The global system of science has seen the unprecedented rise of one particular world region over the past two decades: the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has become the largest producer of scientific articles. The country is climbing fast and steadily in global university rankings, is home to scientists whose groundbreaking and sometimes quite controversial findings and methods increasingly make world news, and pours a staggering amount of money into funding research both domestically and internationally. The MPIWG’s new Lise Meitner Research Group “China in the Global System of Science” will take a close and comprehensive look at these developments, with a special interest in exploring the role of the political regime and societal values as environmental factors for science in contemporary China, in international academic cooperation, and in world science.

Challenges and Expectations
Drafting such a wide research framework does not come without challenges, of course. Projects in this research group act on the assumption of science as a global function system, which implies shared institutions, goals, organizations, inclusion formulas, networks, and many more elements that constitute the structures of the system of science and blur nationalities and borders. It will therefore be a major requirement for studies conducted in the group to operate with utmost caution, by clarifying continually what China or Chinese actually means in this context, and whether this categorization is derived from self-conceptualization or ascription. Does it mean scientific activity that originates in China, or is produced by participants in the global system of science who conceive of themselves as Chinese (for example, by citizenship or descent) or are identified as Chinese by other participants, or by those who are affiliated with institutions in the PR China? Finally, although the research group will focus on contemporary Chinese society, each study will aim at representing an exhaustive analysis, which will naturally include historical perspectives.

First Research Projects
Among the first projects pursued by individual group members are a study of how Chinese polar scientists navigate between research and diplomacy, an analysis of the internationalization strategies of Chinese universities, an exploration of the role of science and scholars in Chinese local governance, and an investigation into the seeming interrelatedness of political initiatives and the evolution of new scientific disciplines and communities in China. The group will also work on joint publication projects, such as Gauging China’s Global Scientific Expansion and Science and Democratic and Authoritarian Social Structures (working titles) and looks forward to hosting visiting researchers and workshops at the MPIWG.

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Analyzing and Understanding Developments in Science in China

At the same time, there are also signs of a growing significance of "true" scientific analyses, especially in micro-political contexts in China—in other words, a re-entry of science as a political value. The Chinese government and the Communist Party (CCP) leadership, in an explicit sociology of science perspective, are forming and structuring this Lise Meitner Research Group seeks to analyze and understand the regime interfaces, this Lise Meitner Research Group seeks to analyze and understand the science system of science. Compared to the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic in China to observe interesting paradoxes: at the same time current policies and measures are even more diverse and comprehensive. Furthermore, they re-emphasize the necessity of indigenous innovations, or the increasingly heavy references to very specific scientific studies and data in public protests. The degree to which scholars are now consulted and take part in local governments' policy and governance always subordinated to politics and ideology following the beginning of CCP rule in the mid-twentieth century. The history of science and technology, and education that were often involved in different forms of activism, in China—in a society that traditionally valued knowledge and scientific authority, but where modern science was toward what should be morally and legally permitted scientific disciplines, including the social sciences and humanities.

Chinese characteristics that incorporate the country's socialist practices.