Good copy, bad copy

Believe it or not, Chinese firms are not all serial intellectual-property thieves

Wars sometimes have moments of cultural levity—even trade wars. Last summer, as America and China were bombarding each other with tariffs, a quaint exhibition opened at the National Museum of China on Tiananmen Square paying tribute to, of all things, American intellectual - property (ip) protection.

levity 轻浮，轻率，欠考虑，不慎重

bombarding 轰炸，炮击，连珠炮般的提问

tariffs 关税制度，关税

quaint 古色古香的，少见的，古怪的

tribute 致敬，贡品，悼念，体现

It was a surprise hit. More than 1m visitors filed past 60 beautifully crafted models of inventions, such as an ice-cream maker, submitted to the United States Patent Office between 1836 and 1890 (all property of the Hagley Museum in Delaware). No doubt some visitors were arm-twisted to go, because it coincided with the start of an innovation drive by President Xi Jinping. But many were simply in thrall to American inventiveness. One remarkable visitor, says David Cole, the Hagley Museum’s boss, was an elderly man, Hu Guohua, who was granted in Communist China, in 1985. It was a reminder of how young IP protection is in China; in America the first-ever patent dates back to 1790 and was signed by George Washington.

craft 船，飞行棋，手艺，**手工制作**

patent 专利，专利权，专利的，显然，获得...专利

arm-twist 对（某人）施加压力

coincide 相符，与...一致，想法，意见等相同

thrall 奴役，奴隶制

in thrall to 沉溺于，迷上了

grant 授予，承认，同意，拨款，补助金

communist 共产党员

first-ever 前所未有的

IP is one of the main fronts in President Donald Trump’s trade war against China. It is also the crux of an indictment in America against Huawei, a Chinese tech giant. In both cases, the government seeks to give the impression that stealing from the West is part of the modus operandi of Chinese firms, something a *Wall Street Journal* columnist described recently as a practice they regard as a “patriotic duty”.

crux 关键，难题

indictment 控告，起诉书

giant 巨人，伟人，巨大的，巨人般的

modus operandi 办事方式，作案手法，做法

columnist 专栏作家

patriotic 爱国的

But that is lazy thinking. The Chinese state may encourage philandering of ideas, and foreign firms in China doubtless face pressure to surrender their secrets. Yet IP protection in China, for all its flaws, has improved at rocket speed of late. As Chinese firms issue more patents, the keener they are to protect them. Some executives even tacitly support American pressure, hoping it will strengthen the rule of law. In an echo of the fawning nickname “Xi Dada”, some have whispered “Trump Dada”, of Daddy Trump.

philandering 玩弄女性的，调情的

surrender 投降，放弃，交出，自首

flaw 瑕疵，缺点，裂缝，裂纹

rocket 火箭，飞驰，迅速的增加

keener 热情的，热衷的（keen的比较级）

executive 行政的，经营的，执行的

tacitly 肃静地，沉默地，心照不宣地

fawning 奉承的，奉承讨好

The litany of complaints about piracy in China, to be sure, goes back decades: copyright infringement in the case of software, and trademark violation against firms such as Disney. Michael Jordan, a basketball legend, spent years trying to stop a sportswear firm using his name, which read as Qiaodan in Chinese, until he was partially successful in 2016. Today, local trademarks of Peppa Pig, a cartoon character, are being sought by scores of patent “squatters”, using a rule that lets them get in ahead of its British owners. Two American tech firms, Qualcomm and InterDigital, have been mauled in Chinese courts in royalty-related antitrust cases. China is a long way from living up to the IP commitments it made on entering the World Trade Organisation in 2001. It still forces firms in joint ventures with state-owned enterprises to surrender IP, and pursues a Communist Party-first industrial policy far removed from the free-for-all of 19th-century American entrepreneurship.

litany 冗长而枯燥的陈述

piracy 剽窃，著作权侵害，非法翻印

to be sure 的确

infringement 侵犯，违反

trademark 商标，特征，标记

violation 违反，妨碍，侵害

maul 殴打，打伤，抨击

Yet among Chinese firms, the mindset is starting to change—as it eventually did among Japanese firms after they robbed America blind in the 1970s and 1980s. From humble beginnings (Mr Hu applied for his first patent in a half-built bungalow), China accounted for 44% of the world’s patent fillings in 2017, submitting twice as many applications as America, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation. Companies, mostly Chinese ones, sue each other over patents in China more than in any other country.

mindset 观念模式，思想倾向，心态

robbed 抢夺，抢劫（过去式，过去分词）

blind 失明的，盲目的

humble 谦逊的，简陋的，低下的，使谦恭

bungalow 平房，单层小屋

sue 起诉

When foreigners do litigate in China, Rouse, a law firm, says they have a higher win rate in patent cases than domestic ones, and are awarded more damages overall. Such fines are low by international standards, but are improving: Alfred Dunhill, a British luxury brand, won a $1.4m payout in October over trademark infringement by a Chinese menswear brand called Danhuoli. In January, the IP court system was bolstered by the establishment of an appeals tribunal at the Supreme People’s Court in Beijing.

litigate 诉讼

rouse 叫醒，惊醒，鼓励，鼓舞，觉醒，奋起

domestic 国内的，家庭的

payout 支出，花费

infringement 侵权，违反，违背

menswear 男装，男装部，男服

bolstered 支撑，支持，给予必要的支持

tribunal 特别法庭，审理委员会，法官席

The more inventive it is, the more protection benefits China. Huawei was the world’s biggest filer of international patents in 2017; whatever misgivings there are about its loyalties to the Chinese state, it is hard to doubt its commitment to innovation. An executive at Alibaba notes that as Chinese firms expand globally, particularly in South-East Asia, they too, suffer from having their ideas ripped off , making them keener to protect them. As China’s economy wakens, says an executive of Beiqi Foton Motor, a vehicle manufacturer, his firm will need to protect its patents from rivals even more, to guard its share of a shrinking market.

misgiving 担心，疑虑，恐惧，不安

loyalties 忠心，忠诚

commitment 承诺，许诺， 委任，委托

innovation 改革，创新，新观念，新发明

rip off 敲竹杠

vehicle 车辆，交通工具

Executives admit to gaping holes in the IP system, particularly in inland regions where local tribunals are subject to heavy-handed interference by provincial governments keen to shield local copycats. That is why some IP executives in China accept the rationale behind American arm-twisting. After all, they admit, if it were not for American pressure on intellectual property, China would not have come half as far. That is not to say they approve of Mr Trump’s bombastic approach, which adds to the sense that America is trying to stifle China’s rise. But the desire for change is both internally and externally driven. As one executive puts it, “No one likes to be called a thief—not even kids.”

**Imitation is a form of flattery**

It is also worth recalling how much of a cultural wrench the Anglo-Saxon IP system is for China. The country that invented printing had no Western concept of copyright. There is even a Chinese saying that “to steal a book is an elegant offence”. When inventions were flourishing in 19th-century America, the West tried to impose IP codes on a humbled China that simply could not square them with its Confucian traditions. Yet America was no saint either. As the Hagley Museum’s Mr Cole points out, its patent office in the early days charged more to foreigners for patents than it did to Americans, especially the British, with whom America was engaged in an earlier version of “strategic competition”. That point was not emphasised at the exhibition in Tiananmen Square.