

## **The >Gleichschaltung< of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology**

“Gleichschaltung” is a term introduced in 1930s Germany to denote the process of establishing totalitarian control over all aspects of society. The term has since been used in other contexts and is applied here to the case of a university in Hong Kong, where the presence of the Chinese “Communist” “Party” and its effect on academia are increasingly felt. The paper clarifies the meaning of “Gleichschaltung” and its relevance to academia, examines instances of Gleichschaltung at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, and elaborates on the ease with which Gleichschaltung can be (and has been) implemented at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology.

Keywords: Gleichschaltung, academic freedom, Chinese Communist Party, Hong Kong, China studies, censorship

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# The >Gleichschaltung< of the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology

Carsten A. Holz

## A. Introduction

The term “Gleichschaltung” [ˈɡlaɪçʃaltʊŋ] was introduced by Adolf Hitler on 23 March 1933 in front of the German Reichstag (parliamentary building) to denote the establishment of a system of unified, totalitarian control over all aspects of German society (Bracher, 1956).<sup>1</sup> It gained prominence in Hitler’s Third Reich and has since been applied to other realms.

In the following, the meaning of “Gleichschaltung” and its relevance to academia is clarified, and an argument for its applicability to the case of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and Hong Kong is made. Individual instances of Gleichschaltung at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology are examined. The final section elaborates on the ease with which Gleichschaltung can be (and has been) implemented at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, and concludes.

### 1. Gleichschaltung

Suppression in totalitarian regimes is typically achieved in two ways: directly through coercion and violence, and indirectly through ideological Gleichschaltung (eDidact, 2018). Ideological Gleichschaltung may be fully internalized. It can find expression in party discipline or personal loyalty to the point of blind obedience. Freedom of thought and action, criticism, and otherness are absent. Ideological Gleichschaltung is frequently implemented under pseudo-legal cover. For Gleichschaltung to succeed, a certain degree of disorientation is deemed necessary, with the populace lacking clear moral standards and principles.

The Gleichschaltung of universities in the Third Reich faced a particular dilemma. As Geuter (1984) writes, “the formation of a national-socialist program for individual disciplines would have required a consistent theory against which the permissibility of particular scientific theories could have been checked. But the national-socialist ideology, in as far as one can speak of such an ideology rather than just the ideas of individual national-socialist leaders, was a conglomerate of conceptions rather than a closed theoretical system” (p. 199).

As a result, and in the understanding that science would not thrive without a certain amount of leeway and that new findings could not be obtained by decree, the state abstained from robust top-down control of academia (Geuter, 1984). For the discipline of psychology which Geuter focuses on, he finds that no planned, substantive Gleichschaltung by the National-Socialist German Workers’ Party ever took place. But the outcome is not academic freedom and a productive academia but opportunism and the inside-out destruction of academia: “The general climate of oppression and persecution, of coercion for good behavior and of political and ideological adaptation, releases at the grassroots—without the need for concrete measures from above—opportunism and sometimes unrestrained action against political opponents or competitors of one’s own career” (Geuter 1984, p. 205).

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<sup>1</sup> Translated literally, Gleichschaltung means “switching to make equal.”

Since the end of Hitler's Third Reich, the term Gleichschaltung has been used by, for example, Huffschmid (1967) to describe the emerging monopoly position of the Springer publishing house across Germany's print media. He notes that instances of 'external' Gleichschaltung—journalism that intentionally caters to the interests of the powerful—is rare. In most cases, conformity comes about through a voluntary process reflecting the conviction and mentality of the journalist and is not viewed by the journalist as Gleichschaltung. Conviction, not fear, is the driving motivation. The outcome, nevertheless, is Gleichschaltung of Germany's media culture.

One distinct feature of the literature on Gleichschaltung in the Third Reich is that it presents, perhaps out of necessity, an ex-post analysis: There may be no scope to discuss and analyze Gleichschaltung if one lives under a regime that conducts Gleichschaltung. A second feature of the literature on Gleichschaltung is that it brings little awareness to the fact that Gleichschaltung may well be imperceptible to those subjected to it at the time that Gleichschaltung is in progress.<sup>2</sup> The literature presents historic accounts of what happened without delving into the essence of how Gleichschaltung was experienced.

Bracher (1966) provides a hint of what academics' perception at a time of Gleichschaltung of universities may be: "In contrast to the stormy succession of loud, breathtakingly great events in the spring of 1933, insistence on personal concerns seemed petty to them [the academic faculty], if they did not take the path of least resistance anyway and almost automatically took the required submission to a commanding authority" (p. 129). I.e., the creation of a society-wide greater "reality," outside the university, facilitates the imposition of a new reality on academia.

To summarize, Gleichschaltung occurs through coercion and through ideology, where ideology can generate a wide range of motivations for individuals, from the development of personal convictions to voluntary or calculated conformity. Gleichschaltung is frequently implemented under pseudo-legal cover, it tends to occur in the context of larger external events which make an individual's concerns appear a trifling matter, and it is facilitated by popular disorientation where clear moral standards and principles have been eroded. In the case of universities, the political desire for Gleichschaltung clashes with a military and economic need for innovation and progress, which, however, as was recognized, cannot be achieved by top-down control over academia. The combination of some degree of Gleichschaltung and some degree of continued academic freedom meant broad scope for opportunism among academic staff.

## 2. Gleichschaltung in the context of the People's Republic of China

The term Gleichschaltung can be readily applied to the PRC, where ideological constraints imposed by the ruling Chinese "Communist" "Party" (CCP) on academia combine with learned (and internalized) beliefs and behavior patterns under a CCP-determined educational

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<sup>2</sup> In a local newspaper of the 1930s in a small town in Germany, Gleichschaltung was invisible. News were reported as they had always been. The local newspaper conveyed a picture of perfect "normality," even as normality gradually and inconspicuously transformed. (Sometime in the 1970s, high school students in Germany were invited to conduct research on the national-socialist period in their localities. I participated in one such project, reading through years of the local newspaper in an attempt to pin down Gleichschaltung.)

and propaganda system.<sup>3</sup> The CCP faces the same dilemma as did the German national-socialist regime in that it cannot fully control academia without stifling innovation and progress (which it may perceive to be necessary for regime survival). As in the case of the Third Reich, the outcome is less one of explicit coercion than one of incentivizing academics to internalize beliefs and behavior patterns.

A key difference between the case of the PRC and Germany in the 1930s is that the ideological foundation of totalitarianism in the PRC appears even weaker than it already was in Germany, where the national-socialist regime could not muster a coherent ideology to dominate academia. In the case of the PRC, there seems to be no viable ideology whatsoever.<sup>4</sup> Gleichschaltung in the PRC then is not in the least focused on an ideology per se, but purely on loyalty to the regime ('study the "leader's" thoughts'). I.e., Gleichschaltung in the PRC takes the shape of imposing total obedience to and unquestioning support of any and all of the regimes' declarations and actions, while proscribing regime-critical and independent thought.

One crucial tool in the case of the PRC for achieving Gleichschaltung of academia, and ultimately of all intellectual expression, is a particular form of censorship, namely self-censorship. As during the Gleichschaltung in the Third Reich, and as perceived for the later German media landscape, in the most common case academics are not even aware of how they have been subjected to Gleichschaltung.<sup>5</sup>

Link (2002) emphasizes the importance of "vagueness" in CCP censorship: One doesn't know what the allowed range of expression is and what leads to sanctions, and therefore self-censors. Vagueness has four advantages: (i) A vague prohibition frightens more people; if I don't know why someone else was arrested, I will be more careful in what I say. (ii) A vague accusation pressures an individual to curtail a wider range of activity; if I don't know where the limits are, I restrain myself in every respect. (iii) A vague accusation is useful in maximizing what can be learned during forced confessions; since the person arrested is not told why s/he was arrested, the interrogators are likely to gain a much broader range of information. (iv) A vague accusation allows arbitrary targeting; the ruler needs not be consistent, and the pretense of legality is sufficient to legitimize the ruler's actions.

Gleichschaltung of academia in the PRC is not limited to censorship, though that remains an important tool. Perry (2015) documents four channels through which the CCP directly influences the preoccupations of Mainland academic intellectuals: standard autocratic control and censorship mechanisms within universities, cultural governance (designed to produce political allegiance and regime loyalty), civic engagement (redirection of energy towards purposes useful to the regime), and internationally used metrics for "world-class" universities. For faculty, it is particularly the latter channel which directs interest and energy from independent thought to "fulfilling 'objective' production targets" (p.18), as conveniently legitimized by the benchmarks of world university rankings. The fulfilment of production

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<sup>3</sup> I place "Communist" and "Party" in quotation marks because the Chinese "Communist" "Party" neither has a communist agenda nor is it a political party.

<sup>4</sup> The gap between Marxism on the one hand and CCP declarations and actions on the other hand would seem too big to consider Marxism a relevant ideology for the CCP. In fact, while all PRC university students must attend classes on Marxism, those who act out of Marxist convictions are promptly arrested (<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/nov/12/ten-student-activists-detained-in-china-for-supporting-workers-rights>, accessed 15 November 2018).

<sup>5</sup> See Holz (2007) on the pervasive self-censorship that China academics apply, often unconsciously, in their research and teaching.

targets is properly remunerated, financially and in terms of authority and prestige. The projection of an internationally accepted (and typically media- and/or government-supported) norm that is solely focused on apolitical endeavors thus facilitates Gleichschaltung.

Perry (2015, p. 2) also notes “the pivotal role of acquiescent intellectuals in sustaining autocratic rule.” I.e., Gleichschaltung in the PRC is not only about striking a balance between control vs. academic freedom necessary for innovation and progress, but also about employing academia as a legitimizing factor for the rule of the CCP. To the extent that CCP-controlled universities become “world-class” universities according to metrics invented in the West, academia in the PRC legitimizes CCP rule.

Overall, the key means for Gleichschaltung of academia in the PRC then appear to be the following:

- self-censorship;
- external censorship;
- civic engagement (which, in the case of faculty, would include access to media/fame and money-making opportunities for regime-conformist academics);
- promotion of internationally used metrics for “world-class” universities with apolitical “objective” production targets;
- the establishment of a society-wide “normal” (or “cultural governance”) that makes independent thought and speech appear deviant and difficult to maintain under a regime that pursues conformity.

It is perhaps not by chance that authors who discuss self-censorship and CCP control over academia are located in the West and writing from a Western perspective. By necessity, authors operate with examples that yield, at best, a non-exhaustive list of characteristics. We do not know the full extent of what is happening in the PRC under the current regime. We do not have access to the internal policy documents that shape (possibly quite systematic) regime behavior in a particular realm. This paper faces the same constraints.

### 3. Hong Kong’s cultural governance: a “general climate of oppression and persecution”

As Geuter (1984, p. 205) emphasized for the case of the Third Reich, Gleichschaltung of academia occurs in a “general climate of oppression and persecution.” Academia does not operate detached from state and society, but is (typically) funded by the state, and, given its subject of inquiry, deeply integrated with society. For the Gleichschaltung of universities in Hong Kong, this means that Hong Kong society and polity are the starting point.

Hong Kong is a prime candidate for Gleichschaltung. As a “Special Administrative Region” of the PRC, Hong Kong enjoys a 50-year period of “one country, two systems.” How the transition in system is to occur from one day to the next at the end of the 50-year period has never been specified. In practice, approaching the half-time of the transition period, Gleichschaltung appears well underway.<sup>6</sup>

The first three CCP-imposed “Chief Executives” (governors) of Hong Kong since the transfer (handover) of Hong Kong from Great Britain to the PRC in 1997 fared badly: The first

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<sup>6</sup> Gleichschaltung also occurs in the literal sense of the word (“switching to make equal”) in that the original Hong Kong system is being made equal to the PRC system.

resigned after a mass demonstration; the second, after completing his term, spent time in prison for taking personal advantage of his position while in office; and the third, Leung Chun-ying, managed to cling to power through 2017 by ending the ‘Umbrella Movement [Revolution]’ (or: ‘Occupy Central’ movement) through the dispatch of riot police.<sup>7</sup>

Those that facilitated the Umbrella Movement in 2014 were sent to prison. Those that are elected to the Legislative Council (quasi-parliament) but do not swear allegiance in a fashion desired by the rulers are denied the right to take up their seats. Those that promote “self-determination” of Hong Kong are denied the right to run for the Legislative Council in the first place. The CCP abducts Hong Kong citizens to the Mainland.<sup>8</sup> A climate prevails where what was once considered morally right is no longer right, where what was once perceived to be the law no longer carries validity, and where “normal” (such as “one country, two systems,” and freedom of speech in Hong Kong) is no longer normal.<sup>9</sup>

Hong Kong’s much touted “rule of law” may well have become irrelevant as freedom of speech is curtailed in an underhanded way following CCP conventions. The Foreign Correspondents Club (FCC) of Hong Kong invited Andy Chan Ho-tin—independence activist and founder of the Hong Kong National Party—to give a FCC lunch talk on 14 August 2018. The talk was chaired by the first vice-president of the FCC, Victor Mallet, Asia news editor of the *Financial Times*. The Hong Kong “government” subsequently denied the renewal of Victor Mallet’s work visa in October 2018 (and in early November denied him entry into Hong Kong as a tourist).<sup>10</sup>

Former chief executive of Hong Kong and current vice-chairman of the “Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference” Leung Chun-ying opposed the FCC’s invitation to Andy Chan Ho-tin with a comment on his Facebook page that “we [Hong Kong] too have no-go zones.” I.e., Leung Chun-ying publicly stated that there is an unspecified body of tacit (unrecorded) rules by which Hong Kong is governed and in whose presence the formal body of law—including any guarantee of freedom of speech—is irrelevant. The Hong Kong “government” promptly provided the evidence that this is indeed the case.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Leung Chun-ying is also accused of potential conflict of interest regarding business-related payments he received while chief executive, with attempts to investigate and to impeach blocked by “pro-Beijing” legislators, and the Independent Commission Against Corruption coming under suspicion of not being so independent, after all.

<sup>8</sup> A google search for “Hong Kong booksellers abduction [or: kidnapping]” yields a great multitude of relevant news items.

<sup>9</sup> The main Hong Kong English language newspaper, the *South China Morning Post*, is a regular proponent of the “new normal.” For example, the article by Yonden Lhatoo (chief news editor) “Jack Ma is a Communist Party member – so what?” (2 December 2018, p. 2) mixes aggression, abundant ridicule and (limited) plausibility to find that Jack Ma—the founder of Alibaba and the owner of the *South China Morning Post*—being a Party member is normal: “[T]he likes of international news agency AFP saw fit to engage in scurrilous muckraking, asking the *Post*, which is owned by Alibaba, what impact Ma’s CCP link would have on our editorial operations. [...] Particularly galling was our grand inquisitors’ sense of supreme entitlement in demanding to know why we had decided not to publish the story (we did, actually, when we found a more newsworthy update in that Ma had jointed the party in his university days).”

<sup>10</sup> I place “government” in quotation marks when the term is used to refer to the Hong Kong “government” because the Hong Kong “government” is de facto chosen by the CCP and can govern only thanks to its control of the police force (it is the “Hong Kong agency of the CCP”); the choice of Hong Kong “government” is not the outcome of a popular vote.

<sup>11</sup> The number of news sources covering these incidents is too large to list. Leung Chun-ying is quoted in <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2018/08/15/beijing-can-instruct-hong-kong-handling-independence-movement-says-top-adviser/> (accessed 15 November 2018) as follows >“The FCC couldn’t have picked a worse topic than Hong Kong independence to offend the Chinese people more,” he wrote on Facebook. “Hong Kong is an open,

The Hong Kong “government” did not give an explanation for this (unprecedented) decision, taking a leaf out of the CCP’s book to keep censorship vague for the resulting self-censorship to be maximally encompassing. (Or, perhaps more accurately, the CCP followed its usual rule book when ordering its agent, the Hong Kong “government,” to ban Victor Mallet from Hong Kong.)<sup>12</sup>

## B. Hong Kong University of Science and Technology

The “Hong Kong University of Science & Technology” (HKUST) operates within the socio-political climate of Hong Kong. HKUST is a “government-”funded, public university in Hong Kong. Its “supreme governing and executive body” is the University Council.<sup>13</sup> Appointments to the University Council are controlled—some directly, some indirectly—by the Hong Kong chief executive.<sup>14</sup> As of mid-2015, nearly one-third of the Council members, appointed by the chief executive, were reported to be present or former members of the Mainland’s “National People’s Congress” or its “Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.”<sup>15</sup> This Council, in turn, appoints the university’s president, provost, and vice-presidents. The provost controls all academic matters in a system designed for the total absence of academic self-administration by faculty members. I.e., the CCP determines Hong Kong’s chief executive, who, in turn, determines HKUST’s Council members, who, in turn, choose management, who, in turn, determine every aspect of HKUST’s operations.<sup>16</sup>

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welcoming and tolerant society. But like other societies we too have no-go zones. Secession ranks top.”< Leung Chun-ying’s post conflates the CCP with the “Chinese people;” it also alleges that Andy Chan Ho-tin is not Chinese (since, presumably, Andy Chan Ho-tin is not advocating to offend himself).

<sup>12</sup> Thanks to Hong Kong’s rigged voting system for Legislative Council, resulting in a pro-CCP majority, a proposal to the legislature to summon immigration officials to explain their expulsion of Victor Mallet was blocked (<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2171264/reason-financial-times-journalists-hong-kong-visa-denial>, accessed 3 November 2018).

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/Council.htm>, accessed 25 August 2018.

<sup>14</sup> As of August 2018, the Council has 27 members

([https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/bio\\_attendance\\_Council\\_1617.htm](https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/bio_attendance_Council_1617.htm), accessed 24 August 2018). Of these 27 members, the Hong Kong chief executive appoints not more than 17 members (as of August 2018, exactly 17 members), of who not more than 8 members on the recommendation of the Council (with no further qualification regarding the appointment of the other 9 members, <https://www.ab.ust.hk/ccss/Ordinance.htm#council>, accessed 24 August 2018). I.e., the Hong Kong chief executive freely chooses one-third of the Council members, and chooses another one-third on recommendation of the Council. Since the first Council of the university cannot have had any members recommended by the Council (which didn’t exist yet), the first Council must have been dominated by the chief executive’s appointees. I.e., for the second Council the chief executive chose one-third of the members without any restrictions, while another third was chosen by the chief executive’s previous freely chosen appointees to the Council; this pattern continues through today’s Council. The remaining members of the Council are the President, Provost, and one Vice-President—all appointed to their positions by the Council—plus two deans (appointed by the President, who was appointed by the Council), the Chairman of Convocation (on the appointment mechanism of whom the HKUST Ordinance is silent), and finally 2 academic members of the Senate (i.e., faculty members, where the Senate is dominated by the President’s appointees, i.e., is not a faculty Senate), 1 member elected by and from full-time employees of the University, and one student representative. I.e., except for the last 2 members of the Council, all other 25 members of the Council are either chosen and appointed by the Hong Kong chief executive, or appointed by the Hong Kong chief executive on recommendation of the earlier Council, or are members by force of their position to which they have been appointed by the Council or the President (who was chosen by the Council).

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.facebook.com/HKUSTSU/photos/a.288100644538118.87865.178853615462822/1170457139635793/?type=3&\\_mref=message\\_bubble](https://www.facebook.com/HKUSTSU/photos/a.288100644538118.87865.178853615462822/1170457139635793/?type=3&_mref=message_bubble), accessed 23 November 2018.

<sup>16</sup> The Council of the Hong Kong University (HKU) in April 2016 commissioned a report on corporate governance at HKU. In its report of February 2017, the review panel recommended that the role of the

Gleichschaltung at HKUST occurs within a society-wide process of Gleichschaltung that comes with an increasing emphasis on the Gleichschaltung of Hong Kong universities. The 2014 Umbrella Movement drew the CCP's focused attention to the need to control Hong Kong universities. It is students who tend to be at the forefront of political change, and while academia had been successfully co-opted in the Mainland that was not yet the case in Hong Kong.

The following examples are intended to provide glimpses of Gleichschaltung that are currently perceptible from *within* the university to a faculty member who is not part of management. This is an attempt to do what the literature on Gleichschaltung in the Third Reich and on Gleichschaltung in the PRC has not achieved: to recognize and name Gleichschaltung as it is concurrently happening, and to do so based on the experience within the system (albeit given the knowledge of Gleichschaltung in the Third Reich, and to a limited extent of Gleichschaltung in the PRC). At this time, the documentation is necessarily fragmented and limited to individual instances.

### 1. HKUST President spreads CCP propaganda

On 1 September 2016, HKUST President Tony Chan sent an e-Letter to all members of the HKUST community.<sup>17</sup> The letter praises HKUST's achievements—"The 25A [25th Anniversary] celebratory events to date have shown just how HKUST has established a unique position in the loftiest echelons of the global higher education community"—and then proceeds with a warning as one of four topics of the e-Letter:<sup>18</sup>

#### "University Mission – A Reminder

Many of you will note the political debates going on in Hong Kong society. I want to use this occasion to share my view. As an organisation with diverse individual views, the University itself does not, and should not, take any political positions. As a public institution, HKUST firmly adheres to Hong Kong's governing system under the Basic Law and the rule of law. In order to provide an environment for achieving our main mission of education and research, the University is committed to, and respects, academic freedom, one of our Core Values, and freedom of speech, a right enjoyed by all Hong Kong citizens under the law.

Within this context, the University cannot condone the concept of Hong Kong independence, as it is inconsistent with the Basic Law. Nevertheless, the University should support rational, respectful, peaceful and balanced debate and discussions, in the cherished tradition of universities worldwide. But we will have no tolerance for any activities on our campus which degenerate into offensive tirades, or advocacy of violence,

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University Chancellor (i.e., of Hong Kong's chief executive) should become largely honorary and "that the incoming Chancellor should delegate to the Council itself the power to appoint future members to the University Council, including its future Chairmen" (paragraph 101). Peter Van Tu Nguyen, a member of the review panel and also a member of the board of directors of Mainland companies, wrote a dissenting opinion in favor of maintaining the current system. ([http://www.gs.hku.hk/Grant\\_Report\\_and\\_Addendum.pdf](http://www.gs.hku.hk/Grant_Report_and_Addendum.pdf), accessed 22 November 2018) The University Council of HKU did not adopt the recommendation of the report.

<sup>17</sup> E-Letters from the President are an infrequent event, on the order of one per year.

<sup>18</sup> <http://president.ust.hk/eng/e-letter-20160901.html>, accessed 11 May 2017.



or violence itself, or any activities which are unlawful. So far, in our 25 years of history, HKUST is blessed with students, faculty, and staff who share this same strong belief in peaceful and rational dialogue, and I am confident this will continue.”

At first sight, this passage may seem quite innocuous. But the timing is strange as this passage appears two years *after* the “government’s” crackdown on the Umbrella Movement. There also exists no reason to issue such a warning ever at an institution where the faculty and student body are supremely apolitical and disengaged. And there is no recent nor historical incident, not even at the height of the Umbrella Movement, of “offensive tirade,” “advocacy of violence,” or “violence itself,” as the president himself acknowledges.

What motivated the HKUST president to write and distribute to the whole university community these lines at this time? Did he receive orders to do so? Or has HKUST President Tony Chan himself been subjected to CCP propaganda and internalized it to such an extent that he felt the need to share? Tony Chan’s ‘reminder’ comes one year *before* a joint statement by Hong Kong’s ten university heads in September 2017 regarding Hong Kong independence.<sup>19</sup> Is he rushing to curry favor with the CCP?

Or does the passage convey what one can expect the leader of an institution “in the loftiest echelons of the global higher education community” to think: that in a socio-political climate such as Hong Kong’s, academia has a particular responsibility to provide thought leadership? I.e., does HKUST President Tony Chan intend to plant the seeds for HKUST faculty and students to drop their apathy and behave as academics at a top university can be expected to?

HKUST President Tony Chan has his facts wrong, making an academic motivation for the inclusion of these passages less likely. The Basic Law is not inconsistent with condoning “the concept of Hong Kong independence,” and therefore the president’s rationale for “the University cannot condone the concept of Hong Kong independence” is invalid. Hong Kong independence may not be in line with the Basic Law, but the Basic Law doesn’t prescribe what anyone’s views on Hong Kong independence must be, nor does it abolish freedom of speech.<sup>20</sup> The joint statement of the heads of all Hong Kong universities in September 2017 does not commit the same error.<sup>21</sup> (Tony Chan appears to simply have copied the widely promoted, dominant CCP rhetoric.) A Basic Law can also be changed: The PRC’s Basic Law, its Constitution, is frequently changed, most recently in 2018 to potentially allow CCP Party Secretary Xi Jinping to continue as State President beyond the original two-term limit.

This passage of President Tony Chan’s e-Letter also reveals much about the self-understanding of HKUST’s management. The President starts out by stating that he wants to share his view. But very quickly his personal view becomes law: “the University cannot condone” and “we will have no tolerance.” As a faculty member of HKUST, I have never been asked about my view. There is no mentioning of the Senate, of the faculty, or of the student union. The president presents his personal views as the law of the land.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/2111365/let-hong-kong-universities-not-government-deal>, accessed 20 November 2018.

<sup>20</sup> Also see the article by Webb, at <https://webb-site.com/articles/legco2016.asp>, accessed 2 September 2016.

<sup>21</sup> “We treasure freedom of expression, but we condemn its recent abuses. Freedom of expression is not absolute, and like all freedoms it comes with responsibilities. All universities undersigned agree that we do not support Hong Kong independence, which contravenes the Basic Law.” (<https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/education-community/article/2111365/let-hong-kong-universities-not-government-deal>, accessed 20 November 2018)

## 2. The need for effective censorship leads to the abandonment of a new school

Around 2014, HKUST Provost SHYY Wei called for the establishment of a new School of Public Policy at HKUST and began a process of hiring. By 2017, the new School had disappeared and the new hires had left or were integrated into existing schools.

The accepted wisdom among colleagues at HKUST is that the establishment of the HKUST School of Public Policy was abandoned when it became clear that the relevant faculty, including current faculty in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, hold differentiated views of China.

The School of Public Policy was in part targeting PRC administrators as potential customers. But as long as censorship at HKUST is not watertight—as during the Gleichschaltung in Germany, censorship and innovative research do not go hand in hand—having HKUST faculty teach PRC administrators was in the end not acceptable to HKUST management, and in particular not to a crucial potential donor. (The potential donor supposedly was a HKUST Council member who is friends with a CCP Politburo member.)

Along a similar vein, HKUST would be supremely well-positioned to operate a large-scale China-focused research center comparable to the U.S.-focused National Bureau of Economic Research in Boston, given the broad China expertise distributed across the School of Humanities and Social Science and the School of Business and Management. But HKUST management does not harness the power of this dispersed expertise.

China-related research and teaching is an exceptional international strength of HKUST, much more so than HKUST's engineering or sciences schools, but at the same time a liability: Under Gleichschaltung, any research outcome and teaching that is critical of the CCP is unwelcome and must be prevented. At which point it makes most sense to keep China research limited and dispersed, and China-related classes (including the number of postgraduate students) to a minimum, rather than lending China research and teaching more prominence and authority. It also implies the need to side-track and marginalize especially the School of Humanities and Social Science, which houses a particular concentration of China scholars, and turn the school into a colorful entertainment branch of the university.<sup>22</sup>

## 3. HKUST plasters Xi Jinping's slogan across the academic concourse

The motto of Harvard University is 'Truth,' embedded (in Latin: Veritas) in Harvard University's seal. The seal of Stanford University carries the motto 'Die Luft der Freiheit weht.'<sup>23</sup> HKUST doesn't have an official motto. But sometime in 2016, Xi Jinping's 'Dare to Dream' began to appear all over HKUST's academic concourse and it is still going strong as of November 2018.

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<sup>22</sup> A university with a castrated core (humanities and social sciences) would more suitably be called an institute or a polytechnic (and a business school) rather than a "university." The focus then shifts to the production of easily exchangeable cogs needed for the operation of the CCP industrial and military machine.

<sup>23</sup> Stanford University uses the original German phrase. The literal translation into English is 'The air of freedom is blowing.' The phrase is reportedly based on what Ulrich von Hutten said when Luther was being persecuted, 'Don't you know that the air of freedom is blowing?' ([https://web.stanford.edu/dept/prevost/president/speeches/951005dieluft.html](https://web.stanford.edu/dept/prevost/provost/president/speeches/951005dieluft.html), accessed 20 November 2018).

CCP General Secretary and President of the PRC, Xi Jinping, said that young people should “dare to dream, work assiduously to fulfill the dreams and contribute to the revitalization of the nation.”<sup>24</sup> The larger context is Xi Jinping’s “China dream” (中國夢) for the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (中華民族的伟大复兴), more accurately translated as the renaissance of the Han Chinese race.<sup>25</sup>

The HKUST version sticks to Xi Jinping’s core element of ‘Dare to Dream,’ followed by one or more addition(s). These include HKUST’s ‘Ready to Achieve’—is that really all that management of a top *university* can come up with?—and HKUST’s Freudian ‘Dive Deep into Your Dream’ (Figure 1 through Figure 3).

In the “loftiest echelons of the global higher education community” (HKUST President Tony Chan, see above), would such whimsical additions not seem to ridicule a perhaps top-down (outside?) imposed ‘Dare to Dream?’ The psychedelic background would support such a hypothesis.

It seems ironic that a place of higher learning in Hong Kong adopts such an openly, highly politicized slogan. In the Mainland, daring to dream anything other than Xi Jinping’s dream would mean a high risk of arrest.



Figure 1. Dare to Dream I

<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia: “Chinese dream,” accessed 12 May 2017.

<sup>25</sup> On the connotations of Xi Jinping’s “Dream” also see Anderlini (2017).



Figure 2. Dare to Dream II



Figure 3. Dare to Dream III

#### 4. The Chinese “Communist” “Party” is free to operate within HKUST

Approximately half of HKUST faculty members are of Mainland origin. Probably all of them have a Western PhD degree. In order to be allowed to go abroad for PhD studies, being a CCP member—at least at the time that the older faculty members left the PRC—certainly helped.

The existence of three or more Party members in an organization leads to the establishment of a Party cell. It would be hard to believe that with up to 250 CCP HKUST faculty members there is not a good number of Party cells at HKUST, and then eventually a HKUST Chinese “Communist” “Party” committee.

HKUST has on the order of 2,000 to 5,000 Mainland (PRC) students (out of a total student body of 20,000).<sup>26</sup> If only 20% of these Mainland students are CCP members, HKUST has a further 400-1,000 CCP members.

The CCP is illegal in Hong Kong. There is no public knowledge of a CCP committee and of CCP cells at HKUST.<sup>27</sup>

HKUST has a “Mainland Students and Scholars Society,” established in 2004, with a publicized “UG” (undergraduate student) section.<sup>28</sup> (The existence of an undergraduate student section of a society that covers “students and scholars” suggests the existence of other sections, such as for graduate students, and for faculty.) It has been documented that such societies are an entry point for the CCP abroad.<sup>29</sup>

This suggests that a significant share of HKUST faculty and students are subject to orders from the CCP or subject to the explicit or implicit threat of CCP actions against them (and/or their families, especially those residing in the Mainland). To the extent that these CCP faculty members influence the decisions of HKUST management, and to the extent that they themselves constitute HKUST management or chair or dominate committees, the CCP controls HKUST. Faculty members deemed undesirable by the CCP can easily be eliminated by denying substantiation (permanent contract) or be gradually forced out via continuous salary reductions and numerous other measures that hamper if not destroy a faculty member’s career. When a search committee for a university management position is headed by a HKUST faculty member who is a CCP member (or even just someone who is conscious of the incentive structures), politically undesirable candidates are easily weeded out already at the initial stage.

HKUST has a “Student’s Union” as well as an “International Students Association” and would thus seem to have no need for a separate “Mainland Students and Scholars Society.” Either Mainland students are students from the same country as Hong Kong students are (“one country, two systems”), in which case the “Students’ Union” would be the appropriate receptacle, or they are students of a country other than Hong Kong (“two countries, one system?”), in which case the “International Students Association” would be the appropriate receptacle.<sup>30</sup> There seems no obvious place for a “Mainland Students and Scholars Society” at HKUST except as tool for the CCP to organize, influence, and control.

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<sup>26</sup> HKUST has 14,807 undergraduate students (as of September 2017), of whom 5,479 are non-locals (<https://www.ust.hk/about-hkust/hkust-at-a-glance/facts-figures/>, accessed 26 August 2018). In my undergraduate classes, the names of approximately 10 percent of the students indicate a Mainland origin. HKUST has 5,053 post-graduate students. In the Social Science Division, nearly all post-graduate students are from the Mainland.

<sup>27</sup> “City University,” another university in Hong Kong, is reported to have feigned surprise—presumably their provost or their public relations department did, since a university cannot—when media reported that a “temporary branch” of the CCP held an official Party meeting on the City University campus on 20 October 2018 for a specific group of Mainland students (dispatched from the Mainland’s National Judges College under the Supreme People’s Court). There were no consequences. (See “CityU ‘surprised’ by party meeting held at campus,” *South China Morning Post*, 16 November 2018, p. C3.)

<sup>28</sup> <http://ihome.ust.hk/~mssug/>, accessed 8 June 2017. Also <https://www.linkedin.com/company/mainland-students-and-scholar-s-society-ug-section-hkust/>, accessed 26 August 2018.

<sup>29</sup> For how this works, including in the context of academia, see, for example, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, “China’s Operation Australia,” Part 1 “The Party Line,” at <http://www.smh.com.au/interactive/2017/chinas-operation-australia/soft-power.html>, accessed 8 June 2017.

<sup>30</sup> Since “one country, two systems” is the constitutional principle on which Hong Kong’s Basic Law is built, by negating the principle of “one country, two systems” HKUST management negates Hong Kong’s Basic Law.

One would expect that university management takes steps to prevent the spread of by Hong Kong law illegal activities at HKUST. (Recall HKUST President Tony Chan’s statement cited above, that HKUST firmly adheres to the rule of law.) Such steps could include dissolving the Mainland Students and Scholars Society and requiring faculty members to sign that they are not members of an organization whose operation is illegal in Hong Kong. HKUST management has taken no steps.

##### 5. HKUST “senior management” requires the Social Science Division to un-invite speakers for a screening panel of the film “Raise the Umbrellas”

The Social Science Division (SOSC) announced a screening of the film “Raise the Umbrellas” (on the Umbrella Movement), followed by discussion with the director and four guests, for 20 November 2017. On Wednesday, 8 November 2017, the Hong Kong Free Press reported that the four guests had been un-invited.<sup>31</sup> The organizer had informed the guests that they “had been disinvited because the school wanted to ‘[keep] politics out of the campus.’” The article states that “it was the senior management of the School of Humanities and Social Science” that made the decision.

The Hong Kong Free Press article is based on statements by the director (who was not un-invited) and two of the un-invited guests (one of whom is quoted from a Chinese language web article). It also presents visual evidence. Figure 4 shows the original and the revised announcement poster. The headshots (in the center) disappear and the guest list (in the lower right) is revised. The prominently displayed university logo and department name at the top disappear in the revised version to leave behind an empty black band; newly added at the bottom, in reduced font size, is “Hosted by Division of Social Science, HKUST.”

HKUST’s mission has two elements, the second of which is “To assist in the economic and social development of Hong Kong.”<sup>32</sup> The events discussed in the film are intricately linked to the economic and social fabric of Hong Kong. By censoring the event, the “senior management of the School of Humanities and Social Science” violated the mission of the university.<sup>33</sup>

The fact that the organizer had informed the guests that they “had been disinvited because the school wanted to ‘[keep] politics out of the campus’” also stands in stark contrast to the stated HKUST objectives for students, which include “a campus life that prepares them to be community leaders.”<sup>34</sup>

The “senior management of the School of Humanities and Social Science” is not taking personal responsibility for the decision; no name is provided. It would not be astonishing if senior management means the dean, perhaps acting on orders from the provost, who, in turn,

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2017/11/08/hkust-pressures-umbrella-movie-organiser-drop-democracy-figures-screening-panel/>, accessed 12 November 2017.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.ust.hk/about-hkust/hkust-at-a-glance/mission-vision/>, accessed 12 November 2017. The first mission is “To advance learning and knowledge through teaching and research [...]”

<sup>33</sup> The mission statement does not include an explicit reference to the political development of Hong Kong (a choice that is incomprehensible from an academic point of view but should please the CCP, if it wasn’t determined by the CCP in the first place). What does that mean for the political science faculty of the Division of Social Science? Are political scientists being told not to consider Hong Kong in their teaching and research?

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.ust.hk/about-hkust/hkust-at-a-glance/mission-vision/>, accessed 19 November 2018.

may have been prompted by a higher authority. The channels of censorship are covered up. HKUST is a public university where orders originate and are passed through some impenetrable dark space where nobody carries responsibility or can be held accountable. Emails and orders arrive out of the dark—and are followed without questioning by those who feel that these orders are addressed to them.



Figure 4. Uninviting Panelists

Two days after the report in the Hong Kong Free Press, at the very end of the week, on Friday, 10 November 2017 at 5:46pm, the Office of the Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science (SHSS) issued a statement to all staff and students at HKUST. The person writing under the pseudonym “Office of the Dean”— a physical office cannot write an email—explains that “a panel comprising only prominent figures from the [Umbrella] movement - in the absence of alternative viewpoints or perspectives - could result in an incomplete and lopsided discussion.” In other words, the anti-democracy camp only needs to refuse participation in discussion to thereby quell all discussion of democracy.

Three further observations are the following: (i) As a colleague at HKUST privately pointed out, panel discussions in, for example, the School of Science, on, say, the topic of evolution, do not include creationists (representatives of the alternative viewpoint that the Earth was created by God and not by evolution). If the email from the Office of the Dean of the SHSS is to make any sense, the School of Science at HKUST needs to be shut down for consistently providing an incomplete and lopsided discussion (and education).<sup>35</sup>

(ii) The person writing as “Office of the Dean” didn’t invent the explanation offered in the email, someone in the Asia Society Hong Kong did. The executive director of the Hong Kong

<sup>35</sup> HKUST management’s “Dare to Dream” slogan (above) would have to be balanced by some equally well-known counter-slogan such as *dadao gongchancang* (Down with the Communist Party).

Center of the Asia Society, in canceling the screening of the same film, in late 2016 wrote that the “Asia Society is a nonpartisan educational institution, and we aim to present programs that are balanced and present both sides of a topic.” According to the *New York Times*, “The concern was not the 117-minute documentary itself, she [the executive director] said, but rather the post-screening panel, which would have only featured speakers with pro-democracy viewpoints.”<sup>36</sup> (Do pro-CCP agents systematically boycott panel discussions on topics related to democracy, perhaps following orders?) Half a year later, in summer 2017, the Asia Society barred a democracy activist from speaking at a literary event at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center, giving a similar rationale.<sup>37</sup> The Gleichschaltung of Hong Kong society thus seeps via Gleichschaltung of public discourse into Gleichschaltung of academia.<sup>38</sup>

(iii) It continues to be the case that nobody takes responsibility for the censorship decision.<sup>39</sup> The text of the email mentions “SHSS [School of Humanities and Social Science] leadership recognized that a panel ...” and “The School explored... but ultimately decided that an expanded panel would detract...,” and the email was signed “Office of the Dean, School of Humanities and Social Science.”<sup>40</sup>

I am a faculty member of the Division of Social Science in the School of Humanities and Social Science. I was never consulted in the making of this school decision. Whoever the “school” in this email is: dean, associate deans, division heads, division executive committees (perhaps following an order of the provost, or an outside order): None of these represent the School faculty. None of them was in any way chosen by the division or school faculty. All have been selected and appointed top-down.

## 6. The PRC’s best scholars no longer consider HKUST a safe haven from the CCP

Around 2016, we had two job applications in the Social Science Division at HKUST by highly desirable hires, both senior Mainland-based scholars and PRC nationals with U.S. PhDs. One of them withdrew his application and went back, from the Mainland, to the U.S. The other scholar may have abandoned his application, or may not have been welcomed by

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<sup>36</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/11/world/asia/hong-kong-umbrella-revolution-film.html>, or <https://www.hongkongfp.com/2016/11/13/asia-society-hong-kong-cancels-screening-umbrella-protest-film-amid-political-concerns/>, accessed 15 November 2017. The Asia Society had no such qualms with related events a year earlier.

<sup>37</sup> This decision appears to be traceable to Ronnie C. Chan, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Asia Society Hong Kong. See his statements at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/world/asia/asia-society-and-one-of-its-leaders-are-at-odds-over-hong-kong.html>, accessed 15 November 2017. He is also reported to have been outspoken in his support of Leung Chun-ying, the chief executive of Hong Kong at the time of the Umbrella Movement. (On Ronnie Chan’s position within the Asia Society, see <https://asiasociety.org/hong-kong/about-our-board.>)

<sup>38</sup> In the above discussed case of the FCC and Victor Mallet, the PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (and other CCP representatives) are publicly documented to have pressured the FCC into calling off the luncheon talk. No such public documentation of any CCP interference is available for the case of the Asia Society; presumably, such pressure can be levied privately on Ronnie Chan, chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Asia Society Hong Kong, or Ronnie Chan has the (willing) nous to call off events on his own accord.

<sup>39</sup> The text of the email, to judge by the style, was written by the then division head of the Division of Social Science.

<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, “SHSS leadership recognized”—nowhere in the email does it say that the SHSS leadership took any action. “The School ... decided ... would detract”—the School didn’t *un-invite* any guests.



HKUST (though there was strong support by colleagues for the hire) and continues to maintain an existing U.S.-based affiliation.

Discussions with colleagues and conversations with other Mainland scholars suggest that Mainland academics no longer regard HKUST (and Hong Kong academia in general) a safe haven. As academia in the Mainland becomes ever more constrained, the benefits of Hong Kong—including cultural similarity and in particular proximity to family members in the Mainland—no longer outweigh the dangers to academia.

## 7. HKUST's deep integration with the CCP-controlled Mainland

HKUST runs a graduate school and research institute in the PRC. HKUST represents all Hong Kong universities in a new Beijing – Hong Kong university alliance. The dean of SHSS (2009-2018) runs a research team of Mainlanders, in the Mainland, doing archival research that constitutes his career.<sup>41</sup>

PRC institutions give awards to Hong Kong academics and HKUST management then lauds these PRC achievement awards. (PRC institutions are not known for valuing critical, independent thinking.) HKUST faculty collaborate in research with PRC institutions and at times depend on funding from PRC institutions. PRC institutions are involved in everything from enabling HKUST to operate in the PRC to the selection of (some) PRC students to come to HKUST in Hong Kong. Such deep integration is explicitly favored by the Hong Kong “government” (with no concern for academic freedom).<sup>42</sup>

A new HKUST campus is envisaged for Guangzhou (Canton), paid for by the PRC, that eventually equals the HKUST campus in Hong Kong in size. No faculty consultation, let alone faculty vote on this new campus was ever undertaken.<sup>43</sup> The top-down initiative includes ten tentative topics for postgraduate student training, of which none is in the humanities and social sciences. This is at a time when Cornell University suspended two academic exchanges and a research program with Renmin (People's) University in Beijing because of concerns over academic freedom (the collaboration having been between Cornell's school of industrial and labor relations and Renmin's school of labor).<sup>44</sup> HKUST's new Mainland campus stays clear of areas of socio-economic or political relevance.

Being fully financed by the Mainland, HKUST's new Guangzhou campus may ultimately have to focus on a PRC wish list, perhaps along the lines of the internationally controversial “Made in China 2025” industrial policy.<sup>45</sup> At a time when scores of undercover Chinese

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<sup>41</sup> The same dean controls the career of every faculty member of the school at HKUST.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, University Grants Committee (2010), Chapter 5. For example, paragraph 5.9 reads: “We would encourage Hong Kong universities to pursue actively and according to their individual strengths the development of distance learning, of collaboration in joint or double degrees, and in a measured way other forms of delivery of educational provision in the Mainland.”

<sup>43</sup> Under a CCP system, open consultation and discussion with CCP faculty and non-CCP faculty is presumably (or: apparently) not necessary.

<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.ft.com/content/b07c275c-d832-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8>, accessed 15 November 2018.

<sup>45</sup> “Made in China 2025” is controversial for a number of reasons, including the following: The PRC government subsidizes domestic products while excluding foreign alternatives; it sets substitution targets for foreign products; it pours large amounts of financial resources into various research and development funds that benefit domestic enterprises; it may request the transfer of foreign technology in exchange for domestic market access; it restricts access to public procurement for foreign firms and limits the possibility for inbound foreign

military researchers are no longer welcome in Western universities where they enrolled in ‘hard sciences,’<sup>46</sup> and at a time when Xi Jinping promotes ‘military-civil fusion,’ perhaps HKUST can help fill the gap? HKUST management certainly embraces the opportunity.

As faculty members fluidly move between the HKUST (Hong Kong) and the HKUST (Guangzhou) campuses in their teaching and research, what happens when some faculty members are banned by the CCP from entering the PRC? Does being banned by the CCP destroy one’s career at HKUST? Will new faculty hiring be subject to prior vetting by the CCP? The Guangzhou campus appears yet another lever for the CCP to incentivize self-censorship at HKUST and to keep out (from the point of the CCP) undesirable faculty members from HKUST altogether.

### C. Conclusions

This article presented and examined seven diverse instances of Gleichschaltung at HKUST, throwing light on the extent of CCP influence on, if not CCP control over “academia” at HKUST. These instances indicate a primary focus on establishing the new “normal” rather than on open coercion. Coercion may nevertheless occur, albeit usually imperceptible to regular faculty members, when the Provost acts in response to a phone call that he receives, or when non-conforming faculty members are harmed via one of the multitude of channels available to HKUST management / the CCP.

As in the Germany of the 1930s, Gleichschaltung occurs under pseudo-legal cover, where HKUST President Tony Chan’s e-Letter makes explicit reference to the “rule of law” to justify his misinterpretation of the law. Formal processes of bureaucratic administration lend their authority to Gleichschaltung.

University management projects a picture of a thriving university. The HKUST “public affairs office” regularly boasts success stories. As in Germany of the 1930s, individual faculty members will think twice about venting their concerns about how the “university” is being managed / undergoes Gleichschaltung as the top-down proclaimed big “success” story of the ‘university’ isolates the individual faculty member whose views are contrary to the highly publicized ‘normal.’

A key mechanism in the Gleichschaltung of universities in the Third Reich was the dismissal and harassment of to the regime undesirable faculty members. Bracher (1966, p. 136) writes “In contrast to the existing tradition, the non-national-socialist university faculty was no longer certain of the duration of their employment and income; they were constantly threatened by interference from outside as well as manipulation of the curriculum, withdrawal of the examination right or denunciation in his own seminar...”

HKUST is designed with a multitude of mechanisms—all contrary to the professional norm and Western university practices—that are conducive to a similar environment. The list encompasses:<sup>47</sup>

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direct investment; it controls crucial technologies such as encryption devices and codes (and secures access for the state to the data of international companies operating in the PRC).

<sup>46</sup> See <https://www.ft.com/content/ebe95b76-d8cc-11e8-a854-33d6f82e62f8>, accessed 15 November 2018.

<sup>47</sup> Some of these mechanisms I have earlier elaborated on (Holz, 2008 and 2014).

- Real salary cuts for targeted faculty.
- A salary level and retirement funding that even under the most optimistic assumptions do not provide the funds needed to retire at HKUST's mandatory retirement age of 65.
- Selective re-hiring at the mandatory retirement age of 65 for short periods (1-2 years) at the discretion of the HKUST provost (without a faculty-based academic review), at a reduced salary level as determined by the provost.
- Blocking targeted faculty from teaching postgraduate students, and thereby de facto from working with postgraduate students, i.e., sabotaging their career.
- Offering special career or income-earning opportunities of the most varied kind, discretely, to individual favored faculty members.
- HKUST management has the right to fire any substantiated faculty member, without explanation, at four months' notice.
- Denying the right to leave Hong Kong. (Faculty need management approval to leave Hong Kong, with additional limits on how many days may maximally be spent outside Hong Kong.)
- Fake grievance procedures. (HKUST management disregards HKUST's formal grievance procedures.)
- Absence of a faculty Senate. (A 100% faculty Senate is the norm in academia. The majority of the members of the HKUST "Senate" are management appointees.)

The list continues, from discretionary decisions on (pseudo-) sabbatical leave to the allocation of faculty offices. Normal practices of academic self-administration are absent at HKUST. HKUST management decides on every aspect of a faculty member's livelihood and career.

Consequently, perhaps the most important feature of Gleichschaltung at HKUST is self-censorship. The complete absence of transparency at HKUST adds the necessary 'vagueness' to ensure that self-censorship is total. For example, as long as salary changes are discrete (and secret) decisions made by one manager, anyone wishing for a salary increase which at least matches Hong Kong's inflation rate cannot but resort to an utmost degree of servility. The incentives to conform at HKUST are simply off the charts for a university. Not astonishingly, time and again faculty members do not speak up and turn a blind eye to matters of concern for academia and society. The key to surviving and thriving at HKUST is 'obedience.'

That is in perfect conformity with CCP aspirations. For it is not some ideological framework that is being imposed by the CCP. It is "falling in line" with the CCP/HKUST command that is the objective of the Gleichschaltung of HKUST.

Obedience to an authoritarian regime is not a natural trait of (real) intellectuals. Thus, numerous faculty members choose to *retire in the job*, i.e., to limit their involvement with the institution to lip service.<sup>48</sup> It is exactly the vacuum created by a totalitarian state—that cannot accept the professionalism and ethos of academia but neither wishes to abandon the hope for scientific progress (Geuter 1984)—which brings forth an environment conducive to opportunistic behavior, passive withdrawal, and silent obstructionism. The HKUST regime then relies on a small group of people, exceedingly well remunerated for their support/servility, to create the semblance of a university. At the same time, the regime's

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<sup>48</sup> "[The totalitarian state does not] distinguish itself by smooth efficiency, but by an infinitely wasteful forced order without the possibility of legal control over the power holders [...]" (Bracher, 1956, p. 42).

degree of institutionalized control over academia and faculty—probably beyond any degree seen in 1930s Germany, which had a history of independent thought and academic freedom—allows the creation of pervasive incentives for obedience, preventing the kind of extreme opportunism that marked academia in Germany under Gleichschaltung.

With the Umbrella Movement in 2014, the grave risk to the CCP associated with an unconstrained or little constrained Hong Kong academia became apparent. Political danger to the CCP on such a scale would typically trigger a massive mobilization under a leading small group tasked to coordinate countermeasures across all departments. This means pushing Gleichschaltung via the CCP media, the Hong Kong government, individual University Council members, individual faculty and students (and their organizations), and whatever other channels are suitable or can be acquired. There will be clear objectives with coordinated strategies to achieve them, and identification of red lines that trigger a hard CCP response.

Mainland mechanisms of CCP control over academia increasingly find their way into HKUST. As of early 2018, the dean has gone as far as to issue quantitative “production quotas” for research, which, if not met, trigger extensive additional teaching penalties. (It is unlikely that such measures were independently conceived by the dean himself.) The University Grants Committee (which advises the Hong Kong “government” on the funding and strategic development of higher education in Hong Kong) in summer 2017 issued a policy to require professors to fill in time sheets documenting how they spend each day, a measure that appears not yet implemented as of November 2018, despite an aggressive article in the *China Daily*, the CCP’s English language outlet (Hong Kong edition) in 2017 claiming that it will be implemented by September 2018.<sup>49</sup> The university leadership itself will beginning 2019 be newly subjected to an “Accountability Agreement” or “Hong Kong Compact” with the Hong Kong “government” that covers numerous “performance” criteria, perhaps resembling the PRC’s state-owned enterprise responsibility system of the 1980s and early 1990s.<sup>50</sup> Academic freedom, an open society, critical and independent thought are not on the list of performance criteria.

At HKUST, no evident obstacle or push-back to Gleichschaltung exists. The chain of selection and appointment connects lower-level HKUST managers to the provost, the provost

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.thestandard.com.hk/section-news.php?id=184262>, accessed 22 November 2018. The *China Daily* published an article by an adjunct professor at a Hong Kong college, Fung Keung, titled “Accountability finally comes to university teachers,” stating that “barring violent and unforeseeable protests, all university teachers in Hong Kong government-funded institutions [...] will be held accountable for how they spend time on teaching or research on a daily basis. [...] “If teachers engage in research, well, the government needs to know what the research is all about and how much time they spend on it in a particular day. [...] I, being a university professor, fully support the government’s latest move. [...] It is hoped my colleagues in government-funded universities would embrace the UGC’s new plan with grade and honor.” ([http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2017-06/29/content\\_29927248.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2017-06/29/content_29927248.htm), accessed 22 November 2018). To judge from an internet search, other Hong Kong media did not pick up the issue, and the topic never registered with faculty in my school at HKUST. The *China Daily* (Hong Kong) is known to approach academics, especially non-substantiated non-China academics, for articles with the promise of substantial financial remuneration.

<sup>50</sup> See Mok (undated). A direct email inquiry to the UGC resulted in a reference to the chapter on governance in the University Grants Committee Annual Report 2017-2018. The one relevant passage in the annual report reads: “For the establishment of a written accountability framework, the University Accountability Agreement (UAA) was endorsed by the UGC in September 2017 after extensive consultations with the universities. The UAA would form part of the universities’ Planning Exercise Proposal for the 2019-22 triennium. Apart from setting out duties and responsibilities associated with public funding, the UAA and the particular performance indicators will help UGC assess the progress of universities against their individual circumstances, but not in direct comparison with others.”

(and president) to the University Council, the University Council to the Hong Kong chief executive, and the Hong Kong chief executive (and University Council members) to the CCP.

The enmeshing of CCP interests and the interests of controlling stakeholders at HKUST could not be tighter (if the CCP is not a major stakeholder itself, or the only meaningful stakeholder). In an environment of society-wide Gleichschaltung, faculty acquiescence at HKUST becomes the expected “normal,” supported by a phalanx of incentives to self-censor. Those implementing Gleichschaltung at HKUST have a habit of refusing to take responsibility for their actions and hide behind the labels of institutions, suggesting they understand the significance of what they are doing. The only authority to hold them accountable being the CCP and its agents, there exists accountability only *against* independent thought and against taking responsibility for safeguarding academia.

Gleichschaltung of HKUST appears as advanced and powerful as of universities in 1930s Germany, if not more so. At HKUST Gleichschaltung is additionally secured by measures well-proven to be effective in the PRC. The consequences for academia and society are as negative now and here as they were 85 years ago in Germany.

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