

TWELVE

The Chinese Dream in Popular Culture

*China as Producer and Consumer of Films  
at Home and Abroad*

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A rising China, manifested most clearly in its steadily increasing role in the world economy, has begun to challenge the undisputed leadership of the United States in key arenas of world affairs. To take one example, despite direct pleas from the Obama administration, Europe's biggest economies and some of the key allies of the United States in Asia became founding members of a Chinese investment bank—the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—which, from the American point of view, poses a direct challenge to the World Bank and other American-led institutions that have exercised global economic dominance going back to the Bretton Woods conference in 1944.<sup>1</sup> China's ascent to become the world's second-largest economy is just one arena in which the emerging Asian giant has risen to second place. China's film market as well, growing around 35 percent a year, is now also the second largest, with expectations that it will surpass the flat North American market (the United

States and Canada) in 2017 or 2018. Indeed, in February 2015, during the lucrative Lunar New Year holiday when Hollywood and other foreign films are routinely barred from distribution, China's monthly box office earnings for the first time surpassed those of the United States.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, new milestones continue to be set. For example, *Fast and Furious 7*, which taps into middle-class obsessions with owning a car, took in 391 million renminbi (RMB) (\$63.1 million) on its opening day on April 12, 2015, almost doubling the previous record of *Transformers 4: Age of Extinction*, which took in 194.8 million RMB on June 27, 2014.<sup>3</sup> *Furious 7* finished its run at \$390 million, breaking the record of \$320 million set by *Transformers 4* in 2014, although even that record has now been surpassed in 2016 by Stephen Chow's *The Mermaid (Meiren yu)*, which took in a staggering \$526.8 million.<sup>4</sup>

Hollywood has achieved its success even with the obvious market manipulation intended to limit foreign film penetration and ensure that Chinese films generate over 50 percent of the domestic box office each year, in effect recognition that China's cultural products are less attractive than their foreign counterparts. Thus, just as a rising China has been frustrated by the continued monopolization of leadership roles by the West and Japan within established economic institutions, in the culture and media fields as well, highlighted by Hollywood's success in China and China's failure in overseas film markets, China has sought to devise strategies that will make their cultural productions more attractive to Western consumers, while at the same time limiting their own consumption of foreign culture.

Given China's global ambitions and the growing importance of the domestic Chinese market for their product, Hollywood studios have been virtually compelled to partner more closely with their Chinese counterparts; indeed, major Hollywood players, including both television and movie production units, have been signing deals and setting up joint ventures and co-financing projects with China at a record pace. Rather than continuing the current one-way street, in which Hollywood film, Western and Korean television series, and other foreign cultural products succeed in the Chinese market while Chinese cultural products are almost invisible abroad, Chinese media

executives have been very clear on their goals. For example, Ren Zhonglun, president of the state-run Shanghai Film Group, told a Western reporter, "We want to learn how to make movies that appeal to a global audience," an aspiration often repeated by other Chinese film executives.<sup>5</sup>

This relationship between Hollywood and China, marked primarily by competition within China's domestic market, but increasingly revealing patterns of cooperation both domestically and internationally, is part of a wider competition that has become increasingly clear since late 2012, between the then newly minted "Chinese dream" and the long-established "American dream." While the Chinese dream, as is true of the American dream, is intended to appeal both to domestic and international constituencies, at present the competition has been manifested most directly *within* the Chinese domestic market, with the primary target audience Chinese youth—the so-called post-'80s and post-'90s generations—as well as the ever-expanding middle class, and their newly disposable income. As suggested above, the competition between the two dreams is most pronounced within the cultural field, particularly entertainment, as China has sought to expand to become a major content producer and not just a consumer of cultural products from abroad. Their efforts have to date been far more successful in their domestic market than overseas, but such success has required certain compromises with state-sanctioned values and, arguably, represents an acknowledgment of the power and seductiveness of the American dream, and foreign culture more generally.

Given the arguments to follow, it is important to note at the outset that a comparison between the Chinese and American dreams requires a disaggregation of the two dreams. For example, it should be clear that there is widespread support within China for China's rise and its foreign policy initiatives—indeed, for the pursuit of China's "national interest"—and widespread criticism of American foreign policy initiatives. At the same time, however, the American dream to this point appears to be more attractive to Chinese youth than its Chinese counterpart, with Chinese propaganda officials and China's leadership actively seeking to counter the enticements offered by the West. What this means in effect is that for Chinese

youth there are *two* Chinas and *two* Americas, with Chinese youth strongly supporting China while sharply criticizing America on the international stage, but favoring America over China when it comes to cultural issues, particularly popular culture, and other aspects of domestic society including, based on compelling internal survey data from Chinese social scientists, the American political system.<sup>6</sup> Film box office and TV series viewership, as well as other documentary materials, some of which are discussed below, also support this conclusion.

In the course of the chapter I demonstrate a number of ironies and contradictions that mark this competition. First, as suggested above, despite the fact that the present and future rise of China to superpower status has been widely documented in public opinion studies, and American power appears to be declining, major aspects of the American dream still resonate with Chinese youth; indeed, the rise of the American dream in China has occurred precisely when the failures of the dream for American youth have been widely acknowledged. Second, and related to the first point, those promoting the Chinese dream and Chinese exceptionalism more broadly often begin with the superiority of Chinese culture, yet China has been losing the cultural war to the United States, not only internationally in terms of soft power projection, but also to a surprising extent domestically, an outcome that is particularly galling to those responsible for promoting Chinese culture. Third, as I note below, one major reason for the lack of Chinese success is a basic contradiction in Chinese cultural policy, which has multiple aims, including the production of culture that is consistent with "socialist values" and the Chinese dream, unlike the high-concept Hollywood films and other Western cultural products that are aimed to appeal universally, across all cultures, and simply to turn a profit. Moreover, in its efforts to "prove" that a China that has risen to superpower status will not imitate American hegemonist policies, China has attempted to demonstrate the country's *uniqueness*, which not surprisingly has limited its appeal outside the country;<sup>7</sup> ironically, this approach has also limited its appeal *within* China as well.

### COMPARING DREAMS

Despite some quite obvious differences in content, the Chinese and American dreams are linked together in a number of important ways and are very much in competition for the affections of Chinese youth. Moreover, Chinese authorities have indirectly acknowledged the existence of this competition and have issued consistent warnings against the seductiveness of Western, primarily American, culture and values.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, there is some evidence that even the Chinese dream concept and discourse was stimulated in part by an article by *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, who suggested in a column prior to the 18th Party Congress held in November 2012 that Xi Jinping needed to have a Chinese dream that was different from the American dream.<sup>9</sup> China's biggest circulation newspaper, *Reference News*, published a translation and, according to Xinhua, the Chinese dream "suddenly became a hot topic . . . at home and abroad."<sup>10</sup> After Xi began to use the phrase, a magazine published by Xinhua called Xi's idea "the best response to Friedman."<sup>11</sup>

Discussions of the American dream are long-standing in the literature on American history and culture, and are often linked with American exceptionalism. While there are variations and the meaning has changed over time, the dream generally has included such aspects as freedom, upward mobility, equality, and home ownership, although perhaps James Truslow Adams, the "godfather" of the American dream discourse, put it best when he wrote "the *American Dream*, that dream of a land in which life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement . . . regardless of the fortuitous circumstances of birth or position."<sup>12</sup>

In contrast to the American dream, the Chinese dream, at least in its current form, is a new initiative, although the themes of building a rich and powerful China have been a part of various reform movements for over one hundred years. Its most recent iteration and current meaning can be traced to the visit by Xi and six other members of the standing committee of the Politburo to the Revolutionary History Museum to view "The Road toward Renewal" exhibition on November 29, 2012. In Xi's speech introducing the Chinese dream

he spoke of "the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" and emphasized how the humiliations suffered by China since the nineteenth century due to weakness and backwardness would soon be over, that China was "now closer than ever to the goal of . . . national revival."<sup>13</sup> Right from the start, therefore, unlike the American dream, the Chinese dream has been more about the nation than about the individual. To be sure, everyone is also encouraged to have his or her own dream,<sup>14</sup> and it is instructive to examine through the available survey data whether these individual dreams fit within the larger narrative of a collective dream for China. However, commentaries in the official media make it clear that the Chinese dream is about patriotism and collectivism more than personal struggles, and that its realization relies on Party leadership.<sup>15</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Chinese media has sought to distinguish the two dreams, and has been quite consistent in pointing out the differences. One of the most useful comparisons, published in a restricted circulation journal by Shi Yuzhi, a Chinese academic in Singapore, points out seven differences between the Chinese and American dreams, with the clear message that the two dreams are based on very different geographical and historical experiences, and while the American dream is based on individual efforts and individual success, the Chinese dream unites the individual and the state in an indivisible whole.<sup>16</sup> For example, he notes that since ancient times China has always had the concept of the country as a family (*jiaguo*), with a strong collective consciousness so that happiness can only be shared together (*gongxiang*), both for the family and the state. On the other hand, European and American culture stresses individualism and the pursuit of individual freedom and success. In addition, since the Opium War, China and its people have struggled and paid a heavy price in dealing with adversity, while America has not felt this kind of pain. Therefore the Chinese dream must be for the glory of the nation (*minzu*) while the American dream stresses individual prosperity, success and a rise in social status. As Shi concludes, this means that the Chinese dream cannot separate the individual from the nation; they are like two feet on the same body.

Although he does not state it directly, his analysis makes it clear that whereas the Chinese dream calls for a great deal of self-sacrifice

for the interests of the nation, the American dream offers an individual success without reference to the nation or any collective force beyond his or her own efforts. Survey and public opinion research reveal how individual values currently prevalent in China make the state-sanctioned values highlighted in the Chinese dream such a hard sell when juxtaposed against American or Western values. For example, a global survey conducted by the French public opinion firm Ipsos, published in December 2013, found that happiness is more tied to material possession in China than anywhere else. Globally, 34 percent of 16,000 people across twenty countries said they measured their success by the things they owned; in China the percentage was more than double the global average, reaching as high as 71 percent. In addition, two out of three Chinese respondents noted they felt “under a lot of pressure to be successful and make money,” more than in any other surveyed country.<sup>17</sup> *Shanghai Daily* ran a weekly series asking respondents from different generations to discuss their own dreams.<sup>18</sup> For the youngest generations, the results likewise showed the importance of materialism and individual goals. One interviewee from each generation was highlighted. The youngest participant, a six-year-old, said, “My dream is to study in America, to play piano better than Lang Lang and give concerts all over the world.” Those born in the 1980s and 1990s expressed a similar emphasis on material success. For example, the representative of twenty-something Chinese noted, “My dream is to find a good husband who is honest, economically stable, owns a downtown apartment and has a car.”

#### **CHINA AS A FILM PRODUCER AND CONSUMER IN THE DOMESTIC MARKET**

The detailed discussion above comparing the Chinese and American dreams and the importance of materialism for a younger generation, which, in contrast to their elders, has been raised in an era of relative prosperity, is meant to provide some context to the decisions Chinese film and political authorities have made with regard to the promotion of the film industry. In the intense competition with

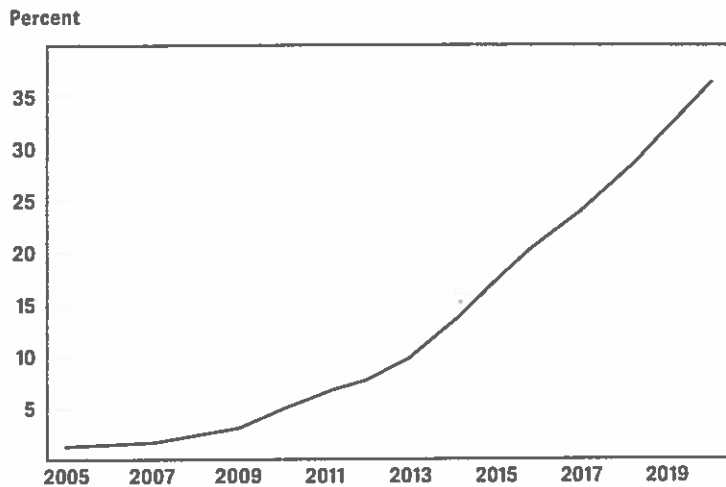
Hollywood for market share, the local films that have done best have generally been broad or romantic comedies in which material success is highlighted, or action films with impressive special effects, a well-known feature of Hollywood films. At the same time, there has been an attempt to balance the pure entertainment by producing “main melody films” (*zhu xuan lv*), focusing on the Party’s revolutionary history and political icons, albeit with very limited success. Faced with a choice between using film to foster state-sanctioned “socialist core values,” to use the terminology of film bureaucrats, or winning the box office battle with Hollywood, the latter goal has proven far more compelling than the former.

The growth of China’s domestic film market has been a remarkable success story, as figure 12-1 demonstrates. Hollywood was invited to enter China’s theatrical film market in 1994 with the Warner Brothers film *The Fugitive* at a time when the Chinese domestic box office had reached its nadir and needed to be “rescued,” but Hollywood’s success was at first limited, primarily by a quota system that permitted only ten foreign-language films a year, but also by issues of censorship, including a ban on three major Hollywood studios in 1997 because of “anti-China bias” in specific films never intended for distribution in China. In addition, Hollywood had to accept a revenue-sharing system that limited their box office share to 10–13 percent of box office receipts, far less than in other markets. By 2000, despite a massive effort, the annual return from China was only about \$20 million, roughly the size of the return from Peru, and less than returns from Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, or the Philippines.<sup>19</sup> By contrast, given the market today, no Hollywood studio can afford to make a major film without first considering the reception in China, and it has become common for blockbuster films to add “China-friendly” components to help ensure success in that market. *Transformers 4: Age of Extinction* which, although since surpassed, became the most successful film of all time in China after its release in 2014, used Hong Kong locations, Chinese actors, and the product placement of Chinese brands as part of its appeal.

Moreover, as noted in figure 12-2, by 2017 or 2018 China is likely to replace North America as the largest film market in the world. These trends have had an enormous influence on Hollywood’s rela-



FIGURE 12-1. China's Domestic Box Office Share of Worldwide Box Office, 2005–20 (estimate)

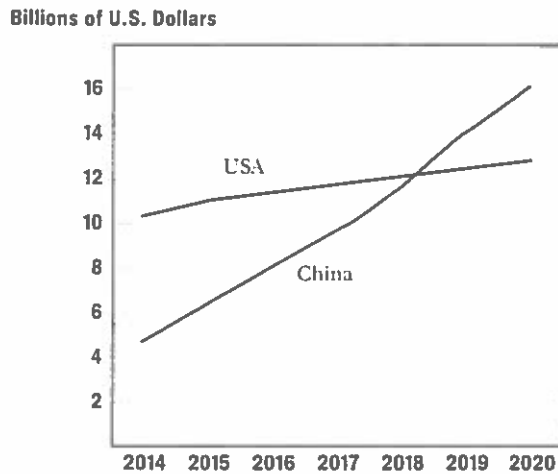


Source: Rob Cain, "Faster and Furiouser: China's Q1 Box Office Review," April 8, 2015 (chinafilmbiz.com).

tionship with China, as well as China's overall film market strategy. Given the success of Chinese films at home and their lack of success outside China—to be discussed below—it might be expected that film authorities would be willing to forego the overseas market and simply concentrate on the competition with Hollywood in China's domestic market. Indeed, no film industry has been able to compete with Hollywood on the world market, much less within North America's own market. However, Chinese ambitions are not simply based on box office results in film markets, but include a strong desire to project a positive image of China abroad and to demonstrate that depictions of Chinese culture have an appeal beyond the country's borders.

In order to combat the Hollywood juggernaut within China, a number of strategies have been adopted, ranging from the quota system mentioned above, which has now been raised to thirty-four foreign-language films, most of which are from Hollywood, with fourteen of the thirty-four reserved for IMAX or 3-D films; blackout dates to reserve the busiest times of the year for domestic productions;

FIGURE 12-2. Projected Annual Box Office,  
China versus North America, 2014–20



Source: Rob Cain, "Faster and Furiouser: China's Q1 Box Office Review," April 8, 2015 (chinafilmbiz.com).

the release of two Hollywood blockbusters on the same date, or a delay in the release of a blockbuster until after its appearance in other markets; an often "benign neglect" to the problem of illegal downloading or piracy; the removal of Hollywood films while they were still successfully generating income; and manipulating box office receipts in favor of domestic films, particularly "patriotic" films that cannot succeed based simply on consumer demand. The goal of keeping Hollywood's market share below 50 percent each year has been successful, as table 12-1 makes clear. However, the table does not fully reveal the relative success of Hollywood films in China. China produced 638 theatrical feature films in 2013,<sup>20</sup> 618 in 2014, and 686 in 2015, although many of these never make it into first-run theaters. In 2013, for example, only 250 feature films, including imports, coproductions, and Hong Kong and Taiwan films actually made it into a theater that was part of a theater chain, although the number of domestic films shown in such venues increased to 259 in 2014 and 320 in 2015.<sup>21</sup> By contrast, in 2014 the foreign titles that made up the thirty-four-film quota—virtually all of which were

TABLE 12-1. Box Office Comparison between Domestic and Imported Films from 2007-15

Year	Domestic films, U.S. dollars	Market percentage	Imported films, U.S. dollars	Market percentage
2007	291 million	52.5	263 million	47.5
2008	421 million	60.0	280 million	40.0
2009	566 million	56.5	436 million	43.5
2010	926 million	56.4	717 million	43.6
2011	1.135 billion	53.6	982 million	46.4
2012	1.336 billion	48.5	1.421 billion	51.5
2013	2.061 billion	58.6	1.454 billion	41.4
2014	2.65 billion	54.5	2.17 billion	45.5
2015 <sup>a</sup>	4.17 billion	61.6	2.61 billion	38.4

**Box office above 100 million yuan**

Domestic films	Imported films
3	4
9	3
12	8
17	10
20	18
22	21
32	28
36	30
48	33

Sources: For regular domestic and imported films, 2007-13: *China Film Industry Report 2013-2014* (Shared version), EntGroup Inc., January 2014, p. 8 (online). For films that brought in more than 100 million yuan, 2007-12: *2012-2013 nian Zhongguo dianying changye yanjiu baogao* [China Film Industry Research Report 2012-2013], Yi en zixun [EntGroup Inc.], March 2013, p. 36 (online). Remaining data, except for 2015, are from *Zhongguo dianying changye yanjiu baogao, 2014* [The Research Report on China Film Industry, 2014] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2014), pp. 239-246; Clifford Coonan, "China's Box Office Surges 36 percent in 2014 to \$4.76 Billion," *The Hollywood Reporter*, January 1, 2015 (online). All data from 2015 are from *Zhongguo dianying changye yanjiu baogao, 2016* [The Research Report on China Film Industry, 2016] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2016), p. 32; *Variety*, December 31, 2015 (online); the 4.76 billion reported in 2015 was adjusted to 4.82 billion in this report.

a. For 2015 the top twenty-eight imported films were all IMAX and/or 3-D, which was true for ten of the top fourteen domestic films.

TABLE 12-2. China Yearly Box Office, 2016, as of August<sup>a</sup>

Rank	Movie title	Gross	Release
1	<i>The Mermaid</i>	\$526,848,189	2/8
2	<i>Zootopia</i>	\$235,591,000	3/4
3	<i>Warcraft</i>	\$220,841,090	6/8
4	<b><i>Captain America: Civil War</i></b>	\$190,429,000	5/6
5	<i>The Monkey King 2 in 3D</i>	\$185,402,420	2/8
6	<i>From Vegas to Macau 3</i>	\$172,104,369	2/8
7	<b><i>Kung Fu Panda 3</i></b>	\$154,304,371	1/29
8	<b><i>The Jungle Book</i></b>	\$150,140,000	4/15
9	<i>Skiptrace</i>	\$133,103,621	7/21
10	<i>Time Raiders</i>	\$127,034,013	8/5
11	<b><i>Star Wars: The Force Awakens</i></b>	\$124,159,138	1/9
12	<i>Ip Man 3</i>	\$124,101,198	3/4
13	<b><i>X-Men: Apocalypse</i></b>	\$120,765,095	6/3

Source: [www.boxofficemojo.com](http://www.boxofficemojo.com).

a. Hollywood films are shown in bold type; *Kung Fu Panda* was a coproduction between DreamWorks Animation, its Chinese unit Oriental DreamWorks, and their Chinese partners, which include China Media Capital, Shanghai Media Group, and Shanghai Alliance.

Hollywood films—grossed \$1.81 billion, around 38 percent of the total.<sup>22</sup> Table 12-2, which lists the top thirteen box office hits for 2016 (as of August), with Hollywood films in bold, provides a good indication of the latter's appeal. Indeed, when the Chinese box office suffered a 4.6 percent drop in the second quarter of 2016, the first full quarter drop in over half a decade, the government took the unprecedented step of letting a few Hollywood movies into the market in July, a period usually reserved for local productions, although that did not prevent a further 18 percent drop in the film market in July, compared to the year before.<sup>23</sup>

The competition in the film industry for the domestic market is part of a larger competition China confronts as it seeks to temper and control the dissemination of Western culture, which has become

particularly popular among university students and the rising middle class. Wang Zhonglei, the cofounder of Huayi Brothers, one of China's leading film production companies, noted that 44 percent of the film audience in China can be found among those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four, while another 7 percent is made up of those between the ages of thirteen and seventeen.<sup>24</sup> One recent survey that has received a considerable amount of attention within China focused on those Chinese who have already become "internationalized," the so-called Generation of International Floaters (*Guoji-piao yidai*).<sup>25</sup> Conducted in 2013 and covering 4,900 people in sixty-two cities, the study found that the post-1980s generation constituted 59.3 percent of these "floaters," while the post-1990s generation made up 18.6 percent. By comparison, those from the post-1970s generation made up 13.8 percent, with earlier generations making up only 8.1 percent. It is not surprising that almost 80 percent of this new group consists of young people since educational attainment is an important criterion, with the large majority either having already studied abroad or with future plans to do so. Among this group, 29.9 percent plan to go abroad for a vacation each year. As many as 53.3 percent like to watch English-language films *without* Chinese subtitles and to use foreign websites such as Facebook and Twitter, which are banned in China. They favor international brand-name products because of their high quality and durability, and prefer to drink Starbucks and Chivas Regal and to drive Volkswagens, Audis, and Fords. Recognizing the attractiveness of the foreign, Chinese entrepreneurs have built hotels in China with names like Marvelot (using the same Chinese characters as the Marriott), Haiyatt, and Peninsula.<sup>26</sup>

In terms of popular culture, as many as 67.4 percent prefer English and American TV series, with only 20.8 percent choosing Chinese domestic shows. American shows that were particularly popular included *The Big Bang Theory* (likely the most popular show since it has reportedly been streamed more than 1.3 billion times over the past five years), *The Vampire Diaries*, and *2 Broke Girls*. Other recent popular shows include *House of Cards*, the British show *Sherlock*, and *Masters of Sex*. It is important to note that many of the most popular shows have been legally licensed and shown on streaming sites, which have been less subject to censorship than regular TV. According to the

Chinese entertainment research firm EntGroup, in 2012 Sohu had 144 American and British TV shows available for streaming, Tencent had 123 shows and Youku Tudou had 109, suggesting that the influence of these channels of distribution are even more important in introducing Western culture to China than regular TV or theatrical films. This “loophole” in the censorship system had allowed Chinese viewers to watch shows with the type of violence, scandal, superstition, or other sensitive themes that would not otherwise be approved. However, this loophole has now been closed since new rules announced in September 2014 and implemented in April 2015 require video sites such as Sohu.com and Baidu’s iQiyi, previously left to police themselves, to submit episodes to censors for approval only once the full seasons have aired. Seasons beginning in September and ending in May in the United States won’t be legally available to Chinese Internet users until June at the earliest, and then only after censorship. The restrictions are a setback for foreign media companies such as 21st Century Fox and CBS, which have struck licensing deals with Sohu, iQiyi, and Youku Tudou, and will likely stimulate a revival of piracy through illegal downloading and illicit DVD sales.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps equally telling is the impact of globalization on even the most popular Chinese TV programs among post-1980s youth and other international floaters. Five of the top ten TV shows revealed by the survey, including the top three, were Chinese versions of foreign programs, often with copyrights, which have been purchased. And even some of the “pure” Chinese programs on the list have foreign components, for example a South Korean host, a program introducing foreign culture, or an obvious rip-off of a foreign show that did not receive copyright approval. Nor are the foreign influences in Chinese popular culture solely Western. By far the most popular program—chosen by over 40 percent of respondents, with 75 million viewers per episode and a number one national ranking—was the Hunan Provincial TV reality travel show *Where Are We Going, Dad?*, a Chinese remake of a Korean show. In addition, the enormous popularity of the South Korean drama *My Love from the Star* (*Lai zi xing xing de ni*) which, although never broadcast on a major network, had over three billion viewers on major Internet sites, and sparked a craze in China for Korean-style fried chicken served with beer, after the female star was repeatedly shown eating the meal in the show.

Well aware of the craze the drama has created in China, one member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee (CPPCC) complained that, "It is more than just a Korean soap opera. It hurts our cultural dignity," openly wondering why China could not make a show as good or as big of a hit.<sup>28</sup> The number two show was the Zhejiang Provincial TV program *The Voice of China*, a reality talent show based on the Dutch program *The Voice of Holland*. When released in February 2016, *Descendants of the Sun* (*Taiyang de houyi*) was equally popular, with even more direct warnings from the Ministry of Public Security on the dangers of watching Korean dramas.<sup>29</sup>

However, even these impressive figures do not reveal the full impact of globalization on the Chinese film and TV markets. For example, the eighth-largest hit in 2014 was the Chinese film version of the TV show *Where Are We Going, Dad?* In addition, among the top ten Chinese films in 2013 were *Finding Mr. Right*, loosely based on *Sleepless in Seattle*, in which the leading characters successfully pursue the American dream by leaving China for Seattle; *Tiny Times*, which has been compared to a Chinese version of *Sex and the City*, without the sex; and *American Dreams in China*, which is based on the true story of a successful Beijing school set up to teach English to Chinese who wanted to study in the United States. Despite—or perhaps because of—their popularity, the government has begun to crack down on some of the most popular TV shows. For example, new regulations issued in 2016 stipulated that children, especially children of celebrities, could no longer be featured on Chinese reality television, ostensibly to protect children from the pitfalls of overnight fame. This restriction seemed particularly aimed at the aforementioned *Where Are We Going, Dad?* and Zhejiang TV's similar *Dad Is Back*, both of which featured children of celebrities.<sup>30</sup>

#### CHINA AS A FILM PRODUCER FOR THE OVERSEAS MARKET

As suggested above, the competition with Hollywood for China's domestic market has been a major story, both in China and the United States. Less often discussed is the competition overseas, including the lucrative North American market.<sup>31</sup> If the issue were only box office

results, a strong case could be made that pursuing overseas success, particularly in the highly developed North American and European markets, could not yield a winning strategy.<sup>32</sup> However, the rise of China internationally is considered incomplete without the strong promotion of Chinese cultural products outside the country's borders, in part because of the leadership's concern that China's image is being distorted by Western media and that the delivery of China's message can only be entrusted to Chinese media.

There was a time when there was considerable optimism over the prospects for Chinese-language films in North America and Europe, particularly in the wake of the success of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*, which brought in \$128 million at the box office in the United States and Canada, still more than twice as much as any foreign-language film has ever made in that market. This was followed by the box office success of such films as *Hero*, *Fearless*, *Kung Fu Hustle*, *Iron Monkey*, and *House of Flying Daggers*, all still among the top twenty-five foreign-language films ever marketed in North America. At the time the last of these successes was being released, around ten years ago, it appeared that martial arts films in Chinese were China's best hope to penetrate the North American and other Western markets. However, China has not had any notable successes in this market after 2006. Indeed, with rare exceptions, no recent foreign-language films have been box office successes.

This has required the search for new strategies to try and find a genre or formula that might succeed. One approach, adopted by Zhang Yimou and Feng Xiaogang, generally considered to be China's most successful directors, is the use of prominent Hollywood actors such as Christian Bale, Donald Sutherland, Adrien Brody, and Tim Robbins in their films, albeit still without positive results.<sup>33</sup> A second strategy, applied by Western distributors rather than Chinese film companies themselves, has been to take an action or martial arts film that has been successful in China and parts of Asia and reconfigure it—in effect to “dumb it down”—for Western audiences unfamiliar with Chinese history, culture, and Chinese film aesthetics. A classic example was *Red Cliff (Chi bi)*, a five-hour film on the Three Kingdoms period that was released separately in two parts and had been a big hit not only in China, but also in Japan and



South Korea. For the American version the distributor released a highly truncated single film with a running time of 148 minutes, primarily focused on the thrilling naval battle that occurs in Part 2, leaving out the long back story in Part 1 on the complex interrelationships among the major historical players. Despite the fact that the well-known John Woo, who has directed such American blockbusters as *Mission Impossible II* and *Face/Off*, directed it, the film made only \$627,047 in North America.

This strategy is most closely associated with producer Harvey Weinstein, who has had previous success in bringing Chinese films to North America and promoting them with extensive advertising in print and broadcast media. Nicknamed "Harvey Scissorhands," the list of films he has altered in an effort to expand their market, and his feuds with the original creators of these films, have become legendary.<sup>34</sup> His most recent attempt featured Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar Wai's *The Grandmaster* (*Yidai zongshi*), one of many films about Ip Man, best known as the martial arts teacher of Bruce Lee. In a familiar pattern, for its North American release Weinstein had the film reedited to cut out twenty-two minutes, used intertitles to explain Chinese history, had an on-screen identification of characters, and a voiceover by lead actor Tony Leung. *The Grandmaster* did prove to be the most successful Chinese film marketed in North America since 2006, bringing in \$6.5 million at the box office, ranking number forty-six among all foreign-language films since 1980. Moreover, unlike other Chinese-language films marketed in North America in recent years, which generally are shown only in Chinese communities in large cities and play on fewer than thirty screens during their theatrical run, *The Grandmaster* played on 804 screens, including those in communities with few Chinese residents. But very few, if any, Chinese films can afford the advertising budget allocated to Wong's film; indeed, the majority of the films from China are released by the Chinese distributor China Lion, which chooses Chinese blockbusters that have been highly successful in China and limits their distribution to Chinese communities. It is therefore not surprising that, *Grandmaster* aside, even the most successful Chinese blockbusters, with a few rare exceptions, bring in less than \$1.5 million, often much less.<sup>35</sup>

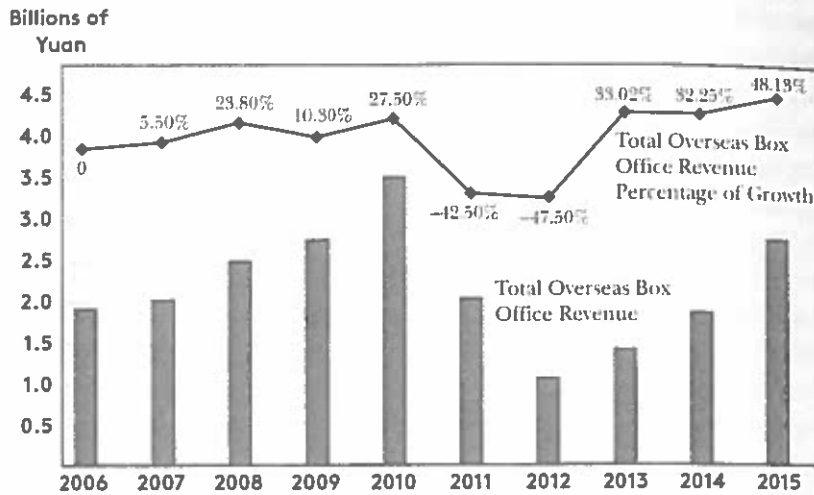
The reception of the *Detective Dee* films are a good indication of the changes in the last decade for Chinese action and martial arts films. Receiving outstanding reviews in such prestigious publications as the *New York Times*, the first *Detective Dee* film opened in September 2011, played on forty-eight screens, and brought in about \$460,000 at the box office. The second film in the series, which opened two years later in September 2013, played on thirty-five screens but brought in less than \$88,000. In his review of the first film, A. O. Scott suggested one of the crucial obstacles faced by any foreign-language film in this market, when he noted: "In a utopian, borderless world without subtitles, the arrival of *Detective Dee* and *the Mystery of the Phantom Flame* would be a global, multiplex event, and the work of its director, Tsui Hark, would be at least as well known among American seekers of cinematic thrills as that of Jerry Bruckheimer and Michael Bay."<sup>36</sup> The problem, of course, is that we don't live in such a world, and distributors and theater owners, whether it is a martial arts film or a broad comedy, view any subtitled film as an art-house film. This situation is not new; when the production manager for Feng Xiaogang's film *Be There or Be Square* (*Bujian busan*), which was shot in Los Angeles, made the rounds in Hollywood to seek American distribution, he was told that, at best, it could only be marketed as an art-house film. When he protested that the film was directed by China's most popular director and starred two very famous actors, and was a cross-cultural comedy that would have broad appeal, he was again asked the language of the film. He reiterated that it was in Chinese, and that ended the conversation.<sup>37</sup> It is this perception of Chinese films, and foreign-language films more generally, that is so prevalent today that makes the earlier success of Chinese martial arts films from 2000 to 2006 all the more striking.

The current strategy that is favored by Chinese film officials and indeed has had the most success in promoting Chinese films in overseas markets is an emphasis on coproductions. For example, in 2013, the top seven films and nine of the top ten Chinese films in overseas markets were coproductions.<sup>38</sup> In examining those coproductions that made at least 100 million Chinese yuan at the box office, 70 percent have been action films, which translate best in world markets, while no other genre makes up more than 20 percent.<sup>39</sup> China's

promotion of coproductions was clearly seen in the choice of *The Nightingale* as its foreign-language Oscar submission in 2014. While many had expected Zhang Yimou's *Coming Home* or Diao Yinan's Golden Bear winner at Berlin, *Black Coal, Thin Ice*, to be the choice, the small-budget remake by French director Philippe Muyl of one of his earlier films surprised even the filmmaker who, when asked about the decision at a preview screening in Los Angeles, had no idea why his film was chosen, other than the fact that it was a coproduction.<sup>40</sup> By contrast, a very small number of films do lend themselves particularly well to coproductions and are virtually guaranteed a successful box office in China and overseas. The most prominent example, as will be noted below, is *Kungfu Panda 3*, which was awarded coproduction status on January 15, 2015.<sup>41</sup>

There are, however, reasons to be cautious in noting the limits on the success of coproductions where the coproduction partner is not within "Greater China." First, from 2002 to 2012, 68.5 percent (293 films) of coproductions have been partnered with Hong Kong, while another 11.7 percent were with Taiwan, making up over 80 percent of all coproductions. The United States followed with 8.6 percent, although as will be noted below, even that relatively low figure is a bit misleading. The trend continued in 2013, when eight of the top ten films were coproductions with Hong Kong.<sup>42</sup> For 2015, thirty-eight of the sixty-one coproductions (62.3 percent) approved for release were with Hong Kong, with an additional five having a partner from Taiwan.<sup>43</sup> Second, as figure 12-3 reveals, the high tide for coproductions took place earlier, between 2008 and 2010, with steep declines in 2011 (42.5 percent) and 2012 (47.5 percent), before an upward trajectory for 2013, 2014, and 2015, which still left the results well short of the figure for 2010, when Chinese films abroad made more than 3.5 billion yuan (\$500 million).<sup>44</sup> The clear reason for the decline was the lack of coproductions with Hollywood. The earlier successes were largely due to a single film each year. For example, *Mummy 3* (2009) made 1.15 billion yuan overseas, which accounted for 41 percent of the box office for all Chinese films abroad that year. *Red Cliff 2* was a distant second at 650 million yuan. *Karate Kid* (2010) made more than 2.36 billion yuan overseas, making up 67.9 percent of the box office of all Chinese films overseas that year; in second place was *Ip Man 2*,

FIGURE 12-3. Changes in the Overseas Box Office Revenues of Chinese Films, 2006–15



Sources: For 2006–12, Yi en zixun, *2012–2013 nian zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao* [EntGroup Consulting, Chinese Film Industry Research Report 2012–2013], p. 200; for 2013, *Zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao, 2014* [The Research Report on the Chinese Film Industry, 2014], p. 32; for 2014, *2014 Zhongguo dianying yingxiaofei 36 yi, 19–40 sui guanzhong gongxian 87% piaofang* [Sohu Entertainment, Chinese Film Marketing Fees in 2014 Are 3.6 Billion Yuan; 19–40 Year Olds Make up 87% of the Box Office], January 6, 2015 (online); for 2015, *Zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao, 2015* [The Research Report on the Chinese Film Industry, 2016], p. 47.

with only 218 million yuan. However, one could argue that *Mummy 3* and *Karate Kid* were really Hollywood films disguised as Chinese co-productions, and indeed Chinese microblogs contained many criticisms of these two films for presenting a poor image of the country to foreigners. Moreover, the Chinese in *Karate Kid* were far more benign in the version shown only in China, reflecting the problems with co-productions that have to meet the demands of multiple markets.

This dilemma has openly surfaced on a number of occasions, particularly with the introduction of politically correct requirements in a manner virtually guaranteed to produce a result counterproductive to state intentions. In discussing the film industry, which Chinese officials have openly stated is facing a war with Hollywood,<sup>45</sup>

Politburo member and Director of the Propaganda (Publicity) Department of the Central Committee of the CCP, Liu Qibao, has praised the success of Chinese films in the domestic market and noted that China should also become an international movie power, but at the same time he has called for the country's films to take "socialist core values as a guide" and "contain more elements of the Chinese dream."<sup>46</sup> Liu's comments may appeal to Xi Jinping and his colleagues on the Politburo, but they reflect a lack of knowledge of audience preferences. When political considerations have trumped audience demands, the result has been embarrassing, whether it is the removal of *Avatar* from Chinese theaters early to accommodate the patriotic film *Confucius*, or the release of three Lei Feng films in 2013 to commemorate Lei Feng Day on March 5. The decision to promote *Confucius* was even ridiculed in the official press while theater owners made it widely known that they couldn't sell a single ticket for the Lei Feng films.<sup>47</sup> Clearly, such a policy has even less hope of succeeding on the highly competitive international market.

### CONCLUSION

Chinese leaders are well aware of the success of the American dream, so successfully propagated by Hollywood films, and Western ideas more generally among Chinese youth, and there have been repeated warnings about the dangers of the West's assault on Chinese culture and ideology; the problem has been to devise a strategy to counteract such influence. One plank in the strategy has been to assert repeatedly that the concept of the "two Americas" is a myth, that Hollywood works closely in concert with the American government to infiltrate subversive ideas into China and undermine the Chinese political system through what in earlier political campaigns in the Dengist era had been called "peaceful evolution" (*heping yanbian*). Their best opportunity occurred in May 1999 when NATO forces, led by the United States, bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, during the war in Kosovo, killing three Chinese citizens. The Chinese media went into overdrive trying to link the hegemonist United States with the cultural United States, asserting that everything

from American blockbuster films to the promotion of human rights and globalization, as well as Western civilization more generally, was part of a deliberate conspiracy by America to control the world. While this analysis had an immediate impact in the aftermath of the bombing, with busloads of university students driven to the American Embassy in Beijing to throw rocks, student calls to boycott McDonald's and KFC, and students publicly tearing up their admission letters to American universities, surveys done not long afterward revealed that while the anger at the hegemonist United States continued, the spillover effect into cultural issues was short-lived, that the concept of what the surveyors called "the two Americas," was still applicable.<sup>48</sup>

Many of the obstacles China faces in combating Western influence are so embedded within the Chinese political system and traditional culture that they will be difficult to overcome, and are indeed reflected in the respective dreams discussed above. The clearest example of this is the Chinese emphasis on the collective over the individual, which was strikingly evident in the response within China to Chinese writer Mo Yan's success in winning the 2012 Nobel Prize for Literature. As the first "mainstream" Chinese writer to be accorded such an honor, which has also eluded scientists who are citizens of the PRC, it was not surprising that Mo Yan's victory was front-page news within China. However, while Mo Yan noted that it was an individual prize and suggested that it was unlikely to have a lasting impact on Chinese literature or even the popularity of his own works,<sup>49</sup> local officials in his hometown of Gaomi in eastern Shandong province emphasized the value of the prize for the larger community. Within a week they announced plans to spend 670 million RMB (\$107 million) to transform Mo Yan's home village into a "Red Sorghum Culture and Experience Zone," and have local residents cultivate the red sorghum that had already been proven to be unprofitable. As a local official noted to Mo's ninety-year-old father, "Your son is no longer your son, and the house is no longer your house" since your son is now the pride of China. "It does not really matter if you agree or not."<sup>50</sup> An official from the local tourism bureau explained that provincial authorities ordered Gaomi to execute the tourism program regardless of how Mo Yan and his family felt about it.<sup>51</sup> This same

issue explains why a Chinese sports superstar such as Li Na could only become successful internationally once she left the Chinese national team and left the country, and how there is still a love-hate relationship between her and Chinese tennis officials.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the obstacles noted above, there are a number of countervailing trends that suggest some optimism for the Chinese film industry. First and most obvious, in comparison to almost any market outside of India, China has done an excellent job in competing with Hollywood domestically, albeit succeeding in part through the use of non-market administrative mechanisms. Second, even in the overseas market, recent initiatives suggest at least the possibility of greater success. Most prominently, Zhang Yimou's decision to make a blockbuster action film in English—a language he does not speak—offers one possible solution to the lack of success of Chinese films overseas. However, assuming that Zhang's film does well in world markets, it is worth asking whether this should be seen as victory for the Chinese film industry or, rather, an admission of defeat. When Zhang was attached to an earlier English-language project—*Quasimodo*, based on *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*—one could certainly argue that directing a film in the English language taken from a very famous Western novel with top American stars was not a step forward for the Chinese film industry, despite the individual success it would bring Zhang himself. He would simply join many foreign directors who were seduced by Hollywood. However, his new project, budgeted at \$150 million and entitled *The Great Wall*, despite the sci-fi components and A-list Hollywood stars, should contain the appropriate Chinese cultural content that can enhance the positive image that the Chinese government has tried so assiduously to promote. At the same time, apart from Ang Lee and probably John Woo, there are no other Chinese directors that would be entrusted with such a large project, so it again appears to be an individual achievement rather than a long-term strategy for Chinese film abroad.

Third, China's best chance for overseas success may be in animation since films for young audiences with cartoon characters will be dubbed into local languages and face fewer issues of censorship than more adult fare. DreamWorks Animation, with an investment of \$330 million to set up the joint venture Oriental DreamWorks in Shanghai

in 2012, is a pioneer in this regard. *Kung Fu Panda 3*, budgeted around \$140 million, opened as a coproduction over the coveted Chinese New Year holiday in 2016, a period usually reserved for domestic films, and went on to gross \$154 million in China, \$144 million in North America, with a worldwide total of \$520 million. Significantly, there were separate scripts in Mandarin and English, with the former shown only in China, which is also the case for two additional animated films currently under preparation at the company.<sup>53</sup>

Finally, as indicated in the DreamWorks model above, the relationship between Hollywood and China is becoming far more complex and intertwined, which suggests that new models for promoting Chinese films abroad are just in their early stages. For example, the prominent Taiwan-born American director Justin Lin was listed as one of the coproducers and co-screenwriters of a film set in Los Angeles entitled *Hollywood Adventures*, with prominent Chinese stars as well as lesser-known American actors. Budgeted at \$30 million, it was the largest Chinese language movie to film in Southern California and is part of the strategy of producer Bruno Wu and his partners to make Chinese films that look like Hollywood films, with local American crews and American directors.<sup>54</sup> However, aside from China, the film played theatrically in only a few Asian markets, with no American release, making \$51.6 million in China, only ranking forty-fourth among all releases in China in 2015.<sup>55</sup> Another development worth watching is the entry of Alibaba Pictures into the filmmaking business, with the company's first film—*The Ferryman (Bai du ren)* as of mid-2016 still in postproduction—a comedy produced and co-written by Wong Kar Wai and best-selling author Zhang Jijia (also a first-time director), and starring Tony Leung and a prominent Asian cast.<sup>56</sup> Alibaba founder Jack Ma has noted in interviews how he appreciates the difference between American and Chinese heroes, indirectly suggesting that his company could potentially produce films emulating the successful American model.<sup>57</sup> Perhaps *Furious 7*, cited at the beginning of this paper, is the best example of the new complex relationship between China and Hollywood. On the one hand, Chinese regulators monitored its enormous success, concerned that it could skew the box office too strongly in favor of foreign films and, indeed, there is evidence of box office deceit in attempts to promote Chinese films over



their Hollywood competition.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, the state-owned China Film Group had a stake reported at around 10 percent in this film and, since they control distribution within China, ensured a strong screen presence for the film—reaching more than 70 percent of all screens in its first week—and therefore benefited financially when the film broke all previous box office records, showing yet again the contradictions that mark the Chinese film industry.<sup>59</sup>

## NOTES

1. Andrew Higgins and David E. Sanger, “3 European Powers Say They Will Join China-Led Bank,” *New York Times*, March 18, 2015, p. A4; “U.S. Allies, Lured by China’s Bank” (editorial), *New York Times*, March 20, 2015, p. A26. Other American allies, including Australia and South Korea, were expected to follow.

2. “China Tops U.S. At the Box Office,” *New York Times*, March 3, 2015, p. C3. China’s box office revenue that month totaled \$650 million, while the U.S. revenue totaled \$640 million.

3. Rob Cain, *chinafilmbiz.com*, April 13, 2015.

4. Box Office Mojo ([www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/china/yearly/?yr=2016&p=.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/intl/china/yearly/?yr=2016&p=.htm)). Although there had been claims that the 2015 Chinese film *Monster Hunt* (*Zhuo yao ji*) had already (barely) broken the record, subsequent data questioned the earlier totals for both *Furious 7* (under reported) and *Monster Hunt*.

5. David Barboza, “Hollywood East, Far East,” *New York Times*, April 6, 2015, pp. B1, 7.

6. Chen Shengluo, “Survey Study on Chinese University Students’ Perceptions of the Political Systems of China and the United States”; reprinted in Stanley Rosen and Chen Shengluo, eds., “Attitudes and Behavior of Contemporary Chinese Youth: Nationalism, Materialism, and Internationalism,” *Chinese Education and Society* 44, nos. 2–3 (March–April / May–June 2011), pp. 13–57.

7. David Shambaugh, *China Goes Global: The Partial Power* (Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 212.

8. Stanley Rosen, “China’s Post-1980’s Generation, between the Nation and the World,” *World Politics Review*, July 15, 2014, pp. 15–19. For example, then General Secretary Hu Jintao gave an internal speech in October 2011 warning against the West’s assault on China’s culture and ideology, which carried “the strategic plot of westernizing and dividing China.” When his

speech was openly published in a leading Chinese ideological journal early in 2012, it signaled a major policy initiative to promote Chinese soft power at home and abroad to combat “long-term infiltration” from the West. This initiative has continued under Xi Jinping. In an internal memo known as Document No. 9, which was distributed to Party officials throughout the country in 2013, “seven perils” were noted that if left unchecked could result in the downfall of the Communist Party. Among the perils were Western constitutional democracy, the promotion of “universal values” such as human rights, Western-inspired notions of media independence and civic participation, and ardently pro-market “neoliberalism.” In early 2014, a People’s Liberation Army colonel noted that the recently established National Security Committee would plan responses to “extremists, online agitators and the West’s cultural influence,” again suggesting the importance of the threat from Western culture.

9. Thomas Friedman, “China Needs Its Own Dream,” *New York Times*, October 3, 2012, p. A27. It should be noted, however, that the term was also used by a retired PLA colonel in a book originally published in Chinese in 2010. See Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: CN Times Books, 2015).

10. “Chasing the Chinese Dream,” *The Economist*, May 4, 2013.

11. *Ibid.*, citing *Globe* magazine.

12. James Truslow Adams, *The Epic of America* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), p. 405. I have addressed this issue in far more detail in Stanley Rosen, “Comparing Exceptionalisms and Dreams: The Relevance of the Chinese and American ‘Models’ for Post-80’s and Post-90’s Chinese Youth,” paper presented at the conference on “Chinese Exceptionalism: Imagined or Historically-Grounded?” at the University of Nottingham.

13. Zhang Baohui, “Xi Jinping, ‘Pragmatic’ Offensive Realism and China’s Rise,” *Global Asia* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2014), p. 72; more generally, see Joseph Fewsmith, “Xi Jinping’s Fast Start,” *China Leadership Monitor* 41 (Spring 2013).

14. For example, the *Shanghai Daily* ran a weekly series that encouraged readers to share their individual dreams (<http://coverage.shanghaidaily.com/ChineseDream/>). Also see, inter alia, the cover story, survey, and series of articles entitled “*Xifang jiating chengjiu zhongguo meng*” [The Chinese dream is a happy family], *Liaowang zhoukan* [Outlook Weekly], no. 2 (January 13, 2014), pp. 20–31, and Meng Jian and Sun Xiangfei, “*Zhongguo meng’ de huayu chanshi yu minjian xiangxiang: jiyu xinlang weibo 16wanyu tiao yuanchuang bowen de shuju fenxi*” [Discourse interpretation and popular imagination of the “Chinese dream”: Data analysis based on more than 160,000

original posts on Sina Weibo], *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu* [Research on Journalism and Communications], no. 11 (November 2013), pp. 27–43.

15. Xinhua Reporter, “Zai shixian zhongguo meng zhengtushang angyang fendou” [The Journey to the realization of the Chinese dream is a high-spirited struggle], *Zhongguo qingnian bao* [China Youth Daily], January 10, 2014, pp. 1, 3; Lin Yahua, “Zhongguo meng de shehui zhuyi jiazhi lixiang” [The Socialist value ideals of the Chinese dream], *Zhonggong zhongyang dangxiao xuebao* [Journal of the Party School of the Central Committee of the CCP] 18, no. 2. (April 2014), pp. 16–19; Fewsmith, “Xi Jinping’s Fast Start.”

16. Shi Yuzhi, “Zhongguo meng yu meiguó meng de qi da qubie” [The seven great differences between the Chinese and American dreams], *Gaige neican: Wenzhai* [Internal Reference on Reform: Digest], no. 10, 2013, pp. 36–37. Professor Shi teaches at the National University of Singapore.

17. Patrick Boehler, “The Chinese Dream in Surveys: A Happy Middle Class,” *South China Morning Post*, December 18, 2013.

18. “The Chinese Dream,” *Shanghai Daily*, July 30, 2013.

19. Stanley Rosen, “The Wolf at the Door: Hollywood and the Film Market in China,” in *Southern California and the World*, edited by Eric J. Heikkila and Rafael Pizarro (Westport, Conn., 2002), pp. 49–77. The banned studios were MGM (for *Red Corner*), Touchstone/Disney (for *Kundun*), and Sony/Columbia Tristar (for *Seven Years in Tibet*).

20. If films made for television were included, the number produced would be 730.

21. For 2013, see *Zhongguo dianying changye yanjiu baogao, 2014* [The research report on China film industry, 2014] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2014), p. 7; for 2014 and 2015 data, see *Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2016* [The research report on the China film industry, 2016] (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2016), p. 14.

22. Clifford Coonan, “China’s Box Office Surges 36 percent in 2014 to \$4.76 Billion,” *Hollywood Reporter*, January 1, 2015.

23. Patrick Brzeski, “China Box Office Slumps 18 Percent in July,” *Hollywood Reporter*, August 12, 2016. Among other reasons, the decline was associated with a weaker crop of local and imported films, fewer discounts on movie tickets, changing demographics in the market, and a consumer slowdown in the broader Chinese economy. For additional details, see Brzeski, “What’s Behind China’s Sudden Box-Office Slump,” *Hollywood Reporter*, July 20, 2016.

24. These comments were made during a Q and A session at the University of Southern California on April 8, 2015.

25. The next four paragraphs, in particular the analysis of this survey, draw from Stanley Rosen, “China’s Post-1980’s Generation, Between the Nation

and the World," *World Politics Review*, July 15, 2014. For Chinese reporting on the survey see, inter alia, "Zhongguode, ye shi shijiede; 2013 guojiren diaocha yanjiu baogao" [China's is also the world's: The 2013 investigative research report on those who are internationals], *Waitan huabao* [Bund Pictorial], no. 12 (December 2013).

26. Julie Weed, "Welcome to the Haiyatt: In China, It's Not the Hotel It Sounds Like," *New York Times*, April 29, 2014, pp. B1, 8.

27. Lulu Yilun Chen, "China's Streaming Fans Face a Long Wait," *Bloomberg News*, January 22, 2015.

28. William Wan, "Chinese Officials Debate Why China Can't Make a Soap Opera as Good as South Korea's," *Washington Post*, March 7, 2014.

29. CNBC, March 16, 2016. The agreement between the U.S. and South Korea in July 2016 to deploy the THAAD anti-missile system gave China the pretext to begin to ban South Korean dramas and Korean stars in China.

30. Amy Qin, "China Cracking Down on Children on Reality TV," *New York Times*, April 18, 2016. When I complimented a leading Chinese film official for allowing the release of *Finding Mr. Right*, with its promotion of the American dream over the Chinese Dream, his response was: "That's why we won't approve such a film again!" (Los Angeles, US-China Film Summit, November 7, 2014).

31. Stanley Rosen, "Can China Devise a Strategy to Promote Its Films Abroad? Obstacles and Suggestions," in *Zhongguo dianying lishi quanjing guanzhao* [A Panoramic view of Chinese film history], edited by Zhou Xing and Zhang Yan (Beijing: Zhongguo dianying chubanshe, 2015), pp. 259–79.

32. Stanley Rosen, "Chinese Cinema's International Market," in *Art, Politics and Commerce in Chinese Cinema*, edited by Ying Zhu and Stanley Rosen (Hong Kong University Press, 2010), pp. 35–54.

33. The evolution of Zhang Yimou's career and his box office performance in North America is discussed in Rosen, "Can China Devise a Strategy to Promote Its Films Abroad?"

34. The films include *Shaolin Soccer*, *Hero*, *Princess Mononoke*, and *Snowpiercer*. He defends himself by noting, "I'm not cutting for fun. . . . I'm cutting for the shit to work." Ben Child, "Snowpiercer Director Reportedly Furious about Weinstein English-version Cuts," *The Guardian*, October 8, 2013.

35. Rosen, "Can China Devise a Strategy to Promote Its Films Abroad?"; boxofficemojo.com. It should be noted that Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution* made \$4.6 million in 2007. One of the rare exceptions was *The Mermaid*, which was released in North America on February 19, 2016, was shown on 106 screens in its widest release, and made \$3.2 million. However, as the most successful film of all time in China, with a box office of \$526.8 million (and \$554 million in all markets outside North America), the \$3.2 million made

up only 0.6 percent of its total box office. Sony / Columbia, because of the usual low expectations for Chinese-language films in North America, did little to promote it ([www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=mermaid2016.htm](http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?id=mermaid2016.htm); accessed on October 27, 2016).

36. A. O. Scott review in *New York Times*, September 2, 2011.

37. Interview with the production manager, 1998, in Los Angeles.

38. *Zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao, 2014* [The research report on the Chinese film industry, 2014], p. 32.

39. *China International Film Co-Production Handbook* (Motion Picture Association and China Film Co-Production Corporation, 2014), p. 52. Note that the total figures in the table would add up to 183 percent since many films cover more than one genre.

40. Q and A at the MPA Preview Screening at AMC Theaters, Century City, Los Angeles, November 7, 2014, in conjunction with the U.S.-China Film Summit.

41. Clifford Coonan, "'Kung Fu Panda 3' Gets Co-Production Status in China," *Hollywood Reporter*, January 23, 2015.

42. See *China International Film Co-Production Handbook*, pp. 32 and 53.

43. *Zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao, 2016* [The research report on the Chinese film industry, 2016], pp. 18–19.

44. This draws from Stanley Rosen, "Cross-Cultural Dramas Fraught with Difficulty," *China Daily* (USA), June 5, 2014, p. 10. In addition, see *Zhongguo dianying chanye yanjiu baogao, 2014*, p. 32, for data on 2013 and 2014; "*Zhongguo dianying yingxiaofei 36yi: 19–40 sui guanzhong gongxian 87% piaofang*" [Chinese film marketing fees in 2014 are 3.6 billion yuan; 19–40 year olds make up 87% of the box office], *Sohu yule* [Sohu Entertainment], January 6, 2015. There were a few relatively successful films overseas in 2015, for example *Wolf Totem*, which did particularly well in France (\$8.8 million), and had some success in Italy (\$3.5 million) and Spain (\$1.5 million), no doubt in part because a well-known French director, Jean-Jacques Annaud, was behind the camera.

45. Clifford Coonan, "China Film Bureau Boss Urges Local Industry to 'Prepare for War with Hollywood,'" *Hollywood Reporter*, June 27, 2014.

46. Clifford Coonan, "Communist Propaganda Czar Wants China to Become a Movie Power," *Hollywood Reporter*, July 9, 2014.

47. On *Confucius*, see "*Kongzi, ping shenme rang 'Afanda' rang dao*" ["Confucius," why do you want "Avatar" to Yield to Make Way for You?], *Shanxi wanbao* [Shanxi Evening News], January 21, 2010; Raymond Zhou, "Confucius Loses His Way," *China Daily*, January 29, 2010, which also includes a cartoon by Li Min showing middle-school students sleeping during a classroom showing of *Confucius*. On the Lei Feng films, see *Hollywood Reporter*, March 5,

2013 and the SARFT website of the  
ing the issuing of group or special

48. Rosen, "China's Post-1980's C  
World," p. 18.

49. Fiona Tam, "It is Hard to be  
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