

## **Who controls technological progress? A PRC example (Huawei).**

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### **Abstract**

The recent debacle over Huawei in international and trade relations has fuelled nationalism and discrimination but also a deeper vein of who controls technological development and whether technology is discrete of its origins (Lenin) or socially embedded (Marx). Huawei publicity claims it is a company owned by its own employees, but several international ‘intelligence’ agencies claim the company is an agent of the state.

The paper explores several issues which help to understand who owns and controls technical progress in its development and application by using the controversial case of Huawei. Whilst the formal ownership structure may be clear (Balding and Clarke 2019), who and how the company is controlled remains less transparent despite the occasional eulogies to the founder, Ren Zhengfei (e.g. Tao et al 2018). Key elements in understanding control concern co-ownership structure, the ‘trade union’ and management strategies, which propert to derive from a unique philosophy. Thus, the case of Huawei provides a lens through which to explore more general issues of ownership, control and influence in China.

The argument developed is that whilst this case illuminates some specificities of the development of PRC capitalism and military-industrial complex (Eisenhower’s final speech 1961) but also some general points about how workers should be involved in technological development. As recent labour – management disputes in Alphabet and Microsoft have shown, given the right context, workers are eager to participate in how technology is developed and utilised.