Chapter 5
Nation-States, Educational Traditions and the WCU Project

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with what is common and global in higher education and moves to inquire into, and hypothesize about, that which is different. It is a preliminary study designed to chart a future process of inquiry and research that is as much historical as sociological in character. This chapter acknowledges that there is a worldwide movement towards the 'World Class University' (Liu et al. 2011) or 'Global Research University' (Ma 2008; Marginson 2008) and begins to explore divergences in the pathways to the WCU/GRU. It is interested in what shapes those global divergences, especially the role of the nation-state and of the national traditions in educational culture that are often interpreted by states.

This is a 'glonacal' study (Marginson and Rhoades 2002) that rests on the assumption that each of the global, national and local dimensions of higher education are potent and each can be the leading or dominant dimension at differing moments. Using situated case studies (Deem 2001) of national systems and individual universities to investigate the varying relations, conjunctions and overlaps between these three dimensions—while also paying due regard to the pan-national regional dimension, especially in Europe, Latin America and East Asia—helps us to understand the dynamics of the higher education sector.

This chapter rests also on a second assumption. Although all three dimensions continue to matter and the national dimension is the main source of the resourcing of higher education, in recent years, the global dimension has become qualitatively more important than before in this sector (Marginson 2010; King et al. 2011). We can date the growing role of global referencing, strategy and practices to the rise of

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synchronous global communications after 1990 (Castells 2000), which 'thickened' the common relational space. However, the crucial date in higher education is 2003, which saw the publication of the first Shanghai Jiao Tong world university ranking (SJTUGSE 2011). This installed a single template or model of the ideal research university, one that has become common to almost every country. Here the normative logic of globalization is simple. Everyone wants to do well in the world top 500 table (Hazelkorn 2008). To do well, an institution must conform to, and perform well within, the template of the ranking concerned. In the case of the Jiao Tong, it rewards Nobel Prizes, discipline medals and science publication and citation in the leading English language journals in each field of research. Institutions also gain ground by collaborating within each other to circulate their research and lift measured performance and by imitating each other's strengths. The outcome has been not just a worldwide field of comparison that bites deeply into national policy and local practices but a global system of networked and increasingly convergent research universities. Nevertheless, they and their settings remain variant in intriguing ways, which are the subject of this chapter.

The first part of this chapter identifies the elements that comprise the common global template (see also Salimi 2009) and briefly suggests the national and local factors that shape success in global comparison and competition. The second part suggests there are divergent pathways to that success, as noted, and begins the process of identifying and explaining these different pathways. There is also a comparison of the approaches of English-speaking nations and the approaches of Confucian heritage countries in East Asia and Singapore (Marginson 2011). The third section focuses on what is seen as the main driver of this global differentiation of pathways—variations in the character of the nation-state and thus also of state/higher education relations. Reasons for the centrality of the state, and for the neglect of comparative state analysis in higher education studies, are canvassed. The final section begins to identify lines of investigation into the triad of nation/culture/education, in the framework of comparative and global higher education.

Much of what follows is raw theorizing that has moved ahead of systematic empirical investigation. The propositions and conclusions in this chapter should be seen as the starting point of hypotheses for investigation. Unencumbered by much evidence, or even a comprehensive literature review, this chapter is short relative to its ambition and range. Nonetheless, it reflects almost a decade of empirical observation and reading in the area, especially 17 case studies of the global strategies of research universities located in East Asia and the Pacific. The author is confident about the judgments herein (at least until proven otherwise).

5.2 What Is a World-Class University (WCU)?

The term 'world-class university' is an aspirational concept. In itself, the WCU is not fixed in character. Like any assertion of 'quality' or 'excellence' or 'beautiful'

or 'best', it is relative and norm referenced. Like all norms, what constitutes a 'world-class university' is in the eye of the beholder. If there are six billion people, there are six billion possible definitions of 'world class'. The very fact of differing rankings shows there is more than one possible definition of the WCU.

However, the dominant role played by comparative research performance measures, and especially the Shanghai Jiao Tong ranking, shows that we can identify a particular concept of WCU that is hegemonic at this time. Here research-related capacities and activities are central but not the whole WCU. Arguably, the objective form that gives substance to the notion of the WCU is the Global Research University or GRU (Ma 2008; Marginson 2008). The GRU has defined characteristics that can be empirically tested and verified. Because it is part of a global system of networked and parallel institutions, its common *global systemic* characteristics, those aspects of its profile that enable comparison and lend themselves to shared activity, are apparent across nations. (We will get to the differences later.) The common features of the GRU include:

- Research capacity sufficient to enable significant output in the sciences ('significant' is open to definition)
- A comprehensive set of academic disciplines and professional training
- Resources sufficient to support globally recognized research and teaching
- Being nested locally and nationally, combined with status and recognition at global level
- Global connectivity through communications, collaboration patterns and people mobility
- Connections to business and industry (extensivity and intensity varies)
- A degree of institutional autonomy ('degree' to be defined) combined with an institutional executive exercising strategic leadership (though there is a tiny handful of exceptions to the requirement about executive supervision, such as Cambridge and Oxford, UK, and also Tokyo)
- A degree of academic freedom in research and scholarship ('degree' to be defined)

Some might want to add to this list the contributions of WC GRUs to the global public good and to the ethical formation of graduates as not just national citizens but globally aware persons. It must be said that at this stage, neither of these qualities is a central part of the common understanding of the WC GRU in many different national systems, which tend to focus more on competitive aspects, despite broad support for collaborative research on global problems.

5.3 What Are the Conditions and Drivers of a WC GRU?

What are the conditions and drivers of a WC GRU? There are economic, political and educational-cultural conditions to meet. The objective characteristics of the WC GRU as listed above require sustained investment and competent performance. The

lead time between investment and outcome is long. It takes more than 5 years before the financing of new capacity leads to high levels of research activity, a further delay before this activity turns into published outputs, and up to another decade before outputs translate into stellar citation performance.

Economically, the scale and stability of resources are both important. There must be growth and wealth sufficient to finance the WC GRU on a continuing basis from a combination of public and private sources. It is very difficult for a nation with a per capita income of less than, say, $10,000 USD per annum to sustain a world top 200 university. (China is an exception. Its per capita income is lower than $8000 and it has a university in the Shanghai Jiao Tong University top 200, Tsinghua. In China, regional economies are notably stratified. The nation sustains both advanced concentrations of urban wealth and intensive research and regions at much lower economic levels.) Within institutions, there must be a mix of human resources and physical capacity sufficient to support research, especially, and advanced teaching. There must be locally and globally competent teaching, communications and institutional leadership and organization, including the capacity to manage the national policy settings.

Nations and universities are stronger if they can call on an accumulation of past achievements, especially in producing and using knowledge, consistent with the WC GRU model. It is easier to build on past capacity than to create a WC GRU from nothing, providing that existing institutions can modernize and globalize. Existing leaders in the USA and UK have a considerable first mover advantage.

Politically, it is essential to maintain a mix of nation-state policies, programs and regulations, including investments, that is favourable to—or at least not unfavourable to—the evolution of the GRU. The more enabling and driving is state policy, the more likely it is that WC GRUs can be created. It is important here that the state does not overplay its hand because WC GRUs must have enough autonomy to make good academic decisions, especially about research.

Culturally, government, civil society and industry must sustain an embedded tradition of respect for science, research and scholarship and tolerate the claims of research universities to social status. More specific educational-cultural conditions must also be met. Within the institution, and perhaps the nation-state, there must be desires for institutional prestige and eminence in the form of the WC GRU, extending beyond the university president's office to be shared by academic leaders. To be globally effective, institutions must also have the desire and capacity to connect effectively across borders, work in global English and open themselves to global flows of ideas, knowledge and people.

5.4 Different Pathways to the WC GRU

In worldwide higher education, the most credible single national model of the research university is an idealized version of the comprehensive American doctoral institution. There is no doubt that the American high science university and its

British cousin have been the main influence on the templates used for ranking purposes. Nevertheless, other inherited traditions are also powerful and have shaped distinctive institutional forms and cultures. The more we look at the dynamics of the evolution of WC GRUs, the more we can identify varied paths to the same globally defined goal. National systems and institutions have varying starting points and employ divergent emphases and methods to create WC GRUs.

Without moving now to a full typology, we can tentatively identify certain regional approaches (note that there is variation within some of these models):

1. United States. The USA has a long modern tradition of mass higher education and the research university. The state is less directive than in other traditions, but the growth of higher education has been supported by the partial role of federal government via research funding, the legal framing of intellectual property and the loans-shaped student market. There is also a fecund business/research interface with a strong biomedical industry. A key element is the self-sustaining civil order that grounds the universities locally and in states and cities, while also fostering the Ivy League private sector which is the premier allocator of status through higher education. The USA sector is so strong that its universities can develop often highly effective global activity at their margin without changing their character.
2. The Westminster systems in the UK, Australia, and New Zealand. There are obvious resemblances to the United States, but the dynamics are different, particularly state/civil society/university relations. The Westminster systems came later to mass higher education and are subject to closer central state supervision. These systems are located in finance-sector dominated polities with Treasury-driven government. Civil society is a lesser factor than in the USA. The Westminster systems are organized using a market equity model, with a strong element of interinstitutional competition between formally similar universities. Diversity is not institutionalized via classification as in the USA and China. The national systems of the UK, Australia and New Zealand also run large commercial export sectors.
3. European systems located in polities premised on the social market or social democracy. On the whole, the role of the state is more obvious than in the English-speaking countries—in most European nations, professors are employed, or were previously employed, as state public servants. States, more than internal market competition, are the primary drivers of institutional improvement. States have played the key role in investments designed to create WC GRUs, for example, in Germany and France. However, European higher education is scarcely homogenous, despite a partial convergence in research activities and degree structures via Bologna concords. Some, like Italy, sustain large scale universities with a comprehensive public function but characterized by internal incoherence and fragmentation. Some, like Sweden, give primacy to citizenship equity in higher education and maintaining strong research universities. Some, like Switzerland, veer closer to the Westminster model. Others combine the last two approaches, for example, Germany. Within Europe, there are several roads

to the WC GRU. That particular set of variations will not be explored further in this chapter.

4. The Confucian heritage systems in East Asia and Singapore. These systems exhibit great dynamism in GRU development—Japan in the 1960s and 1970s and Singapore, Korea, Taiwan China, Hong Kong SAR and China in the last 15 years. In these systems, enrolments tend to universal levels, there is strong household investment in schooling, extra tutoring and higher education that is grounded in Confucian values, and the nation-state closely motivates and supervises higher education and research—though as in Europe, many research universities have achieved greater institutional autonomy than before. The state also drives accelerated investments in university research and scholarships for bright students. More is said about Confucian heritage systems in the next section.
5. In the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, higher education has emerged as quickly, but WC GRU status is not as strongly grounded in local cities and the national economy. Much of the WC GRU development consists of aristocrat-led education theme parks sustained by state oil revenues. This is a very different model, but the nation-state is again a central player.

There are other models that could be discussed, such as the large scale public universities in Latin America such as the national university of Mexico (UNAM) and the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina (UBA), originating in a bonapartist model from France and Italy, and the newer private universities in countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Chile and Japan, though perhaps only the leading Japanese institutions at Keio and Waseda have secure WC GRU status.

5.5 Comparison of English-Speaking Systems and Confucian Heritage Systems

For example, let us compare the established English language systems with the model of the Confucian heritage systems that have now sprung into prominence (Marginson 2011). The distinctive features of the Confucian model are fourfold. First and most important, they are framed, supervised and in many respects powered by a comprehensive and active nation-state. The state exercises a strong direct influence in the leading universities, typically appointing university presidents and often also leading professors, and though there are moves towards greater university autonomy and a managerial executive, it is within the framework of a continued close understanding between government and institution. Second, Confucian systems rest on a 2,000-year-old bedrock of Confucian valuation of self-cultivation via education. This constitutes both an act of familial piety and the way to social preferment. Third, families are locked into educational goals and private investment in educational costs such as private tutoring by one-chance examination systems, inherited from the Confucian tradition, that are the gateway

to the most prestige schools and universities in steeply hierarchical systems of institutions. Finally, modern Confucian higher education is characterized by rapidly growing investment in research in science and technology and in scholarships for the brightest students in the leading institutions, which are largely financed by the state.

The state has been at the root of the dynamic economic growth in the Confucian zone where nations do not follow the neo-liberal prescription of letting the market shape the economic trajectory (in reality, Anglo-American countries do not follow that neo-liberal prescription either, but they allow finance rather than state-sponsored industry to call the shots). In higher education as in other sectors, the comprehensive state in the Confucian tradition that dates back to the Ch'in and Han in China (227 BCE to 220 CE) is a common feature of East Asia and Singapore regardless of the political system, whether capitalist or socialist and whether multi-party or one-party. In all these systems, the state encompasses part of the territory of civil society in the liberal West. The role of government is ubiquitous and taken for granted. It is largely unquestioned as the interpreter of the national character, which is continually being constructed by the nation-state in Japan, China and Singapore. There is often debate inside the state institutions—including universities—but dissent is not translated into a challenge to state authority from outside the state except in extreme moments when the objective is wholesale replacement of the regime. There is a tradition of underlying popular scepticism about government but symbolic antigovernment rhetoric in public places, which is an ongoing ritual in the Western countries, especially in the United States, is largely missing in the Confucian zone.

This is not to say that Confucian nations are more conforming than Western or that Western nations are naturally less patriotic. The USA is soaked in national pride, and there is profound voluntary Western conformity to legal, social and economic rules, though often also a broader space for criticism and 'off-the-wall' public aesthetics. Further, there is another long tradition in the Confucian world, that of open statements of the good by learned scholars. Thus, the scholar critic can find a somewhat beleaguered public place, and even whole institutions can gain a certain freedom. In China, Peking University (Beida) seems to have inherited this role within higher education. Beida has been in the forefront of most political movements in the nation since its foundation. The Communist Party was launched there in 1921. The Cultural Revolution began there in 1966. The first 'rightist' to be denounced was the Beida president, but tellingly, he survived the Cultural Revolution in his post. Likewise, the Tiananmen Square movement in 1989 was launched at Beida. Perhaps the WC GRU in China is sometimes less wholly state-driven than is generally assumed; perhaps there is debate within the state.

The English-speaking WC GRUs have emerged in societies with the Western liberal tradition of a liberal state and division of labour between different parts of the state. There is a larger scope for autonomous economic markets and civil societies, and state/market and state/society tensions have long been inherent. State policy, regulation and funding nevertheless frames higher education—more directly and comprehensively in the UK than the USA, though the federal role in research is decisive in the USA. At the same time, institutional autonomy and codified

academic freedom are built into the model, and the universities also connect to civil society. In the case of the United States, where the role of the state is also federal with the states sovereign in some areas, they often appear more as civil institutions than as state institutions. (Australia has a formally federal structure, but the states are not as sovereign as in the United States. In higher education, the federal government runs policy and funding.) The tradition of popular commitment to education is not as deep or universal as in the Confucian heritage societies. The modern imaginary of equal opportunity in and through higher education has been a powerful social force in the English-speaking systems, and mass education in these countries has helped to shape its evolution everywhere else. However, in contrast with the Confucian world, the aspiration for education is less likely to be shared by the poorest families, and state funding of tuition is more essential to secure growing participation. Examination and selection systems are more complex than in the Confucian world, with plural routes.

The institutional hierarchy is steep in the United States model, but while all systems are hierarchical and not all universities are WC GRUs, there is a larger element of commonality of mission in the case of the UK, Australia and New Zealand institutions, which sustain a binary between nominally research institutions and vocational institutions, not a multilevel classification. In research, the English-speaking systems, like the Confucian systems, depend on state funding, but state funding and research outputs have never increased with the rapidity of the Confucian systems during their phase of accelerated development, which is still underway in most of East Asia and Singapore. This may be because when the English-speaking systems were building mass levels of participation, government funded a higher proportion of tuition than in the Confucian world, leaving less state resources for building research capacity.

Table 5.1 contrasts the Confucian heritage model with the trajectory of the United States and the Westminster model in UK, Australia and New Zealand. Note that there are important variations and distinctions among the Confucian heritage systems. Nevertheless, they share similar nation-state roles and similar popular educational cultures. For more discussion of the differences, see Marginson (2011).

How do the different pathways translate into a layer of WC GRUs at the top of each system? The American system uses market ideology and federal research funding, and a status hierarchy defined by a classification system and thus protected from destabilizing politicization, to sustain high advancing quality in the leading WC GRUs. The Confucian heritage countries combine examination-mediated competition in the Confucian hierarchy with selective state investment in infrastructure, research and scholarships. This has proven just as successful in demarcating a layer of top universities. In both these kinds of system, there is less tension between merit and status than in the Westminster countries. In the Confucian systems, Confucian values lock in student effort, which is therefore less dependent on individual calculations of the probability of success than the human capital metaphor suggests. In the USA, the popular culture historically saw the USA as the engine of such broad ranging opportunities that there was scope for all to succeed and become rich (even though this was self-evidently impossible),

Table 5.1 Comparison of Confucian heritage and English language country systems

	Confucian heritage systems	United States' system	Westminster systems (UK, Australia, NZ)
Character of nation-state	Comprehensive. Politics commands economy and civil society. State often draws best and brightest	Limited, division of powers, separate from civil society and economy. Federal	Limited, division of powers, separate from civil society and economy. Unitary
National culture in education	Universal and venerable Confucian heritage of family commitment to education: valued in itself and also as instrumental means to social standing	Twentieth century meritocratic ideology of education as common opening to wealth and status, within advancing frontier and prosperity	Post 1945 ideology of state guaranteed equal opportunity through education as path to wealth and status, open to all in society
State role in higher education	State supervises, shapes, drives and selectively funds institutions. Over time part withdrawal from directional role	State regulation fosters hierarchical market via student loans, research grants. Then steps back. Autonomous presidents	State regulation, policy and funding supervises competitive market, shapes certain activities. Autonomous presidents
Financing of higher education	State financing of infrastructure, part of tuition (especially early in model), scholarships, aid. Household tuition and private tutoring, even many poor families	State financing of some infrastructure, tuition subsidies, student loans. Households vary from high tuition to low, poor families more state dependent or drop out	State once financed infrastructure but less now. Tuition loans, some maintenance. Growing household investment but less than other models. Austerity
Hierarchy and social selection	Traditional examination, 'one-chance' universal competition/selection into unquestioned prestige hierarchy of institutions. WC GRUs provide fast track for life	Race to enter prestige institutions mediated by SAAT scores. Some plurality of routes and second chances, mainly public sector. WC GRUs provide fast track for life	Competition into university hierarchy mediated by end school selection with some plurality and second chances. WC GRUs provide strong start
Dynamics of research	Part household funding of tuition plus ideology of WCU, with structure of hierarchy, sustain rapid investment in research at scale. Applied emphasis that reduces over time	Research heavily funded by federal government unburdened by direct tuition. Some industry and civic/philanthropic money. Basic science plus commercial IP	Research stringently funded by government which finances tuition. Less philanthropy and civic money than USA. Basic science, applied growth, IP wannabee
Fostering of World Class Global Research Universities (WC GRUs)	Part of tradition, the universal target of family aspirations, fostered by funding and regulation. Rapid building over time is not much questioned	Entrenched hierarchy of Ivy League and flagship state universities, via research grants, tuition hikes, philanthropy. Source of global pride	Ambivalence about status of top institutions in national temperament and government policy. Private and public funding hit ceilings

and it was and is widely believed that high wealth based on market-earned success is wholly admirable. It might be that this vision is now faltering, as the current generation of Americans is mostly worse off than its predecessors, and there are signs of proletarianization in parts of the middle class amid global competition and faltering US economic management (Brown et al. 2011).

In contrast, the Westminster countries have struggled to centre adequate resources in a layer of WC GRUs. High-status leading universities cut across the post-1945 idea of equality of opportunity, post-1980s neo-liberal ideology of market equity and the policy goal of using lesser status institutions to advance participation. Without the potential for enrichment that has characterized the USA, equal opportunity to compete does not deliver enough benefits to enough families. Over time, social inequality in and through education has become more apparent, though this has not made educational status any more acceptable, for it is part of the social mechanisms whereby inequality is reproduced, an inequality acceptable in the East and the USA but unacceptable in the UK or Australia. However, unlike Australia and New Zealand, the UK is able to deploy the inherited status, old imperial role and accumulated resources of its top universities, especially Oxford and Cambridge that are the British equivalent of Harvard, Tokyo, Peking University and Tsinghua. Even so, Oxford and Cambridge struggle to sustain their material pulling power in the global market for talent. Stellar intellectual cultures lacking money eventually wind down.

5.6 The Role and Nature of the Nation-State

Table 5.1 suggests that the main elements of difference between the cases are (1) the character and role of the nation-state in higher education and (2) the national culture that shapes popular commitment to and investment in higher education. The state must work with and not against this national culture, while also interpreting tradition and often leading its further development. These two conditions, state and culture, are more foundational than higher education itself. We can note that in each of the three cases, the two conditions are synchronized. The state in Confucian heritage societies draws on Confucian tradition to part finance the roll out of participation at advancing levels of quality of provision. The state in the English-speaking nations is locked into the politics of response to growing social demand for educational opportunities while working at the margins to universalize social inclusion in the system.

The role of the state underpins both higher education development and the organization of student learning at school level, in East Asia and Singapore. It shows itself in state-financed investment in university infrastructure, research, student aid and scholarships and selective funding of programs to bring foreign-trained talent back to the country. The state appears to be solidly behind the leading universities as they go global, and it expects them to exhibit an improving world-class performance over time. It appoints the university president and supervises the president on an

ongoing basis via the joint system of leadership president and party secretary in China, it supports the selection of the president by a nominal autonomous university council in Singapore but expects the universities to harmonize with the state agenda, and there are other variations in between. The state is also the obvious driver in the accelerated WC GRU investment programs in higher education in Germany, France and some other European countries and in the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia.

As the table suggests, in the English-speaking countries with their liberal ideology and practice of the limited state and with the endemic state/university tensions that are fostered by this ideology, and despite increasing withdrawal of the state from the funding of tuition, the state maintains a shaping power in higher education. Peter Scott's work (1998) emphasizes the central role of the state in modern higher education systems, in which mass higher education and innovation systems are harnessed to nation-building agendas. Even in the outlying case of the United States, where universities appear as more part of civil society than the state sector that contains them in most countries, higher education is historically a product of government and expected to serve national purposes as it does elsewhere. It is a mark of the synchrony between state, university and civil society in the USA that patriotic university boards and presidents voluntarily pursue the national interest.

But is it the same role of the state in each case? Is it the same kind of nation-state? Is it the same kind of relationship between formal education, civil society, economic markets and the household? No it is not, and the differences are important.

In sum, identification of distinctions between system type, and the description of factors that appear to represent the differences, suggests the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1. That in comparing national higher education systems, differences between systems—and especially differences between types of higher education system such as those of Confucian heritage and the United States—can be explained in terms of variations in the nature, role and activity of the *nation-state*. This includes the conjunction between national cultures and state policies.

In fact, differences in nation-states, their traditions, resources, strategies and so on, might even help us to explain differences in the effectiveness of systems and individual universities on the pathway to the WC GRU.

Before going on to look at a possible research agenda for investigating this hypothesis, this chapter will remark briefly on why the role and nature of the nation-state has been somewhat neglected in comparative higher education.

5.7 Why Is the State Neglected in Higher Education?

Peter Scott's point that modern higher education is a function of nation-building programs is broadly understood. The field of higher education studies is often closely tied to state-funded research and national policy agendas. It is obvious the WC GRU project is driven by the global competition state around the world as well

as by institutional ambition. So the idea that national system differences are closely affected by the differing histories and trajectories of the nation-state is unsurprising.

Yet, we do not talk about those differences much and we do not investigate them comparatively and, especially, historically. We compare policies. But we rarely place those policies in their specific context, preferring instead to abstract comparative policy analysis by comparing policies in what is apparently a neutral analytical vacuum (while de facto, introducing our own specific national policy culture as the implicit frame of reference). We rarely compare states themselves, their traditions and institutions, their ways of working and their political and social cultures, and draw the connection between that analysis and the variations in higher education.

Why is the question of the state neglected in our field? A useful way into this question is a set of readings edited by Evans et al. (1985) and published by Harvard University Press as *Bringing the state back in*. Neglect of the state is a function of the domination of American social science. The focus on the state is more a European perspective than an Anglo liberal perspective. Liberal English-speaking societies have downplayed the role of the state in comparative analysis of modernization. In many respects, the United States is the outlying case in state/society relations—as is the case in higher education—yet the sheer weight of American ideas in a global knowledge system in which the USA has four out of every five leading social science schools (SJTUGSE 2011) means that US perspectives tend to set the framework of thinking. In the 1950s and 1960s, American structural-functionalism and pluralism pushed away consideration of the state. This reflected the American liberal political culture, which emphasized society-driven explanations for states and for higher education also. Where higher education was seen in political terms, it was seen as an arena for contestation between plural social groups. Interestingly, this coincided with the orthodox Marxist emphasis on another set of socioeconomic explanations for states and for higher education, based in classes, capital accumulation and class struggle as the motor of history. There is some truth but not the whole truth in both kinds of explanation. What is missing is the autonomous drive and capacity of states. States are never wholly autonomous from class forces and social groups and from economic markets, but a wide variety of arrangements (more or less autonomy) are possible.

The case of the United States continues to hypnotize much of the analysis in higher education studies. It is perhaps not surprising given the USA has 17 of the top 20 research universities, 53 of the top 100 universities (SJTUGSE 2011), and more than half of the top 1% most cited scientific papers (NSB 2011). For example, it is often argued as a matter of course that a US-style independent research culture is essential for creativity, not just because states that depart from merit make bad decisions about research selection, which is obvious—moments of expert freedom are essential to creative work—but because governed research contradicts what is believed to be the American case. Yet, the research culture in the USA reflects a developed civil society along American lines, within the distinctive US political culture, conditions that cannot be replicated anywhere else, and in many respects, the practice of American research is rather different to what the ideology suggests.

Skopcol (1985) notes that it has been a longstanding habit in the USA to attribute even public programs and institutions such as research universities to the civil society or the market, to talk up contestation in the civil order, and downplay the role of the state bureaucracy. In the USA, the Constitution is sovereign, not the executive. The Constitution did not establish a state machine as such to provide for the public welfare. The public welfare is seen as the aggregate of private benefits and transactions. Politics is defined not as contestation over administrative programs, as in many European nations and the Westminster countries, but as contestation over bills in Congress. In effect, politics is seen as contestation over legislation that defines the meaning of the Constitution, hence the sacred character of freedom of transaction and the need to define higher education as a market—even though as in other polities, higher education is shaped by nation-state regulation and resources. Most American research is fed by directed HSF and NIH funding. The research culture is not so independent after all, nor is the US freedom to criticize and dissent necessarily manifest as nonconformity. The jury is still out on how necessary is an American style research culture in all fields to being a WC GRU and how open creativity can be configured in non-American cultures.

5.8 Openings for Investigation

States are more than the identifiable machinery of 'government' and also more than 'politics', party-centred, electoral or internal to the state. By 'state' is meant the full set of administrative, bureaucratic, coercive, communicative and financial systems and institutions, which overlaps into markets and civil society. Established states exhibit much continuity between specific political regimes. Basic patterns of state organization and of the relationship of the state to social groups and institutions often persist even in major crises. If we assume that higher education is closely affected by the nation-state, then we could expect it to be affected by differences between nation-states in the tradition, identity and national culture and also in:

- The capacity of the machinery of state, including fiscal capacity (a robust tax system is essential) and its power of communications and persuasion
- The capacity of the state to articulate and implement a common ideology of 'the nation', including the desired global trajectory of the nation
- The autonomy of the state and its agencies
- The scope for rapid intervention in which the state moves substantial resources quickly on its own initiative
- The agendas and strategies of the coordinating centre of state
- The capacity of the state in the production and distribution of resources
- The political capacity of the state, in the context of popular traditions and expectations, including its effectiveness in shaping the polity and the political culture and in defining the options for legitimate action
- The modes of intervention used by the state

- The relations between state and civil society and economic market
- In higher education, the machinery and culture of governance, policy and funding that links the state and the institutions

5.9 An Example: State Autonomy

All of these areas are accessible to comparative investigation. Such investigation will identify variation between the different system types in higher education; though more than one interpretation of these variations is possible. For example, consider the issue of state autonomy. Weberian analysts of the state focus on 'strong states', which they define as autonomous states. It is not that simple. State autonomy and state capacity are not identical and do not always go together. Autonomous states are states where the administrative machine cannot be stopped by social forces, while states with capacity are states that can get things done. But while some strong states displace ruling groups, for example, the Meiji Restoration in Japan, building state autonomy in that process, other states flourish when they achieve symbiosis with ruling groups, for example, the role of MITI in Japan after World War Two. Still, other states collaborate with ruling groups as partners, for example, the British state collaborates closely with finance capital in the city of London, through the power of Treasury in the Westminster system. The same comment can be made about WC GRUs. Autonomy in a research university by itself is not enough to generate global potency, though it appears that at least some autonomy is necessary to global effectiveness. This is because states cannot handle global relationships on behalf of universities as well as universities can handle such relationships themselves.

State autonomy (like university autonomy) is always partial and contested. It fluctuates in continuing tugs of war between state and economy, state and leading families, or the state and the army. Likewise, university autonomy is pulled back and forth between university and market, and university and government. Skopcol (1985) remarks that autonomy also can and does change over time. For example, the more effective state programs are in affecting the economy and society, the more the state agencies responsible for implementing those programs become tangled with interest groups, clients and corruption around those programs. The agencies lose autonomy, and the programs lose traction and legitimacy. Capacity becomes negatively correlated to autonomy. This is why the New Deal stalled in the United States. In some countries, like Australia, state building of mass higher education was seen to be followed by producer capture, triggering state disillusionment with its programs. It can also happen to universities—potentially, the more clients they connect with, the more they are inhibited. On the other hand, Treasury power in Westminster systems increases the autonomy of state. The state appears as an independent shaper and arbiter. Yet, this can be at the price of nonintervention. In Australia, Treasury blocks a more active pursuit of building the WC GRU because as in the UK, Treasury opposes any and every proposal to increase government funding.

All states are characteristically concerned with capital accumulation, and some are concerned with income and wealth distribution. Most states want higher education to fulfil the requirements of 'the economy', meaning business and industry, and to contribute to employment. But states vary in extent and type of advice they take from business and industry, whether they mediate the relationship for higher education or set up direct 'market' signal systems, and to what extent they get involved instrumentally in graduate employment issues. This in turn affects state expectations about the WC GRU—whether its connections to industry are a primary policy indicator and whether this is imagined specifically in terms of particular national industries and firms or managed at the level of generic national and global business. WC GRUs vary considerably in the extent to which they are instrumentally tied to nationally based capital though structured innovation systems and funding.

Most states seem to exhibit strong capacity in some areas only and strong autonomy in some areas only. For example, does the USA have a strong state or not? A neo-Weberian would probably say 'no', because the state is not autonomous of business and industry and interest groups and the political trading and coalition-building in Congress. A neo-Marxist would probably say 'yes', because the American state, seen as the servant of American capital, represents a very powerful interest both on the world stage and at home. In reality, the picture is mixed. America the state has both high capacity and high autonomy in the military domain and medium capacity and weak autonomy in the economic domain. In higher education, it has autonomy in research policy but little power to drive the specific strategies of research institutions, unlike the state in the Confucian zone, which often has its hands directly on the presidency and unlike the Westminster state which shapes the detail of research practice with performance measures and specific incentives. To implement policy with effect, in creating the WC GRU and other areas, states need not just autonomy but policy structure and culture. In China and Singapore, the state has autonomy and is also highly focused in delivery.

Hypothesis 2. Nation-states vary in higher education, in the combination of state autonomy and state instrumental power. These variations partly explain differences in the speed and effectiveness of WC GRU development.

5.10 An Example: The Scale and Scope of the State

Another issue for investigation is the scale and scope/range of state responsibilities. The contrast between the Western liberal state and the comprehensive Confucian state has been noted. In the polities of the English-speaking world, what governments can or cannot do is primary and is characteristically unresolved. The debate about higher education continually turns on fractured relations between universities and government. The first instinct of interest groups and public actors in the higher education sector is often to create or play on such tensions. The tensions

are also substantial—the main debates often turn on issues of institutions versus government, for example, demands for more funding and opposition to the detail of regulation. These issues are often about where the state/institution boundary is set. Partly because of the tensions around state intervention, liberal states are often reluctant to support and advance objectives other than unquestionable instrumental economic objectives, such as the furthering of economic productivity and growth, or issues of probity in state expenditure where the politics of low taxation dictates surveillance.

National tradition plays a role in determining the extent to which higher education is expected to contribute to the cultural formation of society—and the extent to which it is meant to work for the nonmarket objectives of civil society—and to the ethical and moral formation of students. When the state subsidizes the humanities, it also subsidizes civil society. In the liberal Westminster systems, in which taxpayer populism is a tool for building electoral support, this is often stigmatized as funding an 'elite' or the 'chattering classes'. In the UK in December 2010, the UK government decided that funding the humanities and the social sciences could be sourced entirely from students, without direct public subsidies for teaching. Here civil society is modelled as a spillover from the higher education market. It is inconceivable that Confucian states would be formally indifferent to the question of ethical and moral formation, though they expect parents with Confucian values to foster those values at home and finance much of the educational cost themselves.

Hypothesis 3. The scale and scope of normal state intervention is positively correlated to the speed and effectiveness of systems in advancing the WC GRU, providing that the state is instrumentally effective across its range of responsibilities.

Note that the British funding decision can be interpreted either as a strong British state enforcing its instrumentalist neo-liberal economic view of education or as a weak state that has abstained from using higher education to shape the national culture and (unlike, say, China with the Confucius Institutes) is indifferent to injecting that culture into the global space via the WC GRU. In other words, generalizations solely focused on 'strong' and 'weak' states do not take us far into an understanding of comparative higher education. Even states of similar broad type vary quite markedly in autonomy, capacity and agency freedom and will. Their resources and other circumstances can also vary greatly. The same is true of universities.

States also vary according to where they are placed on one of the curves of WC GRU evolution. Perhaps emerging states have more scope to manoeuvre in higher education because they are less path dependent and there is likely to be internal consensus about the need to improve, but they also have problems not shared by established systems. Apart from the obvious point that capacity is underdeveloped, they must deal from a weaker position with global capital and the neo-imperialism of the Anglo-American powers and are constrained by the Anglo-American dominance in higher education which is continually reinforced by global systems like research

publishing and ranking. Emerging states do not control global policy rules in higher education. They can only start to work the global people flows in their favour with strenuous investment and effort. Nevertheless, on their way up, the system managers in Taiwan and Korea did reverse the brain drain and China appears to be following.

5.11 An Example: State-University Relations

If different parts of the state have different levels of autonomy and capacity—and if we consider higher education, including the globally linked research universities, as part of the state, broadly defined—then in most but not all cases, higher education is one of those parts of the state with higher relative autonomy. At the same time, as noted, the general relations between higher education and other parts of the state vary, from direct administration to the idea that even state universities are part of a semiprivate civic and market order. Specific indicators of the state to university relationship include resources and the conditions attached to their use; the state's own relations with civil society and business and industry; the relations between WC GRUs and civil society; the forms of intellectual freedom and also how it is advanced and protected; and universities' capacity to initiate, outside specific or direct regulation, particularly the strategic autonomy and capacity of the executive.

Structures apparently similar between systems can have different means and associations. Consider the new public management reforms in England, Japan, Malaysia, and China. All led to corporatized structures. But all function differently. In England, legal and financial rules are exceptionally tight and political economy of funding drives conformity to the official culture. In Japan, the system still conforms to state preferences while sustaining a conservative culture, and unlike the UK, a uniformly strong university executive is yet to emerge. In Malaysia, autonomy is stymied by direct state control over the appointment of the vice-chancellors and capacity is inhibited by the politicization of the system. In China, corporate universities are tied to state agendas not only by appointment of the leaders but via the system of dual leadership, with president alongside party secretary. Yet in some cases (not all!), the party secretary acts as guardian of presidential autonomy.

One suspects there are no universal laws here. However, there is an analytical question: what are the implications of the mix of state/GRU factors for each different kind of WC GRU project? Can we identify an *optimal* configuration of state-university relations for *each* pathway to the WC GRU? And is there scope for transplanting models and techniques between traditions to change the potential outcomes? For example, can the Confucian model of state/university relations be transferred to, say, France and achieve a more dynamic evolution of the WC GRU in that national system? What modifications would be needed to replicate a similar dynamism across borders?

Hypothesis 4. Each kind of WC GRU system is characterized by a configuration of the relationship between state and higher education institution that is optimal for *that particular kind* of WC GRU development, all else equal. This optimal configuration can be identified through historical research, case studies and analytical inquiry.

5.12 Conclusion

The next steps are to refine the hypotheses as tools of investigation and to conduct specific research in each different zone in which WC GRU evolutions are occurring.

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