-European relations see in particular Thomas C. Lee (ed.), *China and Europe. Images and Influences in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1991).

64. Werner Meissner, *Western Philosophy in China, 1993–97. A Bibliography* (Bern: Peter Lang Verlag, 2001); Werner Meissner, *Die Rezeption der westlichen Philosophie in der VR China, 1987–1992. Eine Bibliographie (Western Philosophy in the People's Republic of China, 1987–1992. A Bibliography)* (Münster and Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996); Werner Meissner, *Die Rezeption der westlichen Politikwissenschaft in der VR China, 1987–1992. Eine Bibliographie (Western Political Science in the People's Republic of China, 1987–1992. A Bibliography)* (Münster and Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996). There are three bibliographies which contain titles on German philosophy between 1970–88: Wolfgang Bauer, Peng Chang, Michael Lackner, *Das chinesische Deutschlandbild der Gegenwart: A. Deutsche Kultur, Politik und Wirtschaft im chinesischen Schrifttum, 1970–1984: Eine Bibliographie* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989); Wolfgang Bauer, Peng Chang and Stephan von Minden, *Das chinesische Deutschlandbild der Gegenwart. Eine Bibliographie: 1985–1986* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1991); Wolfgang Bauer, Stephan von Minden, *Das chinesische Deutschlandbild der Gegenwart: Eine Bibliographie, 1987–1988* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1992).

lations of books, approximately 800 translations of articles, more than 700 Chinese books and nearly 9,000 Chinese articles. The titles are further divided into 350 general introductions and textbooks on European/Western philosophy, nearly 700 studies of East-West comparative philosophy, 350 studies of aesthetics, more than 320 studies of ethics and around 450 studies of the philosophy of science and technology, to name only the largest groups. The figures look even more impressive if one bears in mind that the bibliographies include only a few titles on Western Marxism (i.e. Frankfurt School), but no titles on Marxism in general or Marxism-Leninism. The quantity of all these translations and Chinese studies represents a phenomenal feat by the Chinese intellectuals. Although German and French philosophy share the largest part of the translations, most of the translations seem to be based on the English version of the original, which, again, underlines the importance of the English language for the cultural exchange between China and Europe.

Because the closed-door policy lasted so long, researchers had only scant knowledge of European philosophy. Since the 1980s, numerous personalities and currents of European philosophy have been introduced. Hegel, Kant, Heidegger, Rousseau, Leibniz, Sartre, Derrida, Nietzsche, Habermas and Foucault seem to be the most prominent thinkers in China, followed by Gadamer, Descartes, Montesquieu, Russell, Kierkegaard, Locke and, of course, Popper. During the early 1980s, a "Sartre Fever" gripped Chinese intellectuals, followed by the "Freud Fever" which dominated the mid-1980s. The "Nietzsche Fever" and "Weber Fever" appeared around 1987, and a "Heidegger Fever" could be observed recently.

The adoption of European philosophy took and still takes place largely unnoticed and, in particular, beyond cultural diplomacy and foreign cultural policy. It sometimes suddenly surfaces in the ideological debates, in which Chinese intellectuals challenge official ideological positions by referring to core concepts in European philosophy. The debate on European concepts such as Kant's humanism and Marx's alienation between 1980 and 1984, and on Chinese and Western culture in 1986–89 not only pointed to a deep-rooted socio-psychological crisis of identity among Chinese intellectuals, but were also closely linked to internal Party struggles. They underlined the enormous relevance of the adoption of European thought in the shaping of the country's future political system.

In view of the large number of publications on European philosophy since 1978 it is no exaggeration to speak of the beginning of a new chapter in the intellectual history of China and its dealings with European thought and culture. The process of adoption was only briefly interrupted in 1989, but has gained momentum again since the early 1990s.

What consequences the influence of European philosophy will have in the long term for both Europe and China cannot be estimated. However, it indicates a basic change in the ways that Chinese intellectuals are thinking. There is reason to hope that the continuous study of European philosophy in China and of Chinese philosophy in Europe will lead to a

common understanding that basic modes of thinking can be found in both cultures, and that these can be used to establish the foundations for intellectual discourse between the two regions in the future.

"Internet Culture"

No discussion on cultural exchanges with China can be complete without considering the rising importance of the Internet. It may well be that our perception and programmes of culture and cultural exchange will soon become outdated as a result of the rapid changes in the field of communication. Chinese scholars speak of the "enlightenment in the information age," which started in the late 1980s in China with the arrival of a few national computer and IT newspapers, magazines and journals.⁶⁵ Among the books which have been translated into Chinese and which have spurred this development of IT on the mainland were Marshall McLuhan's *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man* (1992), Bill Gate's *The Road Ahead* (1996) and *Being Digital* (1996) by the founder of the Media Lab at MIT, Nicholas Negroponte. This last work is listed on Chinese web sites under the hottest topics such as "China can say no." Albeit not from Europe, these works seem to have been very influential in the mainland's drive towards the Internet and have triggered the publication of a series named "Internet Culture," the most important series so far, which reflects the adoption of IT in China from a philosophical point of view.⁶⁶

According to the philosophical outlook of the contributors, future cultural relations and exchanges will be mainly channelled through the Internet. And cultural foreign policy should take into consideration the advantages of this development and make full use of its potential.

As we know, recent exchange programmes – from classical art to modern film and university scholarships – have a very limited range of action and influence. A lack of resources (books, academic infrastructure) further limits the access to knowledge of European culture. Because of its immense population, China will never reach a comparative people-book quotient as exists in Europe. The Internet may offer the only way. With the number of users doubling every six months, approximately 200 million young people (and not just thousands of privileged students and teachers at university) will have access to nearly all the information provided on the Internet within just a few years. In a virtual "uninterrupted revolution,"⁶⁷ millions of Chinese may leap over the "book age" and step more or less directly into the "IT age."

One important aspect here is Internet-based learning. It may well be that some of the new Internet users will be interested in enrolling in

65. So Jian Zhao, *China's Enlightenment in the Information Age*, on <http://opinion.nucba.ac.ip/~zhao/dossier/thesis/review.htm>, p. 1.

66. The chief editor is Guo Liang, a scholar of Western philosophy at the Institute of Philosophy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing.

67. "Buduan geming," a term used by Mao Zedong in 1958 to describe the policy of the "Great Leap Forward."

on-line courses in European Studies that have been developed outside China. From the beginning, European Studies programmes for China should be developed as Internet-based on-line programmes. This would immediately multiply the number of students, a result that the existing and planned European Studies programmes of the EU will never be able to achieve, no matter how many European Studies Centres are established on the mainland in the future.

Conclusion

Besides the general perspective of the subliminal developments in the field of philosophy, day-to-day cultural diplomacy remains difficult, with many setbacks and restrictions. While all European countries have now established cultural relations with China, cultural activities are still very controlled and strongly dependent on domestic policy. The main emphasis is on co-operation in the field of human resources training. These relations are very different from art exhibitions, literature, music and dance presentations and the like and do not fall into the category of traditional culture, but they are still part of the enlarged culture mentioned previously. And they can also exert a long-lasting influence not only on cultural relations but also on economic and political relations.

To sum up the Beijing government's foreign cultural policy towards European countries since 1978, I would highlight the following aspects.

First, since the 1980s, Beijing has shown a rising interest in cultural relations with Europe. The number of agreements, events and exchange programmes has risen significantly since the 1990s and these cover all areas: from traditional culture to academic exchange, to modern art and even the promotion of popular astronomy and palaeontology.

Secondly, at the same time, Western culture in China is still regarded as a potential danger for the one-party dictatorship. The policy implemented to cope with this threat includes containment of foreign cultural activities in China; government control of all foreign cultural activities; censorship of any cultural influence that may endanger the rule of the Party ("bourgeois liberal arts" and "thoughts") via co-operation, the media, etc.; and the sudden cancellation of activities already agreed between the governments if they are deemed politically unsuitable (in China as well as abroad).

In contrast, the recent development of Chinese contemporary art scene is characterized by the mushrooming of avant-garde theatre troupes and art galleries in all large cities of the country, and a rising number of modern Chinese artists tour European countries every month.⁶⁸ The Party seems to lose its grip on the art scene or is only able to control it selectively.

A third aspect to highlight is that Chinese foreign cultural policy aims at presenting China as a great and unified nation by: increasing cultural

68. Compare the regular reports on contemporary art in China and Chinese cultural activities in Europe in www.chinese-art.com.

propaganda that highlights the value of China's national heritage (historic arts exhibitions, traditional opera, etc.); and sending minority ensembles (namely Tibetan) abroad to demonstrate the unity of the country and to counter critics of its policy on minorities.

Finally, cultural exchange in the traditional meaning still plays a marginal role. The main emphasis of China's foreign cultural policy is on the development of human resources and technology transfer, in particular the training of Chinese scientists abroad. Foreign cultural policy mainly aims at mobilizing foreign resources for human resources training; academic co-operation agreements, including academic exchanges; student exchanges and visiting scholar programmes; and foreign human resources training institutes in China under joint control.

On the other side, the cultural policy of the EU and the member states towards China is still weakened by national rivalries and competition. A unified cultural policy of the EU member states towards China does not exist, but is highly desirable. Whether there is a common understanding among the member states where they can agree to merge, at least partly, their foreign cultural policies should be discussed. It is the member states that will have to make the main contribution. They will also be the main bearers of European cultural policy in the future.

I conclude by outlining some strategic goals for a cultural policy towards China.

Co-operation between member states should be sought wherever possible and wherever an overarching European interest can be identified. This may result in joint exhibitions (paintings from various European museums), which can provide an insight into *European* art, and not just French, German, English, Italian or Portuguese art, etc.; joint book fairs; joint European sport exchanges (Europe-China games), and so on. It may well be that this kind of cultural diplomacy will not only be cheaper but will also have a synergetic influence on the effect on China as well as on the promotion of a European identity and a European China policy at home.

The second element is a diversified diplomacy in view of the general changes in international relations. At the moment, the main partner is still the central government in Beijing. But more attention must be paid to provincial and local governments. Even megacities have already developed a certain type of foreign policy. Recently, China's entry into the world economy and the increasing autonomy of the provinces in foreign trade and investment have made these subnational actors important players in many kinds of external social, cultural and economic activities.⁶⁹ The rising activism of local governments in foreign affairs is supported by the fact that China's provinces conduct their external relations through special organizations and mechanisms. The Provincial

69. "Foreign Affairs Capabilities of China's Provinces," paper presented by Peter Cheung and James Tang (University of Hong Kong) at the conference "Centre-Periphery Relations in China: Integration, Disintegration or Reshaping of an Empire?" The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 24–25 March 2000.

Foreign Affairs Office (FAO) is the key organ for conducting provincial foreign affairs.⁷⁰ In view of the rising autonomy of the Chinese provinces and regions, the EU member states should diversify their cultural policy and contacts in China as much as possible.⁷¹

Thirdly, besides EABIP, Scholarship 2000 and Asia-link, the European Studies programmes are of crucial importance for fostering a better understanding of Europe in China. And strong emphasis should be placed here on the development of Internet-based bilingual programmes (English/Chinese), in order to multiply the number of users and to make knowledge about Europe as easily and broadly accessible as possible.

Finally, as early as the 1970s, the Council of Europe envisaged a European Cultural Institute,⁷² which unfortunately never came into being. The establishment of such an institute for China is overdue. The EU already has political and economic representations overseas. It is even going to set up joint military forces for rapid deployment. In fact, compared with every other state, it is already a cultural superpower. However, it has not so far been able to set up an institution to present the image of a "United Europe" and its culture. With the exception of European film festivals, it still presents its culture in national fragments. The ultimate goal should be the establishment of a European Cultural Institute with a language teaching programme in the main European languages, a basic library stock, and different cultural offerings to which the member states contribute their part. Such an institute could be divided into different departments – French studies, German studies, Italian studies, British studies, and so on – while its premises could be shared by different European cultural institutions. Whether such a European Institute will be able to open a branch in China one day remains to be seen. Given the experience that the Chinese leadership does not seem very interested in European culture because of its allegedly subversive character, the chances of such an institute are rather slim at the moment. As a transitional solution, one could imagine an EU institute in China that serves mainly to co-ordinate not cultural activities, but the development of human resources.

70. These offices are quite large, while directors of the FAOs are frequently ex-diplomats: the Shanghai FAO, excluding non-profit units under its control, is already staffed by 238 people, Guangdong is staffed by 104, *ibid.* p. 9.

71. "The Beijing government may find it difficult to maintain a tight rein on the provinces over an increasingly complex foreign policy agenda in a world where forces of globalization have undermined the role of traditional diplomacy." *Ibid.* p. 13.

72. The Council commissioned the *Goethe-Institut* to explore the possibility of closer co-operation between the European cultural institutes. The result was the publication by Manfred Triesch and Andreas Deutschmann: "*Jeder für sich oder gemeinsam?*": *Möglichkeiten und Grenzen der Kooperation europäischer Kulturinstitute* (*Everyone for himself or together?: possibilities and limits of co-operation between European cultural institutes*), Report of the *Goethe-Institut*, commissioned by the European Council, *Materialien zum Internationalen Kulturaustausch*, 22 (Stuttgart: Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen, 1983).