**VIETNAM NATIONAL UNIVERSITY, HANOI**

**UNIVERSITY OF LANGUAGES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES**

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**MAI VĂN KẾT**

**CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF *MADE IN CHINA 2025***

**(PHÂN TÍCH DIỄN NGÔN CHIẾN LƯỢC CÁCH MẠNG**

**CÔNG NGHIỆP 4.0 CỦA TRUNG QUỐC)**

**MAJOR: ENGLISH LINGUISTICS**

CODE: 9220201.01

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Linguistics**

**HANOI 2024**

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**SUPERVISOR: PROF. NGUYỄN HOÀ**

**HANOI 2024**

# STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I, the undersigned, hereby confirm that the thesis entitled "Critical discourse analysis of Made in China 2025" is my own work. To the best of my knowledge, the thesis contains no work previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made.

Signature

MAI VĂN KẾT

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates how China’s Made in China 2025 initiative uses discourse to construct a national identity rooted in technological innovation, self-reliance, and global competitiveness within the framework of Industry 4.0. By applying Critical Discourse Analysis based on Fairclough’s model, the study unpacks how MIC25 promotes the images of New China as a technological powerhouse, moving beyond the “world’s factory” paradigm toward a narrative of New China that leads in advanced industries, including artificial intelligence, smart manufacturing, and green technology.

Through detailed analysis of MIC25 and related government documents, this research reveals how linguistic strategies, such as themes like “technological sovereignty” and “innovation-driven development,” legitimize China’s ambition for autonomy in key sectors while reinforcing national pride and projecting geopolitical influence. MIC25 emerges as both a development policy and an ideological tool, emphasizing China's commitment to reducing foreign dependency and fostering a state-led, innovation-focused economy. In doing so, MIC25’s discourse aligns with broader socio-political goals, contributing to a cohesive national identity designed to navigate and influence the global technological landscape.

The findings reveal how MIC25’s language interweaves national pride with global leadership aspirations, presenting China’s technological ambitions as a collective national project that also strategically challenges Western technological dominance. This analysis contributes to a deeper understanding of how state policy discourse operates within global power dynamics, positioning New China as a standard-setter and influencer in high-tech domains. The research not only extends the application of CDA to technological policy discourse but also provides insights into how language shapes perceptions of state-led innovation, offering implications for policy design, international relations, and discourse-based studies of technology and power.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Full Form | Abbreviation |
| Artificial Intelligence | AI |
| Belt and Road Initiative | BRI |
| Critical Discourse Analysis | CDA |
| Internet of Things | IoT |
| Made in China 2025 | MIC25 |
| Research and Development | R&D |
| Intellectual property | IP |

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# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study’s exploration of Made in China 2025 (referred to as MIC25) as both as a Chinese industrial policy and a discursive tool for constructing New China within the Industry 4.0 framework. Positioned as a key initiative for achieving technological self-reliance and global leadership, MIC25 reflects China’s ambition to project a new image of national strength and innovation on the world stage.

The chapter begins with the study’s rationale, situating MIC25 within the transformative impact of Industry 4.0. It then outlines the research problem and motivation, emphasizing the need to understand MIC25’s role in shaping perceptions of New China. The significance of the study is highlighted, noting the method to uncover how MIC25’s language embeds ideologies of technological sovereignty and competitiveness. The research objectives and questions are presented, followed by the constructivist, qualitative approach adopted for analysis. The chapter concludes by defining the scope and providing an outline of the thesis structure, setting the stage for a comprehensive examination of MIC25’s impact on the construction of New China.

## 1.1. Rationale for the research

The Fourth Industrial Revolution, often referred to as Industry 4.0, represents a profound shift in global technological and industrial practices. Driven by advancements in artificial intelligence (referred to as AI), the Internet of Things (referred to as IoT), automation, and smart manufacturing, Industry 4.0 not only transforms the processes of production but also reshapes the global geopolitical and economic landscape. Central to this transformation is the discourse surrounding these technologies, which plays a critical role in constructing national identities and global power relations.

Within this context, MIC25 initiative serves as a pivotal industrial strategy aimed at transforming China from the "world's factory" to a global leader in high-tech industries. This thesis applies Fairclough's Dialectical-Relational Discourse Analysis (referred to as CDA) to examine how MIC25 employs discourse to shape New China.

The rationale for this research lies in the recognition that the language of MIC25 is not neutral; it is deeply intertwined with China’s broader socio-political and economic goals. The discourse surrounding MIC25 promotes key themes such as "innovation-driven development" and "technological sovereignty," which are strategically employed to construct China’s path to global leadership.

Moreover, MIC25 is part of a larger narrative in which China redefines itself in the face of global competition. By analysing the discourse in MIC25, this research will demonstrate how China discursively constructs its transition from a low-cost manufacturing hub to a high-tech innovator, positioning itself as a leader in key sectors that define Industry 4.0.

Although CDA has been widely used to examine power dynamics and ideological constructs in policy, significant gaps exist in applying CDA to technological innovation, especially in the context of Industry 4.0 and within non-Western frameworks. Firstly, methodological limitations exist in applying CDA to complex, multi-genre discourses such as MIC25, which combines state policy with economic and geopolitical narratives. This calls for expanding CDA to include intertextual and interdiscursive analysis, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of how China’s technological ambitions are constructed across different genres and media .

Additionally, while extensive research addresses China's industrial strategy, few studies specifically explore how MIC25 uses discourse to frame technological leadership and innovation within the unique socio-political and historical context of China. This gap is especially pronounced in examining how MIC25 integrates themes of national identity and technological sovereignty, areas critical to understanding China’s motivations in constructing New China in the global technological arena.

Finally, existing literature often lacks an analysis of how MIC25 interacts with global Industry 4.0 discourses, especially regarding the ideological tensions between globalization and national sovereignty. This research, therefore, seeks to bridge these gaps by applying an advanced CDA approach to the MIC25 discourse, examining how it frames China's national and technological identity in a way that both reflects and shapes global perceptions .

## 1.2. Research problems and motivation

Following the rationale, this section addresses the central research problems and motivations driving this study.

MIC25 policy marks a pivotal shift from its traditional role as a manufacturing hub to an aspiring global leader in high-tech innovation and advanced manufacturing. MIC25 exemplifies China's strategy to achieve self-reliance and technological sovereignty within Industry 4.0, redefining national identity through themes of technological leadership and global influence. As such, MIC25 operates not only as an economic policy but as a discursive mechanism that present China's ambitions and reshapes global perceptions of its national role.

This research explores how MIC25’s discourse employs language to construct images of New China, focusing on themes such as “technological sovereignty” and “innovation-driven leadership” to legitimize state-led industrial growth. CDA is applied to reveal how language in MIC25 not only reflects but actively constructs China’s evolving identity, challenging Western-dominated technological narratives and asserting China’s place as a leader in Industry 4.0.

Addressing this research problem provides crucial insights into the ways state-led discourse shapes technological ambition, national sovereignty, and international positioning. This study thus fills a gap in understanding MIC25’s unique framing of national identity within the framework of technological innovation, offering implications for policy, discourse analysis, and international relations.

As a Master's degree holder in CDA and an individual deeply engaged with technological studies, this research carries both academic and personal significance to me. My expertise in CDA provides a solid foundation for dissecting the complex ways in which discourse constructs national identity and power dynamics in the context of technological advancement. Furthermore, as a person immersed in technology, I have witnessed firsthand the profound impact that Industry 4.0 and technological innovations have on global economies and societal structures. This background fuels my interest in exploring how China’s discourse in MIC25 reflects broader global shifts in technological sovereignty and geopolitical influence.

When I began this study in 2018, the trade war between China and the United States dominated international headlines (Bown, 2020; Shu Shang & Shen, 2021), amplifying the relevance of technological sovereignty in policy discourse. The escalating tensions between these two global powers underscored the importance of understanding how nations frame their technological advancements as part of broader strategies for cultural economic and political dominance. This context provided a unique opportunity to investigate how China discursively positions itself not only as a global competitor in technology but also as a sovereign power determined to reduce foreign dependency. The personal and geopolitical motivations that align with this study make it a timely and crucial exploration of discourse in the age of Industry 4.0.

## 1.3. Significance of the study

This study holds considerable significance across multiple dimensions. For developing nations aiming to modernize their economies and enhance technological capabilities, MIC25 offers a compelling case study. By strategically framing its industrial policy through discourse, China demonstrates how nations can shift from low-cost manufacturing hubs to high-tech innovators. This research provides insights into how other developing countries can similarly use discourse to frame their industrial and technological policies, emphasizing self-reliance, innovation-driven development, and reducing dependency on foreign technologies. These lessons can serve as valuable guidance for policymakers aiming to foster industrial modernization, indigenous innovation, and global competitiveness in their respective countries.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the broader application of CDA in analysing national industrial policies. It demonstrates how discourse not only reflects but also actively constructs power, hegemony, national identity, and global presentation. This extension of CDA into the analysis of policy discourse, especially in the technological and industrial realms, enriches the methodology's applicability, showing its value in understanding how language is used to influence national strategies and global power relations.

This study enriches China studies by offering an in-depth analysis of how China uses discourse as a strategic tool to assert its global technological leadership. MIC25 is not merely an industrial policy but a discursive tool that helps shape and communicate China’s evolving national identity. By exploring how China constructs itself as a technological leader through linguistic strategies, this research uncovers the broader ideological motivations behind China’s rise in the global technology race. It highlights how these narratives contribute to both domestic unity and international competitiveness, thus offering a nuanced understanding of China's ambitions in Industry 4.0.

The findings of this study have significant implications beyond China’s context, contributing to the global understanding of how nations use discourse to compete in the technological domain. In an era where technological nationalism is on the rise, this research reveals how countries, especially those in the Global South, can use language to assert their independence and leadership in global markets. It provides a framework for understanding how developing nations can construct their narratives of technological advancement and innovation in ways that challenge established global powerhouses.

As global economies transition towards knowledge-based industries and advanced technologies, this study contextualizes China in its cultural heritages and deeply-believed traditions. The analysis helps to inform how other developing nations might follow a similar path by strategically framing their past and national pride into policy discourse. This has broader implications for global economic competitiveness, technological standards, and international trade relations.

Beyond its academic contributions, this study offers practical insights for policymakers. By dissecting how China uses discourse to align national identity with industrial policy, this research provides lessons for governments seeking to frame their own technological ambitions. Policymakers in both developing and advanced economies can apply these findings to shape discourses that inspire innovation, foster economic independence, and navigate global technological competition.

## 1.4. Research objectives and questions

The overarching aim of this research is to investigate the ways in which New China is discursively constructed within the broader context of Industry 4.0. This involves a detailed examination of power, hegemony, naturalisation of ideology, as well as various ideological tensions in MIC25.

These research questions will serve the aim and form the guiding framework for the subsequent chapters of the thesis:

*Research question 1: What are the images of New China in MIC25?*

This question seeks to present the images of New China within the technological landscape of Industry 4.0.

*Research question 2: How is New China discursively constructed in MIC25?*

This question investigates the discursive strategies and hidden power relations used to construct New China in MIC25.

*Research question 3: Why is New China discursively constructed in such ways?*

This question aims to uncover the socio-political, economic, and ideological motivations behind the discursive construction of New China.

## 1.5. Research approach

This thesis adopts a qualitative, explanatory, and cross-sectional research design to investigate how the MIC25 initiative discursively constructs China's national identity. The qualitative approach allows for a detailed and in-depth analysis of the linguistic strategies employed in MIC25, while the explanatory nature of the research seeks to uncover the underlying socio-political and economic motivations behind these discursive constructions. The cross-sectional design refers to the specific period during which MIC25 has been promoted and discussed, offering a snapshot of China's strategic positioning in relation to Industry 4.0 at this particular moment in time.

The primary methodological framework used in this thesis is Critical Discourse Analysis, based on the approach developed by Norman Fairclough (2015). CDA is particularly well-suited for this research as it enables the investigation of how language not only reflects but also constructs social and political realities and it acts as a guiding framework to answer each research question.

As an explanatory study, the focus of the research is on understanding how and why China constructs its identity in certain ways. The cross-sectional nature of the research limits the analysis to a specific timeframe during which MIC25 has been promoted, capturing the contemporary discourse surrounding China's technological rise. This allows for a focused analysis of how China's aspirations are framed in relation to the current global context, providing insights into how language is used strategically to manage both domestic and international perceptions.

In summary, this thesis employs a qualitative, explanatory, and cross-sectional research design with CDA as the central framework to analyse the discursive construction of China’s national identity in MIC25. Through this approach, the research uncovers the underlying motivations and power relations that shape China’s discourse within the context of Industry 4.0.

## 1.6. Scope of the study

Focusing on official MIC25, this section defines the study’s scope, concentrating on how China’s strategic language projects a vision of technological independence and global competitiveness.

The study investigates the following key areas: First, the central focus of this research is on the language used in MIC25. The discourse surrounding MIC25 will be analysed to reveal the images of New China that are constructed in discourse.

Second, the research explores how China discursively positions itself as a global leader in key sectors in Industry 4.0. This analysis will examine how China's internal socio-political conditions are managed within the broader narrative of technological advancement, as well as how this presentation is communicated to both domestic and international audiences.

Third, the study investigates how power relations, hegemony and ideologies are embedded within China's discourse on technological leadership. Fourth, on the scope of Industry 4.0 policies, according to Bhatia (2017) on genres, these documents are not purely discursive but also aim to drive non-discursive outcomes, such as regulatory changes, investment strategies, or technological advancements. However, this study specifically focuses on the discursive aspects of the MIC25 initiative, examining how language and discourse are strategically employed to shape and communicate Chinese dream. The analysis is centred on how the MIC25 is constructed and articulated within official policy documents, rather than on the tangible outcomes these policies aim to achieve.

Fifth, on the scope of discourse, this study acknowledges that the discourses surrounding Industry 4.0 span a wide range of genres, including academic, legal, media, business, and even literary contexts. However, the focus of this research is on MIC25 and other official government documents.. The study limits its scope to these formal, institutional discourses.

Six, there are various models of critical discourse analysis; however, this research employs Norman Fairclough's CDA to build a robust conceptual and analytical framework. In CDA, the textual analysis only focuses on lexical choices, modality, agency, and metaphors, other properties of discourse are not the focus of this study.

Seventh, this thesis draws on theories from cultural political economy and sociolinguistics, and globalization. Finally, the thesis will also explore the ideological tensions behind MIC25 to uncover power dominance.

## 1.7. Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organized into seven chapters, each building upon the theoretical foundations of CDA to explore the discursive construction of New China within the framework of Industry 4.0. The chapters are designed to provide a comprehensive analysis of China's strategic positioning through its industrial and technological policies, particularly the MIC25.

Chapter 1: Introduction:

The introductory chapter provides an overview of the research context, establishing the core objectives and research questions that guide the study. It introduces the significance of the study as well as the research approach. This chapter also emphasizes the importance of CDA as a methodological tool for uncovering power relations and ideologies embedded within policy discourses such as MIC25.

Chapter 2: Literature Review:

This chapter reviews existing scholarly literature on MIC25 as discourse, and the application of CDA in analysing policy discourse. It provides the theoretical foundation by examining how discourse shapes national identities and the role of language in constructing New China's self-reliant technological ambitions. The chapter also discusses Chinese dream and national identity constructs.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology:

Chapter 3 outlines the research design and methodological framework for the study. It details the application of CDA in this context and explains the various analytical tools employed. The chapter discusses the rationale for selecting MIC25 and other government documents, and describes how these texts are analysed to reveal the socio-political and economic motivations behind China's strategic discourse.

Chapter 4: Images of New China:

This chapter focuses on how China discursively constructs its national identity as a technological leader, an innovator and a self-reliance nation under the context of Industry 4.0. It examines key lexical choices, such as "innovation," "sovereignty," and "global leadership," which serve to frame China's transformation from a manufacturing hub to a high-tech economy. Through CDA, this chapter uncovers how China positions itself both domestically and internationally in globalisation.

Chapter 5: Discursive Construction of New China:

Building on the previous chapter, Chapter 5 delves deeper into the discursive strategies used to legitimize China's ambitions under MIC25. It explores how China constructs itself as an "innovative" and "modern" nation through discourse, highlighting the country's efforts to lead in advanced manufacturing, artificial intelligence, and green technologies and among others. This chapter also examines how China's industrial and technological discourse intersects with global narratives, positioning itself as a leader in Industry 4.0.

Chapter 6: Social Practices and Motivations behind New China:

Chapter 6 broadens the analysis by examining the socio-political and economic motivations behind China's discourse. It explores the underlying power structures and ideological tensions that inform China's push for technological self-reliance. The chapter discusses how China's narrative of "innovation" and "global leadership" serves to legitimize state interventions and enhance its global standing while addressing both local and global ideological flexibilities and tensions.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: The final chapter summarizes the key findings of the thesis, reflecting on how China's discourse under Industry 4.0 is constructed to project an image of a technologically self-reliant and globally competitive nation. It discusses the broader implications of these findings for understanding global technological power dynamics and offers recommendations for future research.

# CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review in Chapter 2 establishes the foundational theories and frameworks that underpin the research questions guiding this study. By exploring key scholarly contributions, this chapter provides the theoretical context necessary to understand how the MIC25 initiative discursively constructs New China’s identity, technological sovereignty, and global leadership aspirations. Each section of the literature review focuses on specific concepts relevant to analysing the discourse of MIC25, ultimately setting the groundwork for in-depth discourse analysis and contextual examination.

## 2.1. Critical discourse analysis

The literature review begins with an examination of CDA, a methodology particularly relevant for analysing MIC25. This section provides a theoretical foundation, drawing on Fairclough's (2015) work to understand how language within MIC25 constructs China's industrial ambitions and the power structures it supports. Exploring CDA's role in deconstructing policy language offers insights into the first research question: What are the images of New China as projected by MIC25? and set the conceptual framework guiding all the research questions.

### 2.1.1. MIC25 as discourse

this section focuses specifically on MIC25 as a discursive construct, framing it as more than an industrial policy but as a narrative mechanism for constructing national identity. Through Fairclough’s (2015) lens, MIC25’s discourse positions China as a leader in technology and sovereignty, aligning with the thesis’s goal to reveal the ideological motives behind this portrayal. This leads into the analysis of how MIC25 discursively constructs New China, setting the stage to focus on addressing the “how” of the second research question.

The MIC25 initiative is not just an industrial policy but a discursive construct that plays a pivotal role in shaping China's national identity and global technological ambitions within the context of Industry 4.0. To Fairclough (2015), MIC25 can be understood as part of a broader linguistic and socio-political strategy that seeks to reposition China in the global economy through the power of language. Fairclough’s (2015) discourse theory highlights how discourse constructs social realities, sustains power relations, and naturalizes ideologies, making it an essential tool for analyzing MIC25 as a discursive phenomenon.

Industry 4.0, as a concept, involves the integration of cutting-edge technologies such as AI, robotics, and quantum computing into industrial production systems, radically transforming global industries (Schwab, 2016, p. 7). However, this transformation is not purely technical, it is also a discursive process, as policies like MIC25 construct specific narratives around technological leadership, innovation, and national sovereignty. Language, as Fairclough emphasizes, is central to this process of meaning-making. In MIC25, the language of innovation, self-reliance, and technological sovereignty is not merely descriptive but works to legitimize China’s pursuit of leadership in high-tech industries (Sony & Naik, 2020).

Fairclough’s (2015) theory proposes that discourse operates dialectically, meaning that it both shapes and is shaped by social practices. In the case of MIC25, the discourse surrounding technological independence and innovation-driven development reflects broader political and economic goals while also influencing the implementation of policies. For China, the discourse of MIC25 positions the nation as a challenger to Western technological dominance, utilizing the language of global competition and national renewal to assert its role in the future of Industry 4.0 (Pfeiffer, 2017).

Fairclough (1992) also explores the concept of interdiscursivity, which refers to how discourses from different fields combine to create new meanings. In MIC25, the policy discourse draws on multiple genres, including economic strategy, national planning, and legal frameworks, creating a hybrid genre of industrial policy. This aligns with Bhatia’s (2017) Critical Genre Analysis, where policies are seen as dynamic and interdiscursive tools used to achieve professional and institutional goals. MIC25 functions not only as an economic blueprint but also as a discursive strategy that ties together China’s historical narrative of modernization with its future ambitions in the global technological arena.

Fairclough’s (2009) term of cultural political economy offers further insights into how discourse interacts with economic structures. MIC25 is not only a policy document but a vehicle for ideological dissemination, where language reinforces China’s desire for technological sovereignty and independence from Western technological influence. By using discourse to frame its technological rise as an inevitable and necessary development, China legitimizes its aggressive industrial policies on the global stage. This framing is what Fairclough (2015) would describe as the naturalization of ideology, where specific economic strategies become common sense, appearing as the only viable path forward.

MIC25’s discourse around technological innovation is designed to foster a sense of national pride while simultaneously repositioning China as New China. In doing so, China challenges the neoliberal globalism that has historically been dominated by Western powers. Fairclough’s (2009) approach suggests that the language used in MIC25 not only reflects China’s ambitions but actively constructs them, influencing how China is perceived globally and how it perceives itself.

While Fairclough’s (2015) discourse theory provides a powerful lens for understanding the ideological implications of MIC25, it also highlights the complexities involved in interpreting discourse within such multi-layered policies. Industry 4.0 is a concept with multiple meanings and interpretations, making the task of discourse analysis more challenging. For example, One study emphasizes the evolving nature of Industry 4.0 since its initial conceptualization in Germany in 2011. The technological landscape and understanding of Industry 4.0 have significantly changed, leading to confusion around its scope and characteristics (Culot et al., 2020). MIC25 embodies these complexities, as its language is laden with strategic ambiguity, allowing for diverse readings depending on the audience. For domestic audiences, it is a narrative of national renewal and innovation, while for international audiences, it projects China as a responsible but competitive global power.

This ambiguity is what Fairclough (1992) describes as the potential weakness of applying discourse analysis to complex socio-political contexts. The multiplicity of interpretations inherent in Industry 4.0 discourses can sometimes obscure the power relations that underpin them. Therefore, while MIC25’s language may appear to advocate technological cooperation and global development, it also subtly reinforces China’s geopolitical positioning as a leader, challenging existing power structures in the process.

In conclusion, MIC25 serves as a prime example of how discourse functions in shaping technological and industrial policy within the context of Industry 4.0. Drawing on Fairclough’s (1992, 2015) discourse theory, we can see that MIC25 is not just a set of economic policies but a discursive project that constructs China’s national identity and positions it within global technological competition. By analyzing the language used in MIC25, the underlying power dynamics and ideological assumptions are uncovered that drive China forward. The discourse of MIC25 naturalizes China’s ambition to lead in Industry 4.0, making it both a technical and socially constructed phenomenon, deeply embedded in the global struggle for economic and technological dominance.

This discursive formation of Industry 4.0 policies like MIC25 is central to understanding how language shapes global power dynamics, positioning China as a key actor in the technological future while also redefining its role on the global stage.

### 2.1.2. Critical discourse analysis traditions

Transitioning from MIC25’s specific discursive elements, this section expands on the broader CDA traditions, focusing on various approaches to dissecting policy discourse. Wodak’s (2001) discourse-historical method, van Dijk’s (2014) socio-cognitive approach, and critical linguistics are explored here, providing context for the multi-dimensional CDA approach used in analyzing MIC25. Understanding these frameworks allows for a more comprehensive investigation into how New China is discursively constructed.

Critical Discourse Analysis is an interdisciplinary approach that examines texts in terms of their wider social and political significance. It has gained prominence largely due to the influential work of Norman Fairclough (2015, first published in 1989). CDA is rooted in the belief that language is a form of social practice and that it both shapes and is shaped by society. This approach is particularly concerned with issues of power, ideology, and inequality as they are manifested in language. There are four main traditions in CDA:

First, Fairclough's (2015) dialectical-relational discourse analysis (referred as CDA in this study). It is one of the most well-known and widely used frameworks. His approach combines linguistic analysis with social theory to explore how discourse shapes and is shaped by social structures. Fairclough's work often focuses on neo-liberal discourses and employs linguistic descriptions that serve political motivations and judgments

Second, Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach integrates historical context into the analysis of discourse. This method is particularly useful for understanding how discourses evolve over time and how they are influenced by historical events and social changes.

Third, van Dijk's (2014) socio-cognitive approach emphasizes the role of cognition in the production and interpretation of discourse. He explores how social power and dominance are enacted, reproduced, and resisted through text and talk.

Finally, It is critical linguistics (Fowler et al., 2019; Hodge & Kress, 1993), which predates CDA, focuses on the relationship between language and power. It aims to uncover hidden ideologies in texts and to show how language contributes to the maintenance of social inequalities.

Industry 4.0, characterized by the integration of digital technologies into manufacturing and other industries, represents a significant shift in economic and social structures. Analyzing the discourse surrounding Industry 4.0 requires a framework that can address the complex interplay between language, power, and social change. Norman Fairclough's CDA is particularly well-suited for this task for several reasons

First thing first, Fairclough's (2015) approach to CDA is particularly relevant in this study due to its emphasis on the relationship between language and power, and its foundation in the Marxist tradition, which critically examines ideology and political economy. As Jacobs (2006) points out, Fairclough's (2015) framework is well-suited for analyzing the recursive relationship between discourse, power, and the socio-economic structures that shape policy discourses. In the context of Industry 4.0, this approach allows for a detailed examination of how technological discourses, whether in national policies like China's MIC25, are constructed and how they reflect broader socio-political and economic power dynamics (Fairclough, 2006).

Secondly, Fairclough's (2015) emphasis on neo-liberal discourses aligns well with the economic and political ideologies that underpin Industry 4.0. His framework can help uncover how these ideologies are promoted and naturalized through language (Poole, 2010). For example, a study on English teaching materials using Fairclough's (2015) CDA methodology revealed that textbooks often propagate neo-liberal values such as market dynamics, consumerism, and individual marketability. These materials also tend to present a superficial, non-critical multiculturalism, which serves to create an idealized image of the West. This practice of 'inculcation' underscores the pervasive influence of neo-liberal ideologies in educational contexts, mirroring the ideological underpinnings of Industry 4.0 (Babaii & Sheikhi, 2018).

Besides, Fairclough's (2015) CDA has been applied to various contexts, from government discourse to media texts, demonstrating its flexibility and robustness. This versatility is beneficial for analyzing the multifaceted and global nature of Industry 4.0. For example, A study on CDAs in Industry 4.0 proposes a novel framework that can be utilized by manufacturing enterprises of any size to enable and enhance the mutual benefits of CDAs and decision-making processes. This framework aims to improve key performance metrics such as reliability, availability, and efficiency, particularly for SMEs. The preliminary benefit analysis of this framework indicates significant potential for enhancing the operations of manufacturing SMEs through collaborative efforts (Lazarova-Molnar et al., 2019).

Finally, Fairclough's (2015) approach is inherently critical, aiming to reveal the power relations and ideological processes embedded in discourse. This critical stance is essential for scrutinizing the promises and challenges associated with Industry 4.0, such as issues of labor, automation, and economic inequality (Fairclough, 2006; Poole, 2010). Besides, Fairclough and Wodak (1997) further elaborate that discourse is not only socially constitutive, that is, it creates social identities and relationships, but also socially conditioned, influenced by existing structures of power and ideology. Discourse, therefore, plays a dual role in both sustaining the status quo and potentially transforming it, making it a powerful analytical tool for examining public policies, particularly in contexts where economic and political power intersect, such as the global technology race and initiatives like MIC25.

### 2.1.3. Fairclough's critical discourse process

Building on the foundational concepts of CDA and its application in policy discourse, this section delves into Fairclough's critical discourse process. Fairclough’s approach is particularly relevant for this study, as it provides a structured framework to analyze how MIC25’s language constructs China's ambitions within the technological and geopolitical landscapes. By examining Fairclough’s three-dimensional model, text, discursive practice, and social practice, this section further refines the tools used to address how MIC25 constructs an image of New China, aligning with the first and second research questions.

Fairclough’s (2003) three-dimensional framework provides an effective tool for uncovering the complexities of discourse and its role in shaping China’s industrial and technological narrative. This framework operates on three interrelated levels, textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice, each offering insights into how language constructs, reflects, and sustains power relations and ideological strategies.

Fairclough's (2003) approach to textual analysis is deeply rooted in systemic functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2013) and critical theory (Fowler et al., 2019). He integrates linguistic analysis with social theory, drawing on the works of theorists like Bourdieu (1977) and Habermas (1984) to link the micro-analysis of texts to the macro-analysis of social relations (Fairclough, 2003). This dual focus allows researchers to explore how language both reflects and shapes social structures.

Fairclough's (2003) textual analysis involves a detailed examination of linguistic features such as vocabulary, grammar, and textual structures. This micro-level analysis is essential for understanding how texts produce and reproduce social power relations. For instance, Fairclough's (2003) framework includes analyzing the choice of words, sentence structures, and the overall organization of the text to reveal hidden ideologies and power imbalances

Practically, the first dimension, textual analysis, involves a close examination of the language used in the MIC25 document, focusing on its vocabulary, grammar, and rhetorical structures. In this analysis, the strategic use of certain terms reveals the ideological underpinnings of the discourse.

First, Fairclough's (2010) approach to lexical analysis involves examining the specific words and phrases used in a text to uncover underlying ideologies and power structures. Lexical choices are not neutral; they carry connotations and can influence the reader's perception of the subject matter. For instance, the use of euphemisms or dysphemisms can either soften or intensify the impact of a statement, thereby guiding the audience's emotional response (Bajri & Mariesel, 2020). Fairclough (2010) often highlights the thematic use of lexical items to show how they contribute to the overall message of the text. For example, in the analysis of Gamal Abdel Nasser's 1967 speech, lexical items were used thematically to either glorify the revolution or describe the sacrifices of soldiers, thereby shaping the audience's perception of the events (Bajri & Mariesel, 2020).

The lexical dimension of CDA is not limited to the words themselves but extends to their social and political implications. Fairclough (2010) argues that lexical choices can reveal much about the social relations and power dynamics at play. For instance, the choice of certain terms over others can indicate an attempt to naturalize specific ideologies, making them appear as common sense.

Practically, central to MIC25 is the frequent use of terms like "innovation-driven development," "technological sovereignty," and "self-reliance." These terms are not neutral descriptors but serve as linguistic tools to frame China’s industrial policy as an inevitable pathway toward global leadership. The emphasis on "innovation" positions China as a forward-thinking, future-oriented power, while "sovereignty" and "self-reliance" highlight the country’s desire to reduce dependency on foreign technologies, emphasizing a shift toward domestic strength in key technological sectors.

Second, agency in Fairclough's (2015) CDA refers to the capacity of individuals or groups to act independently and make their own free choices, which is often analyzed through the linguistic representation of social actors and their actions. Fairclough's (2015) approach emphasizes how texts can either highlight or obscure the agency of social actors or to frame strategic action and proactive engagement. For example, the study of an international student in Australia demonstrates how Fairclough's CDA can highlight individual agency. The analysis shows that the student, Woody, engaged proactively and strategically with the demands of his academic program, thus acting as an agent of his own change (Kettle, 2005). Agency can also be frame as ideological subjective position. For instance, the examination of Pakistani editorials using Fairclough’s CDA model reveals how linguistic choices reflect and shape the ideological positions of male and female social actors. The study highlights how language can reinforce societal hegemony and the agency of different groups within a patriarchal context (Rafat, 2021).

Third, modality analysis in CDA involves examining the use of modal verbs (e.g., can, must, should), adverbs (e.g., possibly, certainly), adjectives (e.g., likely, necessary), and other linguistic elements that indicate the speaker's stance. This dimension is crucial for uncovering the speaker's attitudes, beliefs, and intentions, as well as the power dynamics and ideological positions embedded in the text. For instance, in the analysis of political discourse, modality analysis can reveal how speakers use language to assert authority, express certainty or doubt, and align themselves with particular ideological positions. In a study of Trump's TV speech, modality analysis was used to explore how the speaker employed language to shorten the distance between himself and the audience, thereby gaining their affirmation and support (Tian, 2021). The use of modality (such as "must" or "will") in MIC25 may also strengthen this sense of urgency and inevitability around China’s global role in Industry 4.0.

Fourth, metaphors serve as a fundamental means of concept- and argument-building. They help in constructing social realities and can reveal the underlying ideologies of a text (Musolff, 2012). For instance, in the analysis of Gamal Abdel Nasser’s 1967 speech, metaphors were used to describe the defeat, glorify the revolution, and honour the sacrifices of fallen soldiers. This use of metaphorical language helped to frame the narrative in a way that aligned with Nasser's political objectives (Bajri & Mariesel, 2020). Analysing metaphors in neoliberal discourse, such as those found in higher education contexts, can illustrate how seemingly hegemonic ideologies adapt to specific social contexts, reflecting characteristics of complexity and contingency (E, 2020).

In this study, MIC25 employs metaphors of renewal and leadership. Terms like "rejuvenation" connect the technological goals of the initiative to China’s broader national revival narrative, framing technological innovation as central to the country’s historical return to greatness. This not only legitimizes the policy but also appeals to a sense of national pride.

The second stage of Fairclough’s (2015) model, interpretation, focuses on the relationship between the text and its production, distribution, and consumption. This level reveals how the text interacts with the social and temporal conditions of its creation. This phase is divided into three steps:

Norman Fairclough's CDA provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how language functions within social and political contexts. One of the key aspects of Fairclough's CDA is the concept of positive self-presentation, which involves how individuals and groups use language to construct favourable images of themselves.

Fairclough (2015, p. 56) emphasizes the dynamic interplay between language and social structures, arguing that "language is a part of society; linguistic phenomena are social phenomena of a special sort, and social phenomena are (in part) linguistic phenomena." This perspective is crucial for understanding **positive self-presentation**, as it highlights how discourse is not merely a passive reflection of social reality but an active tool in shaping it. Besides, **negative other-presentation** is a strategy used within CDA to highlight how certain discourses contribute to the marginalization and stigmatization of specific groups. This is often achieved through linguistic choices that frame these groups in a negative manner. Fairclough's (1992) work demonstrates that such portrayals are not merely descriptive but are imbued with political motivations and judgments.

In his work, Fairclough (2010) differentiates between critical and noncritical approaches to discourse analysis. He critiques noncritical approaches for being "too structural and static, and not tied closely enough to social analysis" (Carranza, 1997). Conversely, he finds that critical approaches, while more dynamic, often lack the detailed linguistic analysis necessary to fully understand the nuances of discourse. Fairclough (1992) aims to bridge this gap by combining detailed linguistic analysis with a focus on social change, which is essential for analysing how positive self-presentation operates within various discourses.

Critics of Fairclough's CDA, such as Widdowson (Widdowson, 2004) and Stubbs (Stubbs, 1997), argue that his approach is heavily influenced by political motivations. They claim that Fairclough (1992) "draws on linguistics merely for its metalinguistic terminology" and that his linguistic descriptions are "subservient to political motivations and judgments" (Poole, 2010, p. 137). Despite these criticisms, Fairclough's (1992) focus on the political implications of discourse is precisely what makes his analysis of positive self-presentation so compelling. By examining how language is used to construct favourable self-images, Fairclough's (2015) CDA reveals the underlying power dynamics and social structures that shape these discourses.

An example of positive self-presentation in Made in China 2025 can be seen in the way the policy document frames China as a rising global leader in manufacturing. The text frequently emphasizes China's achievements in various high-tech sectors, such as aerospace, telecommunications, and green energy, while positioning these accomplishments as evidence of the country's inevitable rise to industrial supremacy. For instance, phrases like "*Building internationally competitive manufacturing is the only way China can enhance its strength, protect state security, and become a world power*" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction) emphasize China’s essential role in the global economy and construct an image of national strength and innovation.

Furthermore, Fairclough's (2015) CDA provides a robust framework for understanding how **imaginary** constructs are embedded within texts and social practices. This triadic model allows for a nuanced examination of how imaginary constructs are woven into the fabric of discourse. For instance, in the analysis of Vladimir Nabokov's "Lolita," Fairclough's framework is employed to explore how the protagonist, Humbert Humbert, creates an imaginary world to mask his suppressed identity. This fictional reality, narrated from Humbert's subjective viewpoint, highlights Fairclough's assertion that individuals construct their realities through discourse, blending memory and imagination to reflect personal ideologies and desires (Sheibeh & Deedari, 2016).

**Intertextuality** refers to the way texts reference or incorporate elements of other texts, either explicitly or implicitly. It is a crucial concept in CDA (2015) for analysing the discursive elements in social relations of power and solidarity. However, the operationalization of intertextuality to map existing power relations at the levels of discourse has been limited. Recent developments in the methodological framework for intertextuality in CDA emphasize the importance of absence and ambiguity as key analytical foci, introducing concepts such as the inter-text, networks of inter-texts, and typicality (Farrelly, 2020).

**Interdiscursivity**, on the other hand, involves the blending of different discourses within a single text. Fairclough's (2015) model of CDA views discourse as a form of social practice that is dialectically related to other elements of social life. This model combines textual analysis with contextual analysis, linking discourse to other discourses and social practices. For example, Tayebipou (2018) suggests that intertextuality and interdiscursivity are crucial in shaping political and ideological discourses by drawing from religious, promotional, and previous texts to influence audience perception and response.

Fairclough's (2015) CDA framework is instrumental in dissecting the complex interplay between language and **globalization**. He combines CDA with a political-economic perspective, which allows for a nuanced analysis of how language both shapes and is shaped by global economic and political processes (Fairclough, 2006). This dual focus is crucial for understanding the multifaceted nature of globalization, which is not merely a neutral flow of ideas but is deeply embedded in power dynamics and economic structures. In the era of Industry 4.0, characterized by the integration of digital technologies into manufacturing and other industries, the discourse of globalization and cooperation takes on new dimensions. Fairclough's insights into the political-economic aspects of globalization are particularly pertinent. Industry 4.0 is not just about technological innovation but also about the global distribution of power and resources. Fairclough's CDA can help uncover how language in Industry 4.0 discourse perpetuates or challenges existing power structures and economic inequalities (Shi-xu, 2009).

At the situational level, CDA focuses on the immediate context in which discourse occurs. This involves analysing specific instances of language use and their immediate effects. In the context of Industry 4.0, situational analysis might involve examining how language is used in corporate communications, such as press releases or internal memos, to shape perceptions of technological advancements and their implications.

For instance, a study applying Fairclough’s (2015) CDA to a chairman’s statement of a UK defence firm revealed how grammatical devices are used to represent organizational activities and outcomes in ways that obfuscate social agency and evaluate social actors and events strategically. This situational analysis helps to understand how language is employed to guide interpretations of financial performance and legitimize certain actions within the immediate context of corporate communication (Merkl-Davies & Koller, 2012).

At the institutional level, CDA examines how discourse practices are shaped by and shape institutional structures and power relations. In Industry 4.0, this could involve analysing how language within organizations reflects and reinforces hierarchical structures, corporate culture, and power dynamics.

Fairclough’s (2015) approach emphasizes the role of language in constituting social and institutional relationships. For example, the analysis of Pakistani editorials using Fairclough’s (2015) CDA model highlighted how linguistic choices reflect and perpetuate patriarchal practices within the institutional context of media organizations. This study showed that different newspapers adopted varying stances on the same issue, revealing the hidden ideologies and power structures within the press media (Rafat, 2021).

At the social level, CDA explores the broader societal and cultural contexts that influence and are influenced by discourse. This involves understanding how language practices contribute to the maintenance or transformation of social structures and power relations.

Fairclough’s (2015) CDA is particularly concerned with how discourse shapes and is shaped by social practices and ideologies. For example, the broader societal implications of CDA are discussed in terms of its ability to reveal domination and the abuse of power at various levels, including the social level. This is crucial in understanding how Industry 4.0 technologies and discourses might reinforce or challenge existing social inequalities and power dynamics (Ulinnuha et al., 2013).

Moreover, Fairclough’s (1992) work on media discourse and social change underscores the importance of examining how media representations of Industry 4.0 technologies influence public perceptions and societal norms. The interplay between language and social change is central to understanding the societal impact of technological advancements (Fowler, 1997).

### 2.1.4. Criticism of Fairclough's critical discourse analysis

While Fairclough’s (2015) critical discourse process offers valuable insights, it is not without its limitations. This section addresses key criticisms of Fairclough’s approach, particularly concerns regarding its interpretive flexibility and potential for researcher bias. By examining these critiques, the review contextualizes Fairclough’s (2015) CDA within the broader methodological landscape, highlighting both its strengths and areas for caution. This critical perspective ensures a balanced foundation for using CDA in analyzing MIC25, supporting a rigorous examination of how New China’s identity is discursively constructed.

The increasing relevance of Industry 4.0 has spurred interest in applying CDA (Fairclough, 2015) to examine the discourse surrounding these developments. While CDA (Fairclough, 2015) offers significant insights into how language shapes policy and power relations, it has faced various critiques, particularly in the context of policy related to Industry 4.0. This section will explore these criticisms and how CDA (Fairclough, 2015) continues to evolve to meet the complex demands of analysing technological transformations.

While CDA (Fairclough, 2015) has proven useful in understanding the role of language in policy discourse, one key critique, particularly in its application to technological policy, is its perceived inability to fully engage with material realities. Industry 4.0 policies rely heavily on physical infrastructure, technological innovation, and industrial processes, which cannot be adequately explained by language alone. Critics argue that CDA (Fairclough, 2015) often overemphasizes symbolic power and discourse while underplaying the material conditions that influence power relations and may not always fully account for the material conditions influencing power relations (Babatunde & Kolade, 2023; Mullet, 2018). This critique suggests that CDA should expand its scope to integrate a more holistic approach that incorporates the analysis of both discursive and material elements in understanding Industry 4.0.

Another critique lies in CDA's (Fairclough, 2015) tendency toward selective quotation. In policy discourse analysis, CDA scholars may isolate particular discursive instances, presenting them as representative of broader trends (Breeze, 2011). This practice can lead to a skewed understanding of how technological change is framed across different contexts. As Jacobs (2006) points out, this can distort the narrative if the selected quotations do not accurately reflect the diversity of voices in the discourse. When analysing Industry 4.0 policies, it is crucial to adopt a rigorous methodology that ensures a wide array of perspectives are considered, including those of policymakers, technologists, and the public.

Furthermore, Fairclough's (2015) CDA has been criticized for focusing predominantly on neo-liberal discourses and using linguistic descriptions that serve political motivations and judgments rather than providing a neutral analysis (Poole, 2010)

A final critique concerns CDA's (Fairclough, 2015) accessibility, particularly for non-specialists such as policymakers. Chilton (2005) raises the question of whether CDA has had tangible effects on policymaking, suggesting that its complex linguistic analyses are often too technical for practical use by those shaping policy. In the context of Industry 4.0, where rapid technological innovation demands swift and clear decision-making, the ability to communicate findings from CDA in an understandable and actionable manner is crucial. Fairclough (1992) acknowledges that language analysis is inherently complex, which may create barriers for policymakers. Thus, CDA scholars must strive to present their findings in more accessible formats, linking their discourse analyses directly to practical policy recommendations. However, efforts have been made to bridge this gap. For instance, one study provides a guideline specifically designed to make CDA more accessible to policymakers and other professionals. This guideline adapts Fairclough's methodology by simplifying the language and detailing the four phases of the methodology, thus making it more user-friendly for non-specialists (Cummings et al., 2020).

## 2.2. Industry 4.0 as social practices

Building on the CDA foundation, this section situates MIC25 within the broader context of Industry 4.0, highlighting the complex relationship between technological advancements and national identity. Industry 4.0 is not only a set of technologies but a social practice, shaping narratives of modernity and leadership. Here, the literature provides insights into the global discursive landscape, aligning heavily with the second research question on the discursive construction of New China and its positioning within a rapidly evolving technological paradigm.

### 2.2.1. Discursive formation of Industry 4.0

To delve deeper, this section explores how the discourse surrounding Industry 4.0 is itself constructed, revealing underlying ideological and power structures that influence policy. Examining the language of progress and innovation allows us to understand how MIC25 contributes to China’s self-image as a forward-looking, technologically advanced nation. This supports the thesis’s analysis of MIC25 as a strategic narrative tool within the global Industry 4.0 discourse.

MIC25 is not merely an industrial policy; it represents a discursive project that shapes the vision of China’s future as a global leader in technological innovation. Through CDA, it becomes evident that the language of MIC25 functions to naturalize ideologies surrounding technological progress, self-reliance, and global competitiveness. These ideological constructs are embedded within broader power dynamics, reflecting and reinforcing dominant social relations in the context of Industry 4.0.

Firstly, using Fairclough’s (2015) concept of "discourse as social practice," the terminologies in MIC25, such as "smart manufacturing," "automation," and "innovation-driven development," act as discursive tools that shape our understanding of technological progress. These terms are not neutral; they are part of a wider discursive process where meaning is socially constructed and negotiated within a specific technological and economic context. Within the MIC25 discourse, these terms emphasize China's strategic pursuit of self-reliance and technological sovereignty, aligning with broader global competition narratives.

By framing these technologies as essential, MIC25 positions China as a central player in the global technological race, while also constructing a national narrative of progress and innovation. This ideological construction aligns with techno-determinist ideology, the belief that technological advancements drive societal change and economic growth. However, this narrative often downplays the social and economic costs of automation and digital transformation, such as job displacement and inequality.

Secondly, Fairclough’s (2015) framework emphasizes the role of language in the construction and maintenance of power dynamics and hegemonic structures within society. A study investigating power and hegemony in research consultations found that language ideologies play a crucial role in establishing asymmetrical power relations between supervisors and supervisees. The study revealed that in some cases, language was used to sustain the dominant position of the supervisor, thereby perpetuating power imbalances. This aligns with Fairclough's view that language is a tool for maintaining social hierarchies and power structures (Sikandar & Hussain, 2018).

Thirdly, Fairclough’s (2015) emphasis on the semiotic dimension of discourse reveals that "without discourse, there is no ideology." Fairclough's (1992) work shares some common ground with the materialistic semiotics proposed by Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, who attempted to integrate Marxian critique with semiotic analysis. Both approaches explore the relationship between language, ideology, and power, although they diverge in their interpretation of the role of language and discourse in Marx's economic works (Borrelli, 2018).

 In the discourse of Industry 4.0, key terms such as "artificial intelligence," "IoT," and "data-driven decision-making" carry significant ideological weight. These terms construct an imaginary vision of the future where automation and data management are central to economic development, reflecting the interests of dominant technological and economic actors and shaping public perception around technological progress.

Thirdly, Fairclough’s (2015) notion of "ideological-discursive formations" helps explain how MIC25 interpellates individuals, institutions, and corporations into a specific worldview that emphasizes innovation, efficiency, and competitiveness. By participating in the discourse of Industry 4.0, these actors internalize and reproduce the values and goals of this global paradigm, positioning themselves within the global technological race and reinforcing the hegemonic discourse.

This interpellation is especially visible in MIC25’s promotion of national pride and self-reliance in technological development. Fairclough’s analysis of discourse reveals how this process obscures the underlying power dynamics, making it seem as though actors are operating autonomously when, in fact, they are reinforcing established power structures. The language of "technological sovereignty" constructs an image of China's independence from foreign technology, which aligns with its global ambitions but also masks the unequal distribution of power in these processes.

Fourth, Fairclough’s (2015) concept of "naturalization" explains how the language of MIC25 works to legitimize existing power structures. In the discourse of Industry 4.0, terms like "digital transformation" and "technological sovereignty" serve to reinforce the interests of global technological giants and powerful national actors. By framing technological transformation as essential for economic survival, MIC25 masks the reality that these changes primarily benefit large corporations and tech firms, while marginalizing smaller businesses and low-skilled workers.

The discourse of MIC25 is deeply ideological, shaping how technological progress is perceived and enacted. Through Fairclough’s (2015) lens, we see how this discourse operates to naturalize power structures, construct national identity, and promote technological determinism. This discursive framework positions China as a global leader in innovation, while simultaneously obscuring the social and economic inequalities that arise from such transformations. Understanding these discursive mechanisms is essential to unpacking the broader implications of MIC25 within the global landscape of Industry 4.0.

The discourse of naturalisation reinforces techno-determinist ideology by framing these technologies as the critical drivers of China’s economic transformation. In Fairclough's terms, this discourse promotes a future in which technological innovation is inevitable and indispensable for global competitiveness. The ideological function of this language is to legitimize technological progress as a natural and essential component of national development, obscuring alternative pathways and critical perspectives.

Fifth, to further expand on how ideology operates within the discourse of Industry 4.0, Benedict Anderson’s (2006) concept of "imagined communities" is particularly insightful and it is realized in the imaginary constructed that embedded in discourse. Anderson argues that nations are socially constructed through shared narratives, and in the case of MIC25, China constructs itself as a global leader in technological innovation. Through the discourse of MIC25, China creates an imagined community of New China where its citizens, industries, and policymakers are united by a shared vision of technological progress and national rejuvenation.

This imagined community is not limited to China; it extends globally, positioning China as a key actor in shaping the future of Industry 4.0. The language of self-reliance and innovation in MIC25 reflects China’s desire to compete with Western technological powers, creating a sense of national identity built on technological sovereignty. However, Anderson’s (2006) theory also argues that these communities are imagined, the reality is that many groups, such as low-skilled workers displaced by automation, are left excluded from this vision of the future.

### 2.2.2. Ideological tensions in Industry 4.0

Transitioning from the ideological formation of Industry 4.0 discourse, this section addresses the ideological tensions within it, particularly how the discourse intersects with issues of economic competitiveness, national identity, and self-reliance. Such tensions echo China’s dual goals of participating in global markets while championing technological sovereignty, a core theme in MIC25. Addressing these tensions prepares the groundwork for analyzing the motivations behind New China’s constructed identity, as raised in the third research question.

In recent years, the rise of Industry 4.0 has triggered new ideological frameworks in the development of public policy, particularly with a focus on the intersection of technology, economy, and governance which leads to a variety of ideological tensions. Much like the shift towards market fundamentalism in the 1980s, championed by leaders like Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher (Block & Somers, 2014), the movement towards Industry 4.0 reflects the prevailing ideological belief in the transformative power of technology. At a point, Grafton and Permaloff (2005) argued, the literature on policy formulation often overlooks the ideological motivations that underlie such transformative shifts. However, this thesis highlights the importance of ideology in shaping Industry 4.0's trajectory. The rise of Industry 4.0 has given rise to distinct ideologies that shape policy, governance, and industrial strategies across the globe. These ideologies reflect varying degrees of state involvement, market liberalization, and technological determinism.

First, one of the dominant ideologies in the discourse surrounding Industry 4.0 is technological determinism, which suggests that technological progress will inevitably drive economic and social advancements (Dafoe, 2015). Scholars like Schwab (2016) have popularized the notion that Industry 4.0 will lead to transformative changes in productivity, economic growth, and even societal structures. This belief reflects an optimistic ideology, where technology is seen as the primary force behind progress, with governments and industries merely facilitating its adoption.

However, critics argue that this technological optimism ignores the potential for inequalities and disruptions in the workforce. Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014), for example, highlight how automation and AI, while boosting productivity, may exacerbate social divides by displacing jobs, especially in low-skill sectors. This critique suggests that the ideological focus on technology as a solution to economic challenges often overlooks the social implications of widespread automation. Balsmeier and Woerter (2019) further argue that the rhetoric around Industry 4.0 often masks the deeper issues of workforce displacement and economic inequality, driven by the increasing dominance of technological capital over labour.

Second, while technological determinism dominates the discourse in more neoliberal economies (E, 2020; Harvey, 2005; Kontopodis, 2012). Recent studies have highlighted the role of state intervention in shaping Industry 4.0 policies, especially in emerging markets and nations with more centralized governance, for example in Seoul or Singapore (Joo, 2023). China's MIC25 serves as a prime example of how Industry 4.0 is being deployed within a framework of state-led industrial policy. China's strategy involves significant government intervention to foster technological self-reliance and leadership in critical sectors such as AI, robotics, and advanced manufacturing (Li, 2018).

In line with Fairclough's (2015) ideology, China's industrial strategy is driven by the need for hegemony in global technological standards, positioning itself as a leader rather than a follower. Wübbeke et al. (2016) emphasize how China's strategy seeks to dominate the global market by setting standards and ensuring that Chinese firms gain leadership in strategic sectors, challenging the dominance of Western technology firms. This approach contrasts sharply with the liberal market ideologies that emphasize private-sector innovation and minimal government intervention seen in countries like the United States and Germany (Kontopodis, 2012) or in the United Kingdom (Aiginger & Rodrik, 2020).

However, critics of state-led Industry 4.0 strategies warn of potential inefficiencies and rigidities. Breznitz (2011) argue that state-led initiatives may hinder innovation by over-regulating and over-directing industries, stifling the organic growth that often drives technological breakthroughs in more open markets. Additionally, Lynn and Salzman (2023) suggest that nationalistic industrial policies might isolate countries from global technological ecosystems, which thrive on cross-border collaboration and market-driven innovation.

Third, a key ideology in recent Industry 4.0 literature is the idea of innovation ecosystems - networks of companies, governments, universities, and other institutions working together to drive technological progress (Pasi et al., 2022). This approach reflects an ideology of collaboration and cross-sectoral integration (Benitez et al., 2020), where technological advancement is seen as a collective process rather than a top-down or market-driven one (Valackienė & Nagaj, 2021). Scholars like Fukuda (2020) emphasize the importance of innovation ecosystem thinking in fostering Industry 4.0 innovations, particularly to reduce three risks and to strengthen productivity and growth.

Fourth, countries that have successfully adopted Industry 4.0 policies tend to balance market-driven innovation with strategic state intervention, adjusting their policies as needed. Singapore's Industry 4.0 strategy, for instance, exemplifies ideological flexibility, where the government provides substantial support for technological innovation while maintaining a free-market environment to attract foreign investment (Cheang, 2024; Ng et al., 2023). This approach is seen as a hybrid model, combining elements of liberal market policies with strategic industrial planning (Sansana et al., 2021). To explain this, hybrid industrial policy represents a blend of neoliberal principles with more proactive state intervention aimed at addressing the shortcomings of pure neoliberalism (Baldwin et al., 2019).

Fifth, the emergence of Industry 4.0 has been characterized by the integration of advanced technologies into industrial processes. However, a crucial ideology of Industry 4.0 that has gained increasing attention in recent years is the tension between sustainability and these technological advancements (Bonilla et al., 2018). This tension reflects both economic and environmental imperatives, particularly as countries across the globe engage in competition to lead in the development of sustainable technologies. Recent studies have examined how advanced technologies can drive efficiency in manufacturing while reducing carbon footprints (Bonilla et al., 2018). For instance, the use of real-time data analytics and predictive maintenance can minimize waste and energy consumption, which aligns with the global agenda for sustainable development.

Sixth, global competition for leadership has become a critical ideological tension of Industry 4.0 strategies, with countries striving to position themselves as pioneers in sustainable industrial practices as well as reduction of external dependence (Andreoni & Chang, 2019). China, in particular, has attempted to be a global leader in the development and deployment of green technologies such as electric vehicles, renewable energy, and smart grids (Wübbeke et al., 2016). The MIC25 strategy reflects China's ambition to dominate key sectors of green technology as part of its broader industrial policy. Another critical tension is the role of the government in conflict management and its entrepreneurial function. Leadership in industrial policy is not just about setting policies but also about managing conflicts that arise from competing interests and ensuring that the government has the organizational capabilities to implement these policies effectively. This involves strategic coordination and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances (Andreoni & Chang, 2019).

Seventh, the ideology of self-reliance in the context of Industry 4.0 has gained significant importance due to the growing geopolitical tensions that shape global trade, technology transfers, and industrial strategies (Neill et al., 2023). As technological advancements accelerate the transformation of industries, nations are increasingly focused on building their own technological capacities to safeguard their economies from external shocks, disruptions, and dependency on foreign powers. For example, India's approach to self-reliance has seen significant shifts over the recent decade. India's policy of self-reliance discouraged exports and focused on building domestic industrial capabilities, driven by the scarcity of foreign exchange and a protectionist stance (Chacko, 2021). The ideology of self-reliance within Industry 4.0 involves the development of domestic capabilities to innovate, produce, and deploy advanced technologies, without excessive reliance on external actors (Neill et al., 2023). Self-reliance becomes not only a matter of economic strategy but also one of national security and industrial sovereignty. For example, Zhan (2022) found out that the intersection of self-reliance and national security is particularly pronounced in the context of food security. China's dual strategy of importing large volumes of food while emphasizing self-sufficiency underscores the importance of maintaining national food sovereignty. This approach is driven by the need to support rural livelihoods and mitigate the risks associated with global food supply disruptions.

Germany, with its Industrie 4.0 initiative, has emphasized technological self-reliance to maintain its industrial leadership in the face of global competition. Launched in 2011, Industrie 4.0 seeks to enhance Germany's manufacturing sector through the integration of digital technologies into production processes (Pfeiffer, 2017). Given the geopolitical uncertainty surrounding international trade and the potential for technology embargoes, Germany's focus on domestic innovation in critical areas reflects the country's commitment to maintaining control over its industrial future (Reischauer, 2018).

Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, launched in 2014, similarly emphasizes the need for self-reliance in technological development, though with a focus on the digital economy rather than traditional manufacturing. Singapore's strategy centres around building digital infrastructure and fostering innovation ensuring the country's competitiveness and resilience amid global technological disruptions (Cheang, 2024). While Singapore remains deeply integrated into global markets, its government has prioritized the development of domestic technological capabilities to reduce vulnerabilities associated with reliance on foreign technologies, particularly in critical sectors such as cybersecurity and data infrastructure (Sansana et al., 2021).

Geopolitical tensions have significantly shaped the self-reliance strategies of both Germany and Singapore in Industry 4.0. As global power dynamics shift and trade conflicts intensify, both nations have recognized the importance of reducing dependence on foreign technologies, especially those originating from countries involved in geopolitical disputes (Schneider, 2023; Vu, 2018).

In conclusion, the rise of Industry 4.0 has introduced new ideological frameworks in public policy, focusing on the intersection of technology, economy, and governance. One dominant ideology is technological determinism, which views technology as the primary driver of economic progress. However, critics warn that this overlooks issues like workforce displacement and inequality. In contrast, countries like China, through state-led initiatives such as Made in China 2025, emphasize technological self-reliance and seek to lead in global standards, reflecting Gramscian hegemony. Meanwhile, innovation ecosystems, which promote cross-sector collaboration, and the tension between technological advancement and sustainability, are key themes shaping global Industry 4.0 strategies. Lastly, self-reliance has become critical for countries like Germany and Singapore, as geopolitical tensions drive the need to reduce reliance on foreign technologies.

### 2.2.3. Mapping ideologies

After exploring Industry 4.0’s role within policy discourse, this section examines how Industry 4.0 functions as a social practice, reshaping national identity through new forms of technological engagement and societal expectations. This approach allows us to see beyond Industry 4.0 as a technological phenomenon and view it as a transformative force that influences how nations, including China, project power and modernity. Analyzing Industry 4.0 as a set of social practices provides deeper insights into MIC25’s portrayal of New China, addressing how the discourse constructs a future-oriented national identity.

Fairclough (2010) emphasizes that discourse operates as a form of social practice that shapes and reflects social relations. Through discourse, ideologies are embedded in everyday language, becoming naturalized and making particular power relations appear normal or even inevitable. This naturalization process is one of the most insidious aspects of ideology, as it conceals the power dynamics that underpin social structures, allowing dominance to be maintained with minimal opposition (Fairclough, 2010). Consequently, individuals may accept these power relations unconsciously, contributing to the stability of the social order.

Ideology operates at various levels within Industry 4.0, influencing socio-political, cultural, and economic dynamics. One of the central ideological functions, as highlighted by Fairclough (2010), is the legitimization of power structures. In the context of Industry 4.0, discourse serves to legitimize the authority of governments and corporations over the transformation of manufacturing industries. Particularly, MIC25 is framed as necessary responses to global technological competition, positioning China as a leader in Industry 4.0. MIC25 emphasizes China's need to reduce reliance on foreign technology and foster indigenous innovation in critical sectors such as robotics, aerospace, and new energy vehicles. By framing the policy in these terms, the discourse legitimizes government intervention in key industries and justifies substantial investments in research and development, which in turn consolidates state power over industrial sectors (Li & Alon, 2020). Economic discourses also often serve as ideological practices that exert power and influence. By analysing economic expert discourses, researchers have identified different forms of ideological subjectivation, including oppressive, normalizing, and resisting forms. A recent study underscores the role of discourse in regulating the relationship between subjects and political systems, further illustrating Fairclough’s (2010) concept of discourse as a tool for legitimizing power (Maesse & Nicoletta, 2021).

Another critical ideological function in Fairclough's (2010) framework is the manufacturing of consent and fostering of social cohesion. Both MIC25 and Industry 4.0 use discourses that construct national and industrial identities to align public opinion with the objectives of these policies. Freeden (2003) also observes that ideologies recruit political actors through persuasion and propaganda, producing "common sense" understandings of policy goals. In Industry 4.0, this manifests in discourses that present technological innovation as an unqualified good, side-lining critiques of its social impacts. Chomsky (2015) goes on to note that this ideological control can exclude alternative perspectives, thus narrowing public debate about the costs and benefits of such technological transformations. In the case study of China, Through a corpus-based critical discourse analysis of 20 years of data, it was found that government-affiliated interpreters play a crucial role in reinforcing and reconstructing a positive image of the government. This is done by emphasizing the government's concern for its people, thereby legitimizing its hegemonic rule (Gu, 2019).

Thirdly, Fairclough's (2010) concept of naturalisation of social relations helps to understand how certain practices and beliefs become normalized and accepted as common sense and naturalise technological change. For instance, in the Metropolitan Region of Curitiba, Brazil, the dominant discourse legitimizes the proliferation of suburban gated communities by combining environmental concerns with neoliberal principles. This discourse simplifies complex relationships and renders alternative possibilities unthinkable, thereby naturalizing certain social relations and practices (Zanotto, 2020). Besides, ideology represents an imaginary relationship to a material reality and how discourse can be a political tool that shapes identities (Beetz et al., 2021). Thus, MIC25 can legitimize and justify certain technological advancements while marginalizing alternative approaches. The role of ideology in this context is to present technological change as a natural and necessary progression, thereby shaping public perception and policy decisions.

Furthermore, Fairclough (2010) also notes that discourse plays a key role in reproducing social practices over time. For example, in a recent study, the conservation of industrial heritage in China exemplifies how industrial policy is intertwined with social practices. The paper "Reproducing the discourse on industrial heritage in China: reflections on the evolution of values, policies and practices" highlights the dynamic nature of industrial heritage conservation, which is influenced by evolving values and contextual social and cultural imperatives. The study emphasizes the importance of adaptive reuse and sensitive legislation in managing industrial heritage, particularly in urban settings like Shanghai. This approach reflects a broader trend in industrial policy where historical and cultural values are integrated into contemporary urban development and planning practices (Lu et al., 2020). In the context of MIC25, the discourse contributes to the reproduction of industrial practices that favor technological and corporate dominance. Zenglein and Holzmann (2019) argue that MIC25 reproduces an industrial framework where the state plays a central role in shaping industrial policy, reinforcing the dominance of state-owned enterprises and government-backed corporations.

In another case, the political economy of industrial policy is explored in the paper "The political economy of industrial policy: Structural interdependencies, policy alignment and conflict management." This study provides a long-term analytical perspective on industrial policy, emphasizing the importance of structural interdependencies, policy alignment, and conflict management. The authors introduce the Policy Package Matrix as a tool for strategic coordination of industrial policy measures, highlighting the government's role in managing conflicts and aligning policies to support industrialization (Andreoni & Chang, 2019).

Finally, while Fairclough’s (2010) CDA emphasizes how discourse often reinforces dominant ideologies, it also allows for the possibility of resistance and contestation. He also argues that power is "implicit within everyday social practices" and that it is predominant "at every level in all domains of life" (Fairclough, 1992, p. 50). Applying Fairclough's perspective to industrial policy discourse involves examining how language is used to both assert and contest power. This dual focus can reveal the strategies employed by various stakeholders to influence policy outcomes. For instance, analyzing the language used by policymakers, industry leaders, and labor representatives can uncover the power dynamics at play and identify opportunities for resistance and change. Negm (2015) acknowledges the importance of including resistance in a broader theory of power, meanwhile the literature primarily focuses on top-down relations of dominance. This gap in the literature suggests a need for more research on how industrial policy discourse can be used to challenge and resist power.

In conclusion, the role of ideology in Industry 4.0 policy discourse is multifaceted. It helps shape how technological advancements and national identity are framed, understood, and implemented at both national and global levels.

### 2.2.4. Challenges and opportunities for CDA in mapping ideological tensions of the Industry 4.0

While Industry 4.0 offers a unique framework for understanding social practices, analyzing its ideological tensions through CDA presents both challenges and opportunities. This section addresses these aspects, focusing on how CDA can effectively reveal conflicting narratives within Industry 4.0, such as globalization versus national sovereignty and innovation versus social equity. By examining these tensions, the study clarifies CDA’s potential for uncovering the ideological complexities within MIC25, particularly in portraying China’s technological ambitions as inherently tied to its national identity.

In applying CDA to future-oriented technologies and to analyse the discursive constructions of imagined identities such as those encompassed by Industry 4.0, both challenges and opportunities arise. Industry 4.0, driven by technological transformations shapes industrial policies, national identities, and global power relations. Yet, analysing this complex and dynamic discourse using CDA requires a critical assessment to navigate its limitations while capitalizing on its strengths.

One of the primary challenges in applying CDA to Industry 4.0 discourse is the rapidly evolving nature of technological and policy language. Industry 4.0 technologies are subject to continuous innovation, leading to an ever-shifting landscape of terminology and discourse. This fast-paced evolution complicates the task of capturing the full breadth of this discourse, as CDA traditionally focuses on stable and clearly articulated text and speech. The fluid nature of technological discourse means that CDA must be adaptable and continuously updated to remain relevant. The multifaceted nature of these technologies requires a nuanced understanding of both technical and social dimensions (Bajic et al., 2021).

Secondly, it the scarcity of practical implementation evidence. Bajic et al. (2021) admitted that despite the growing academic interest in Industry 4.0, there is a lack of comprehensive analysis and practical evidence of its implementation. This scarcity poses a challenge for CDA practitioners who rely on empirical data to analyse discourse and its impact on social practices.

Thirdly, CDA's strength in revealing hidden power structures also presents a challenge in contexts as diverse as those involved in Industry 4.0. The socio-political environments in which Industry 4.0 policies are enacted are often fluid, shaped by shifting geopolitical competition, trade tensions, and economic strategies. This means that power relations are not static but continually negotiated and redefined. While CDA excels at identifying underlying ideologies, it risks oversimplifying these dynamic relationships unless it accounts for the local, temporal, and fluctuating nature of these interactions.

Fourth, there is a challenge of managerial and technological in combination with linguistic skills. Industry 4.0 implementation faces significant managerial and technological challenges. These include issues related to cyber security, data privacy, and the need for new managerial skills. These challenges can complicate the application of CDA, as they require an understanding of both managerial practices and technological advancements and discourse.

Additionally, the technical and often complex theoretical language used in CDA can create a barrier between academic discourse and practical policymaking. Policymakers involved in Industry 4.0 initiatives may not easily grasp the detailed linguistic and theoretical critiques produced by CDA, limiting its potential impact on real-world policy decisions. Fairclough acknowledges that language analysis is a complex and sometimes quite technical sphere (Fairclough, 1992), implying that CDA scholars need to make their findings more accessible to non-specialists involved in the design and implementation of policies.

Last but not least, it is the material resource constraints in value co-creation. The co-creation of value in industrial services through Industry 4.0 technologies is hindered by material resource constraints. These constraints can limit the availability of data and the ability to conduct comprehensive CDA, as the analysis often depends on access to rich and diverse data sources (Bonamigo & Frech, 2021). This is also because CDA is qualitative in nature, while material resources are more often measured quantitatively.

Despite these challenges, CDA offers significant opportunities for analysing the discourse surrounding Industry 4.0 and its accompanying policies. CDA excels at uncovering the hidden ideologies that shape technological policies, particularly those promoting narratives of technological superiority, national competitiveness, and state intervention. In the context of China's MIC25, CDA can be ideal to reveal how discourses around technological leadership, innovation, and self-reliance are strategically deployed to justify state actions aimed at positioning China as a global technological leader.

Secondly, CDA's ability to critique the assumptions embedded in policy language is a powerful tool for analysing Industry 4.0. For instance, the discourse surrounding automation and AI often frames these developments as inevitable and universally beneficial, ignoring potential socio-economic risks such as job displacement, inequality, and digital divides. By exposing these underlying assumptions, CDA provides a critical perspective that challenges dominant narratives and brings to light the broader socio-political implications of these technologies.

Furthermore, CDA's interdisciplinary nature allows for an integration of linguistic, socio-political, and economic analyses, offering a more holistic view of how discourse functions within Industry 4.0. By combining CDA with theories of framing, ideology, policymakers and scholars can navigate the complex language of future-oriented technologies. This integrated approach positions CDA as an essential tool for investigating how language constructs power relations and shapes public policy in the context of global technological competition.

Fourth, in the case of MIC25, CDA can shed light on how China constructs its identity as a leader in Industry 4.0 through its discourse. By analysing the narratives of "technological sovereignty," "self-reliance," and "innovation" found in MIC25 and other government documents, CDA uncovers the ideological underpinnings of technological ambitions of New China. These discourses not only legitimize China's push for industrial modernization but also challenge existing global power structures by presenting China as a rising competitor to Western technological dominance.

Moreover, CDA allows us to analyse the mechanisms by which these discourses are circulated and reinforced. By focusing on the role of framing and narrative analysis, we can examine how China's discourse on Industry 4.0 is framed in terms of national rejuvenation, technological progress, and global leadership. These narratives are not merely descriptive but serve to legitimize China's industrial strategy and position it as a central player in the global technological landscape.

Sixth, it is the technologies developed in Industry 4.0 itself that helps generate vast amounts of data, providing a rich resource for CDA as well as new research tools for CDA. This data and tools can be used to analyse discourse patterns, power dynamics, and social practices in new and insightful ways. This research itself is beneficial from the technologies of Industry 4.0 for faster searching for and reviewing other studies in the world of IoT.

In conclusion, the application of CDA to the discourse of Industry 4.0, highlighting both the challenges and opportunities. Key challenges include the rapidly evolving language of Industry 4.0 technologies, which complicates CDA's traditional focus on stable discourse, and the scarcity of empirical evidence in real-world implementations. The fluid socio-political environment surrounding Industry 4.0, shaped by shifting geopolitical and economic factors, further complicates CDA’s task of analyzing power dynamics. Other challenges involve the technical complexities of Industry 4.0, including managerial and technological issues, the gap between academic language and policymaking, and resource constraints that hinder comprehensive analysis.

Despite these hurdles, CDA offers valuable opportunities. It excels at uncovering hidden ideologies in technological policies, revealing how narratives of technological superiority, national competitiveness, and state intervention are constructed. In contexts like China's MIC25 initiative, CDA can expose the ideological foundations behind discourses of self-reliance and technological leadership. CDA’s interdisciplinary approach enables a holistic analysis of language, power, and policy in Industry 4.0, using vast data generated by these technologies to uncover new insights. Ultimately, CDA serves as a critical tool for understanding how discourse shapes power relations and global technological competition.

## 2.3. Industry 4.0 and Chinese dream

Moving from Industry 4.0’s global dimensions, this section reviews the concept of the Chinese Dream, which encapsulates national rejuvenation, pride, and global leadership aspirations. By linking MIC25’s goals with the ideals of the Chinese dream, this section illuminates the cultural and ideological underpinnings of China’s technological ambitions. This connection provides a framework for understanding why New China’s identity is constructed in alignment with cultural ideals, further addressing the “why” aspect of the research questions.

### 2.3.1. Chinese dream

Having established the broader framework of Industry 4.0 and its impact on national identity construction, this section introduces the Chinese dream, a central vision within China’s policy discourse. The Chinese dream is not only a guiding narrative for national rejuvenation but also a powerful tool for framing China’s modernization goals within a vision of historical continuity and future ambition. Exploring the Chinese dream provides crucial context for understanding how MIC25 aligns with China’s broader aspirations, answering why New China’s identity is crafted with particular ideological values.

The Chinese dream, a vision articulated by President Xi Jinping, aims to rejuvenate the nation and secure its place as a global power, reminiscent of its historical prominence. This vision is underpinned by two primary pillars: becoming a world leader in high-tech innovation and rejuvenating the nation to reclaim its status as a global power.

China's ambition to become a global leader in high-tech industries is a cornerstone of the Chinese Dream. The country has launched several initiatives to achieve this goal, including the "Digital Silk Road Initiative" and "China Manufacturing 2025." These initiatives aim to establish China as a dominant force in next-generation information and communication technologies, as well as space technology. By developing an extensive IoT platform and telecommunications infrastructure, China seeks to control global information flows, thereby challenging the current technological hegemony of the United States (Jun, 2022).

Despite significant progress, China faces challenges in its quest for innovation. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has prioritized innovation as part of its national development strategy, as highlighted in the 14th Five-Year Plan. However, the imperative of party control may undermine the necessary conditions for fostering a truly innovative environment. Additionally, while China has shown technological prowess, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, it still faces technical impediments in key areas such as semiconductors (Kania, 2021). The second pillar of the Chinese Dream focuses on the rejuvenation of the nation, aiming to restore China's historical status as a global power. This vision is closely tied to China's strategic initiatives on the international stage, particularly in East Asia and Eurasia. Since the beginning of economic reforms in 1978, China has expanded its global influence, initially as a market for industrial equipment and technologies, and more recently as an active participant in global governance institutions (Vinogradov, 2021).

Xi Jinping's approach to national rejuvenation is characterized by a combination of reassurance, reform, and resistance. This strategy involves reassuring other nations of China's benign intentions, promoting reforms in the international order to facilitate China's rise, and resisting challenges to the country's core interests. This multifaceted approach aims to solidify China's position as a global power while addressing the complexities of international relations (Goldstein, 2020).

In summary, the Chinese Dream is a comprehensive vision that seeks to position China as a world leader in high-tech innovation and rejuvenate the nation to reclaim its historical status as a global power. Through strategic initiatives and a focus on innovation, China aims to navigate the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century, ultimately realizing its long-term national aspirations.

### 2.3.2. National identity constructs

Building on the ideals of the Chinese dream, this section examines the construction of national identity as a key objective within MIC25. National identity serves as the backbone of the Chinese dream, linking the motivations behind New China to its cultural and historical legacy. Through this lens, MIC25 is more than a policy for technological advancement; it is a narrative that weaves together pride, resilience, and progress, answering "how" and "why" New China’s identity is discursively crafted to align with both traditional and modern ideals.

Chinese dream seeks not only to advance China’s technological and economic standing but also to cultivate a cohesive national identity that aligns with historical values and future ambitions. Through discourse that emphasizes national rejuvenation, self-reliance, and cultural heritage, MIC25 constructs a narrative that positions China’s rise as both a restoration of its historical prominence and a path towards modernization. This literature review explores theoretical foundations that illuminate the role of technology, modernization, and identity in shaping this vision of New China. Specifically, it examines how technological nationalism, discourse in national identity construction, modernization theory, sustainable development, and social stratification intersect to form the ideological framework supporting the Chinese dream.

First, technological nationalism refers to the use of technology as a means to reinforce national sovereignty, self-reliance, and identity. It reflects a country’s desire to establish technological autonomy and reduce dependency on foreign innovations as a means of safeguarding its economic and political sovereignty. As Buzan and Wæver (2003) argue, technological capabilities are increasingly seen as fundamental to national security, particularly as global interdependence grows. In the context of the Chinese dream, MIC25 exemplifies technological nationalism by emphasizing China’s goal of achieving technological self-sufficiency in critical high-tech sectors (Agarwala & Chaudhary, 2021).

Technological nationalism not only reinforces the Chinese dream’s vision of self-reliance but also strengthens China’s global position by asserting its right to compete on equal footing with Western powers. As Kahl and Grodal (2016) note, this focus on technological independence is not merely an economic strategy but a discursive tool that enhances China’s status as a sovereign, technologically advanced nation. Thus, technological nationalism in MIC25 is central to constructing an image of China as both a self-reliant and globally competitive force. In their study, Kahl and Grodal (2016) found out that IBM's success over Remington Rand in the early computer market was partly due to its effective use of discursive strategies.

Secondly, the process of constructing national identity is deeply embedded in discourse, where language and narratives are used to cultivate a collective sense of identity and purpose. Anderson’s (2006) concept of "imagined communities" posits that nations are socially constructed through shared symbols, myths, and narratives that forge unity among their members. CDA offers insights into how discourse naturalizes certain ideologies, making them appear as self-evident truths that shape public consciousness and reinforce national identity (Fairclough, 2015). Fairclough (2015) explains that national identity is constructed by embedding cultural and historical values within contemporary ambitions, aligning a nation’s goals with an idealized version of its past. Within MIC25, the Chinese dream uses language that ties technological progress and economic growth to China’s historical achievements, constructing a vision of New China that is both a restoration of past prominence and a step forward into global leadership.

Thirdly, modernization theory, particularly as articulated by Rostow (1990), provides a framework for understanding how economic and industrial progress are perceived as prerequisites for national power and influence. Rostow’s (1990) stages of economic growth model suggests that nations progress from traditional to modern societies through industrialization, ultimately achieving "high mass consumption" and economic maturity. Although modernization theory has faced criticism for its Western-centric assumptions, it remains influential in contexts where states view industrialization as a means to achieve both domestic prosperity and international recognition (Painter & Walsh, 2005).

In the context of MIC25, modernization theory underpins China’s ambitions to transition from a "large" manufacturing nation to a "strong" one. The policy’s emphasis on high-tech manufacturing, innovation, and industrial advancement aligns with the modernization paradigm, which equates technological progress with national strength and global influence (Li, 2018). Through MIC25, the Chinese dream frames modernization and technological leadership as essential to China’s vision of becoming a prosperous and respected global power. This echoes Rostow’s (1990) argument that technological and industrial development are crucial for achieving a "modern" status on the world stage, positioning China’s economic and industrial progress as both a pathway to and symbol of its national identity.

Fourth, while MIC25 advocates for rapid industrialization and technological advancement, this growth-oriented focus introduces tensions with sustainable development goals. Daly (2015) argues that sustainable development requires a steady-state economy, which prioritizes long-term ecological health over short-term economic expansion. Similarly, Sen (1999) contends that economic development should enhance human capabilities and well-being, rather than merely increasing production and consumption. These perspectives emphasize a balanced approach to growth, where economic development must consider ecological and social sustainability.

In MIC25, the emphasis on high-tech industries and infrastructure expansion often conflicts with these sustainable development principles. Although China’s long-term strategies include goals for "green development," MIC25’s focus on rapid industrial and technological growth risks prioritizing economic expansion over environmental considerations. This ideological tension is central to the Chinese dream, as the pursuit of modernization and national strength may come at the cost of ecological sustainability.

Fifth, social stratification and inequality theory provides insights into how economic policies can inadvertently deepen social divides, reinforcing disparities between privileged and marginalized groups. Bourdieu (1984) and Giddens (1984) highlight how social structures can perpetuate inequalities, particularly when policies prioritize certain sectors or regions over others. In China, MIC25’s focus on high-tech industries and urban-centric development risks exacerbating the urban-rural divide, favoring urban centers and skilled labor while potentially marginalizing rural and less-educated populations. This dynamic challenges the inclusivity of the Chinese dream, as the benefits of rapid modernization may not be equitably distributed. By framing high-tech growth as central to national identity, MIC25 risks constructing a vision of China that disproportionately privileges certain populations, raising questions about the social inclusivity of the Chinese dream. This discourse of national identity thus faces an inherent tension: while MIC25 promotes a unified vision of a strong, self-reliant China, it also introduces socio-economic divides that complicate this ideal.

These theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for understanding how MIC25 contributes to the construction of China’s national identity within the Chinese dream. However, the vision of rapid industrialization brings tensions between economic growth, environmental sustainability, and social equity, raising complex questions about the inclusivity and long-term viability of the Chinese dream. Together, these frameworks highlight the ideological and practical challenges embedded in constructing a cohesive national identity that aligns with China’s aspirations for

### 2.3.3. Rejuvenation as national identity constructs

The focus now shifts to the concept of rejuvenation as a cornerstone of China’s national identity construct, embodying a return to historical prominence and global leadership. By framing national identity through rejuvenation, MIC25 aligns China’s technological and economic objectives with a symbolic revival of past greatness. This section explores how the discourse of rejuvenation is strategically used to position New China’s rise as both a continuation and transformation of its historical legacy, providing further insight into why China’s identity is shaped in this way within MIC25.

The theme of "rejuvenation" is central to the Chinese dream in MIC25, emphasizing not only economic and technological progress but also a return to historical greatness and cultural continuity. This section explores four theoretical concepts that contribute to our understanding of how rejuvenation functions as a national identity construct within China’s policy frameworks: national security and sovereignty in technological policy, heritage conservation, Confucianism and cultural continuity, and Benedict Anderson’s concept of the "imagined community." Together, these frameworks help explain how China constructs a collective identity around the idea of a modernized, yet historically rooted, nation.

First of all, in contemporary geopolitics, technology has become a crucial element of national security, with many nations increasingly viewing technological self-sufficiency as integral to sovereignty. According to Buzan and Hansen (2009), national security now extends beyond military concerns to include economic and technological independence, especially in an interconnected global economy where reliance on foreign technology can become a strategic vulnerability. This perspective aligns with China’s techno-nationalist policies, such as MIC25, which emphasize reducing dependency on foreign technology as a matter of national security and asserting control over critical sectors like artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and advanced manufacturing. Most recently, Israel was blamed for using AI in the war ageist Hamas (Human Rights Watch, 2024; McKernan & Davies, 2024). Technological sovereignty is particularly relevant to China’s national identity, as it underscores the notion of self-reliance within the Chinese dream

Secondly, heritage conservation is another critical component of China’s national identity construct, serving as a bridge between the nation’s past and its future aspirations. Heritage conservation theory posits that preserving historical landmarks, traditions, and cultural symbols plays a vital role in shaping national identity, as these elements anchor a society’s sense of continuity and collective memory (Munasinghe, 2005). By maintaining links to the past, a nation reinforces its unique identity while grounding its future ambitions within a historically informed narrative.

For China, heritage conservation is not merely about protecting ancient artifacts or sites, but about preserving the "essence" of Chinese culture, which is then integrated into modern development policies like MIC25. As Popova and Fomenko (2022) notes, the integration of intangible cultural heritage protection into the modern political course of the state highlights the importance of spiritual culture and traditional crafts, contributing to cultural awareness and the popularization of traditional spiritual culture. By invoking historical achievements and cultural pride, the Chinese Dream constructs a narrative of national rejuvenation that positions modernization as a continuation of China’s historical legacy, rather than a departure from it. This helps MIC25 align China’s technological and economic goals with its cultural heritage, creating an identity that celebrates both modern achievements and historical continuity. In another case, (Wen et al., 2023) admit that heritage conservation goes beyond safeguarding ancient artifacts or sites; it involves preserving the "essence" of Chinese culture, which is then integrated into modern development policies. This approach ensures that historical elements are maintained while adapting to the needs of contemporary urban life in China.

Third, Confucianism, a philosophical system rooted in Chinese history, emphasizes values such as harmony, respect for hierarchy, and moral governance, which have profoundly shaped Chinese cultural and political identity (Zhaohui, 2023). In recent years, Confucian ideals have seen a revival in Chinese policy discourse, where they are integrated into the framework of the Chinese Dream to highlight cultural continuity amid rapid modernization. According to Bell (2010), Confucianism provides a moral and cultural foundation for China’s development, reinforcing a sense of unity and stability even as the nation undergoes significant economic and technological transformations.

MIC25 taps into Confucian principles by blending economic and technological goals with traditional Chinese values, thus creating an identity that emphasizes historical continuity. Confucianism’s focus on social harmony and ethical leadership aligns with China’s ambition to construct a morally oriented path to modernization, one that respects traditional values while embracing technological progress (Li & Pogodin, 2019). This cultural continuity allows the Chinese Dream to present modernization as a balanced, culturally rooted project, rather than as Westernization. By integrating Confucian values with the goals of MIC25, China constructs an identity that is both modern and distinctly Chinese, framing its technological advancements as a natural extension of its historical legacy.

Fourth, Benedict Anderson’s concept of the "imagined community" is foundational for understanding how nations create a collective identity that transcends individual aspirations. Anderson (2006) argues that nations are socially constructed through shared narratives, symbols, and myths that foster a sense of unity among their members. These narratives allow individuals to feel connected to a larger national identity, even if they do not know all other members of the nation personally. This sense of collective identity is particularly significant in large, diverse societies like China, where national unity is essential for political cohesion.

The Chinese Dream functions as an "imagined community" by constructing a vision of national rejuvenation that ties individual aspirations to a collective mission. Through policies like MIC25, China projects a future-oriented vision that emphasizes both technological progress and historical continuity, creating a narrative that all Chinese citizens are part of a shared journey toward national greatness. Anderson’s theory helps explain how this narrative fosters a collective identity that transcends individual differences, as all citizens are seen as participants in China’s rise on the global stage. By framing the Chinese Dream as a national project, the discourse constructs an "imagined community" that unites the population around a common goal of rejuvenation and international respect.

In conclusion, these theoretical frameworks provide insight into how rejuvenation functions as a central construct of China’s national identity within the Chinese dream. National security and technological sovereignty emphasize self-reliance as a core element of identity, cultural heritage contributes to this construct by linking modernization with historical pride, Confucianism offers a cultural foundation for this vision, blending traditional values with modernization and the concept of the "imagined community" explains how the Chinese dream unifies the population under a shared narrative of national rejuvenation, constructing a collective identity that transcends individual aspirations. Together, these frameworks illustrate how China’s national identity is being constructed as a modern yet historically anchored "imagined community," with rejuvenation as both its goal and defining characteristic.

## 2.4. Gaps in the literature

Having reviewed existing scholarship, this section identifies key gaps that the current study aims to address. Despite a substantial body of research on MIC25, there remains a need for a nuanced discourse analysis connecting policy language to national identity and global aspirations. Identifying these gaps underscores the importance of the present study, reinforcing the relevance of CDA for a detailed examination of New China’s identity constructs within MIC25.

While the existing literature on CDA and its application to public policy is vast and interdisciplinary, several gaps remain, particularly in the context of emerging technological paradigms such as Industry 4.0. This research seeks to address these gaps by focusing on the discursive construction of New China within the framework of Industry 4.0, a topic that has not been thoroughly explored in current scholarship.

First and foremost, CDA can be a useful tool to analyse the policies and strategies within this initiative, but there are methodological gaps that need to be addressed to effectively employ CDA in Industry 4.0. There is also a lack of a systematic approach to applying it specifically to MIC25 and the broader discourse on Industry 4.0. While CDA effectively highlights the discursive construction of concepts such as "technological sovereignty" and "innovation-driven development," there is a need to expand CDA to include intertextual and interdiscursive analysis. Government documents related to MIC25 often draw on other genres, such as economic forecasts and geopolitical strategies, creating a layered and complex narrative. Integrating intertextuality into CDA would provide deeper insights into how these diverse discourses reinforce China's aspirations in Industry 4.0. Fulfilling this gap by employing a more comprehensive, methodologically robust CDA will provide a richer and more accurate analysis of how the MIC25 initiative discursively constructs New China in the future of global technology. Addressing this methodological gap is essential for advancing the use of CDA in policy analysis, particularly in the context of Industry 4.0, and it will enable a more detailed understanding of the ideological, political, and economic dimensions embedded in China’s industrial strategies.

Secondly, although CDA has been applied to analyse power dynamics and ideological structures across various fields (Fairclough, 2015), the intersection between CDA and the discourse of technological innovation in Industry 4.0 is underdeveloped (Reischauer, 2018). Existing studies tend to focus on traditional political or economic contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how global technological revolutions, like MIC25, are discursively constructed, especially in non-Western settings such as China. The intricate ways in which national identity, technological sovereignty, and global leadership are intertwined in the discourse of Industry 4.0 are not fully addressed in the literature, which this research aims to contribute to.

Thirdly, while previous research has explored China's strategic positioning in global industrial frameworks, particularly through initiatives like MIC25, there is a limited focus on how this policy interacts with global discourses on technological leadership and innovation. The use of language and discursive strategies to construct China as a technological leader and innovator remains underexplored. This research fills this gap by providing a critical discourse analysis of MIC25, demonstrating how it aims to shift global perceptions of China's industrial and technological status.

Furthermore, although CDA has been employed to analyse policy documents, there is still a limited understanding of how technological discourses within policies like MIC25 reflect broader ideological and power dynamics on a global scale. The interaction between local industrial policies and global technological trends, as reflected in China's discourse, requires further empirical research to unpack how these discourses shape international competition and collaboration in Industry 4.0. The research in Chapter 6 addresses this by showing how China's discourse in MIC25 positions itself in response to Western hegemony in high-tech sectors.

Finally, the literature has yet to fully explore the implications of the rapid technological advancements brought by Industry 4.0 on discourse, particularly in terms of how nations like China navigate the pressures of global competitiveness, innovation, and sustainability. This study contributes to filling this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of how China's national narrative of technological leadership is constructed, and how this narrative reflects broader global economic and political tensions in the era of Industry 4.0.

In conclusion, while CDA has provided valuable insights into the discursive construction of power, identity, and policy, its application to the context of Industry 4.0, particularly within China, is still in its infancy. This research not only extends the theoretical framework of CDA into new technological paradigms but also contributes to a deeper understanding of how national identity, technological sovereignty, and global leadership are discursively constructed in the age of digital transformation.

## 2.5. Chapter summary

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature related to the MIC25 initiative and its positioning within the context of Industry 4.0, with a focus on the application of Fairclough's Critical Discourse Analysis (2015). The chapter explores various theoretical foundations, ideologies, and discursive strategies that underpin MIC25 as both a national industrial policy initiative and a tool for shaping New China.

The chapter begins by situating MIC25 within the broader discourse of Industry 4.0, emphasizing how language and discourse play a crucial role in constructing national identities and framing technological ambitions. The review draws on Fairclough’s (2015) CDA framework to demonstrate how discourse is used to legitimize power structures and promote ideologies like "innovation-driven development" and "technological sovereignty." This provides the theoretical groundwork for analyzing how China uses MIC25 to construct its national identity and assert its technological sovereignty.

One of the key areas addressed is the role of ideologies embedded within the discourse of Industry 4.0. The review highlights how Industry 4.0 policies reflect broader global discourses on innovation and economic competitiveness, and how these discourses serve to naturalize specific ideological positions.

The review identifies several critical gaps in the existing literature. While discourse analysis has been applied to MIC25, there is a lack of comprehensive, discursive analyses that can capture the full scope of the discourse across multiple texts. Additionally, there is limited research that connects the discursive framing of MIC25 to actual socioeconomic outcomes. Furthermore, while many studies focus on domestic narratives, fewer examine how MIC25 is perceived internationally, particularly in terms of global technological competition.

In conclusion, Chapter 2 establishes the theoretical and empirical foundations for this study, highlighting both the strengths of existing research and the areas where further analysis is required. This review serves as the basis for the subsequent chapters.

# CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the study presents the philosophical and methodological foundations that guide the exploration of the MIC25 initiative within the analytical framework of CDA. This approach is grounded in a constructivist paradigm, which posits that social realities are not objectively given but are constructed through language, interactions, and cultural practices. By employing CDA, the research seeks to uncover how discourse not only reflects but also shapes China's national identity, particularly in relation to its ambitions for technological leadership within Industry 4.0.

The chapter outlines the qualitative nature of the study, focusing on interpreting and analysing the discursive strategies within the MIC25 documents, rather than testing hypotheses or employing quantitative measures. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the "what", "how" and "why" of New China.

This chapter plays a critical role in addressing the research questions by establishing the methodological procedure necessary for analysing the discourse of MIC25. It directly connects to each research question by explaining the rationale for using CDA, which is particularly suited to examine how MIC25 constructs the "images" of New China (Research Question 1), the linguistic and rhetorical strategies employed (Research Question 2), and the socio-political motivations underlying these constructions (Research Question 3).

The constructivist and qualitative approach set the stage for the in-depth analysis that follows, enabling the study to reveal how China’s industrial policy discourse legitimizes its aspirations and navigates global power dynamics. Thus, this chapter serves as the foundation for the subsequent analysis of MIC25’s discourse and its broader implications.

## 3.1. Research approach

This study follows a constructivist paradigm that aligns with the overall aim of exploring how discourse shapes and reflects social realities, particularly in the context of the MIC25 initiative. Constructivism posits that reality is not objective but is constructed through social interactions, language, and cultural practices (Berger & Luckmann, 1971). This philosophical stance is particularly appropriate for a study employing CDA because it recognizes that knowledge and meaning are created through discourse, making it essential to investigate how language shapes social, political, and economic realities (Fairclough et al., 2007).

In the case of MIC25, the constructivist approach enables the exploration of how China's discourse on technological leadership and innovation constructs a specific vision of the country's identity, global role, and power dynamics. This paradigm acknowledges that language is not neutral but is instead a tool for constructing social realities, which is central to CDA's goal of revealing how power and ideology are embedded in discourse (Fairclough, 2015).

The study is also qualitative in nature, as the focus is on interpreting the meanings, narratives, and ideologies within the MIC25 discourse rather than testing hypotheses or quantifying data. A qualitative approach allows for a detailed analysis of the language, themes, and rhetorical strategies used in MIC25 documents, enabling the study to uncover deeper insights into how China discursively constructs its technological ambitions and leadership.

A qualitative approach is particularly suited to this research because CDA seeks to explore how language constructs meaning within social and political contexts. Since the focus of this study is on how MIC25 employs language to legitimize China’s ambitions for technological sovereignty, a qualitative method provides the depth necessary to analyse the intricate ways in which discourse operates.

CDA is especially well-suited to this task because it focuses on the relationship between language, power, and ideology (Fairclough, 2015). By analyzing the language used in MIC25, this research will uncover how China positions itself as a technological leader, constructing a national narrative that reinforces broader geopolitical goals. Therefore, a qualitative approach, combined with CDA, allows for an in-depth, interpretive exploration of the social practices and ideological formations that MIC25 both reflects and shapes.

In summary, the constructivist paradigm and qualitative approach used in this research are vital for understanding the ways in which the MIC25 discourse constructs China's national identity and technological leadership within the broader framework of Industry 4.0. By using CDA, the study explores not just the content of the discourse but also the power relations and ideological motivations embedded in it, providing insights into how language serves as a tool for shaping both national and global perceptions.

At the heart of this constructivist and qualitative approach is the detailed research process that follows, outlining the specific methods used to analyze MIC25 discourse and uncover its ideological underpinnings.

## 3.2. Research process

With the constructivist, qualitative approach established, the study now turns to the detailed research process. This section outlines the procedural steps that guide the analysis of MIC25 through research objectives and research questions, to ensure that each research problem is systematically addressed through a case study design that captures the socio-political context of China's industrial policy.

This section outlines the research processes used in this study. First, the objectives of the study were set for analysing the images of New China in MIC25, how and why new China is discursively constructed such ways. This is a case of Industry 4.0 industrial policy initiative of China. Case studies allow for in-depth analysis of a single case within its real-world context, which is crucial for understanding how MIC25 operates within China’s socio-political and economic environment. Yin (2018) argues that case studies are particularly useful for addressing "how" and "why" questions, making this approach well-suited for exploring the intricate language and power dynamics in MIC25 and guide the research questions.

Secondly, these approach and design laid the foundations for the research questions:

*Research questions 1: What are the images of New China in MIC25?*

*Research question 2: How is New China discursively constructed in MIC25?*

*Research questions 3: Why is New China discursively constructed in such ways?*

Second, with the research questions established, the case study design allows for a focused examination of MIC25 within its socio-political and economic context. To address these questions, the study relies on primary data gathered through documentation, as this method offers the most direct insights into China's strategic discourse in MIC25. The study used documentation as its primary data collection method because Bowen (2009) emphasizes that documentation is a reliable source of data in qualitative research, as it provides exact, stable records for analysis. A cross-sectional approach was used to collect the data as well as to analyse the discourse of MIC25 during a specific time frame when the initiative was actively promoted. It was because cross-sectional research captures a "snapshot" of how language is used within a particular context, allowing for a detailed examination of the MIC25 discourse as it functioned at that moment in time. Bryman (2016) notes that this approach is effective when studying the immediate socio-political context influencing a particular discourse.

Thirdly, the primary unit of analysis was the textual discourse of MIC25 and other government documents. The variables analysed in this study include key discursive elements that contribute to China’s construction of its technological identity: (1) lexical choices; (2) discursive strategies; (3) ideological constructs.

Fourth, this study used CDA as its primary method of inquiry, which was broken down into three stages: (1) textual analysis; (3) discursive practice; and (3) social practice.

This research is interpretive and explanatory, aiming to clarify the underlying causes and motivations behind the discourse surrounding MIC25. The goal is to explain how and why certain discursive strategies are employed to construct New China. As Babbie (2021) explains, explanatory research focuses on identifying the reasons behind observed patterns, providing a deeper understanding of the phenomena under investigation.



#### Figure 1: Research process (Adapted fromWodak & Meyer, 2016, p. 15)

Criticality was emphasized as a critical methodology in this research to align socio-discursive engagement with socio-political objectives. First, it was to focus on uncovering the discursive sources of power, dominance, inequality, and bias in both written discourse, examining how these were maintained and reproduced within specific social, political, and historical contexts. Besides, the writing MIC25 process was purposeful, so the choices were conscious or unconscious, and it critically describes, interprets, and explains these uses. Third, the research was critical to integrates insights from linguistics, and other disciplines to critique how MIC25 contributes to forming and sustaining social practices and problems. Next, it helped the research to emphasize the historical and social context of MIC25, to analyse how MIC25 shapes and is shaped by societal and cultural structures, relations, and processes. Finally, this stance was necessary to uncover how MIC25 manages ideological work, shaping society and culture, and how it is implicated in reproducing or transforming social issues.

The research process was iterative and involved repeated cycles of analysis, reflection, and re-analysis. This approach allowed the researcher to refine understandings and interpretations as new insights emerge from the data. Mullet (2018) describe the iterative process in CDA as essential for deepening understanding, as it enables the researcher to revisit the text in light of evolving discursive patterns.

Having established the research questions and the rationale for adopting a case study approach, the next step involved the careful collection of primary data from official documents, which form the basis for analyzing MIC25.

## 3.3. Data collection

Building upon the research design, the following section focuses on data collection methods. Here, this section explores how key documents, including the MIC25 policy and related government texts, provide the primary sources for discourse analysis. These documents serve as the foundation for uncovering the language and narratives that construct China's technological identity.

This study primarily relied on the Made in China 2025 document, published 7/7/2015, as its main source of data. MIC25 was selected due to its pivotal role in articulating China’s ambitions to transform into a global leader in advanced technologies.

MIC25 was retrieved from the official Chinese government website to ensure the authenticity and accuracy of the data. Supplementary sources were also consulted to enhance the analysis, including official speeches by President Xi Jinping and other government documents related to China’s industrial policies. This broader set of texts allows for triangulation, ensuring that the study captures the full scope of discourse surrounding China’s industrial transformation.

The documentation method (Bowen, 2009) was employed to collect these primary texts, which consist mainly of policy papers and government documents. This approach allows for systematic gathering of textual data that reflects China’s strategic aims and discursive narratives. The use of publicly available government documents also ensures transparency and adherence to ethical research practices (Leese, 2017).

One major challenge in the data collection and analysis process was the fact that MIC25 was the translation of the original Chinese-language policy into English. Translation may lead to potential nuances being lost, especially in the areas of rhetoric, metaphor, and modality (Qun & Carey, 2023), which are critical to discourse analysis. Some terms central to MIC25, such as "innovation-driven development" or "technological sovereignty," may carry cultural connotations that are not fully conveyed in the English versions, leading to a partial interpretation of China’s strategic aims. Despite these limitations, efforts were made to cross-check translations with authoritative sources to minimize inaccuracies .

The documents used in this study were collected during a specific timeframe from 2015 to 2023, reflecting the ongoing promotion and international response to the MIC25 initiative. The primary document, along with supplementary government.

Once the data was gathered, the analysis focused on several key discursive elements, which were essential for understanding how China’s technological identity was constructed in the MIC25 initiative.

## 3.4. Data analytical framework

Once data collection is completed, the next step is to apply a rigorous analytical framework to interpret the gathered texts. The following section presents the CDA-based framework, detailing each analytical step used to uncover the ideological and discursive elements that shape the MIC25 narrative.

CDA provides a robust analytical framework to investigate how language and discourse shape social identities, power relations, and ideologies. CDA is particularly useful for examining the ways in which discourse both reflects and constructs social realities, making it ideal for addressing the complex narratives within MIC25. This section represents the detailed analytical framework with 10 steps to incorporate the theoretical foundations with the actual analysis of the MIC to answer the research questions in this study.

Step 1. Identify key lexical items

The first step in the lexical analysis was to identify key terms, phrases, or word choices that are central to MIC25. For example: innovation, quality, green. Then, specialized language that signaled inclusion or exclusion of certain audiences. For example, smart manufacturing, and innovation-driven development are key terms that suggest the themes of self-reliance and global competitiveness.

MIC25 borrows from global discourses surrounding innovation and Industry 4.0, adopting terms like "smart manufacturing" and "global competitiveness" to position China within these international trends. This not only aligns China with global industrial developments but also reinforces its role as a key player in the global technological race. Besides, the use of "innovation-driven development" reflects an intersection between economic and political discourses. The emphasis on innovation as the engine of national progress connects technological advancement with broader political goals, such as economic modernization and strengthening China's global position.

Step 2. Examine semantic features

Once the key lexical items are identified, their semantic (meaning-related) features were examined. This included looking at: (1) synonyms and antonyms to reveal how the selected terms contrast with or reinforce each other. For example: the document frequently emphasizes "innovation-driven development," which contrasts with traditional manufacturing methods. By focusing on innovation, the document reinforces the need for modernization and progress, moving away from stagnation and traditional practices. (2) connotations to reveal what positive or negative associations these words carry. For instance, "innovation" often carries positive connotations of progress and modernity. However, the consistent use of "innovation" naturalizes the idea that technological progress is inevitable. This framing obscures potential downsides, such as social and economic disruptions, and presents innovation as a universally beneficial force that must be pursued. (3) polysemy to realise words that have multiple meanings and which meaning was prioritized in this discourse. For example: the term "quality" mean the standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind. A distinctive attribute or characteristic possessed by someone or something. The document prioritizes the meaning related to the standard of products and processes. "Quality first" is emphasized to highlight the importance of high standards and excellence in manufacturing, rather than just the attributes or characteristics of products.

Step 3. Explore ideological implications

Lexical choices often reflect broader ideological positions. In CDA, this involved examining how the selected words contribute to naturalizing certain worldviews or perspectives. The "what" and "how" questions were ask whether ideologies were embedded in these words or these lexical choices aligned with or support dominant power structures or social practices. For example, the use of "innovation-driven development" reflects an ideology of techno-determinism and projecting an ideological myth, suggesting that technological advancements are the primary drivers of national development and success. The focus on "innovation" obscures alternative perspectives, such as the risks associated with automation and technological displacement.

Additionally, by emphasizing "international competitiveness" alongside "innovation-driven development," MIC25 reinforces dominant power structures. These terms suggest that innovation is essential for China to maintain its status in the global order, presenting technological leadership as a prerequisite for political and economic dominance.

Step 4. Contextualize lexical choices

Words gain meaning from their context. The lexical choices were analysed in a text relate to the broader social, political, or economic context. At this step, intertextuality was recognized. The question how these words related to previous discourses or texts as well as the question if they borrowed it from other fields such as economics or politics were asked. For example, "smart manufacturing" is not only a technical term but is also tied to broader global discussions about Industry 4.0. The term positions China within a global movement toward automation and innovation, aligning the country with international technological standards while asserting its leadership. Besides, MIC25 constructs an "imagined community" (Anderson, 2006) of citizens united by the goal of technological innovation. The language of "smart manufacturing" and "innovation-driven development" fosters a collective identity centered around national progress and leadership in global technology. It positions China as a nation collectively striving to advance and secure its place in the global technological race.

Step 5. Investigate lexical relations

Lexical items often work in relation to each other. The recurred words were analysed to see if they were grouped and structured within the text to reinforce certain meanings or ideologies. At this step, collocation and metaphor were recognized. For example, "technological" often goes with "innovation" or "global" with "competitiveness" or the metaphor "engine" was recognized. These lexical relations help reinforce hegemonic ideas about technological progress. By associating innovation with global leadership, MIC25 suggests that technological superiority is necessary for China to maintain its influence and power in the global arena. This framing supports the dominant ideology that technological advancement is essential for political and economic dominance. The term "engine" is used metaphorically to describe the role of manufacturing in driving economic growth and development, suggesting a ideological myth of a better-developed New China.

The collocation of "international competitiveness" with "innovation-driven development" naturalizes the idea that technological innovation is not just desirable but essential for competing on the world stage.

Step 6. Analyze word class and grammatical function

The grammatical role of lexical items were analysed to reveal power dynamics. For instance in MIC25: the abstract nouns "progress" often objectify processes or phenomena, making them seem like fixed realities. At this step agency was recognized via active or passive verbs.

For example from MIC25: "China leads in technological innovation" (active structure) suggests agency and control, positioning China as an active global player. Contrast this with passive structures where agency is obscured, as in "innovation is being driven," which removes the actor from the action, suggesting that technological progress is a natural, unstoppable process rather than a deliberate policy decision.

Furthermore, in this step, modality were analysed to uncover the degree of certainty or obligation implied in a statement, often through modal verbs like "must," "should," or "will." For example in MIC25: The clause "China will lead in technological innovation" uses high modality ("will") to assert certainty and inevitability, reflecting a strong commitment to global leadership, and framing technological progress as a future certainty rather than a possibility.

Step 7. Evaluate linguistic choices in different genres

Fairclough (2015) emphasizes that discourse operates across different genres, each with specific conventions. Differences in word choice in MIC25 and other government documents were compared to see if these differences reinforced the same or different ideologies. For example from MIC25: The term "innovation" in the "Made in China 2025" document is central to the ideology and strategic vision for transforming China's manufacturing sector. However, in *Made in China 2025 Key Technology Roadmap* (State Council, 2018), the term "innovation" is closely tied to the strategic goals of enhancing China's self-sufficiency and global competitiveness in key technological domains. Across different genres, the use of "innovation" reinforces the same broader ideological message: that technological progress is essential for national development and global leadership. While the specific goals may vary between documents, the overarching narrative remains the same, technological innovation is the driving force behind China's future success.

8. Assess lexical patterns across discourses

The analysis involved identifying how certain words or phrases were drawn from different discourses (e.g., economic, political, technological) and integrated into MIC25. For example from MIC25, the term "smart manufacturing" and "innovation-driven" are drawn from both economic and technological discourses, linking industrial policy to broader global trends in Industry 4.0. The integration of global economic and technological language into MIC25 shows how China’s national strategy is deeply intertwined with global discourses. By adopting language from Industry 4.0 and positioning New China within these international frameworks, MIC25 situates the country as both a participant in and a leader of global technological innovation.

Step 9. Summarize the findings

Finally, the key insights gained from the lexical analysis were categorized and thematized into the discursive practices that shape the text, including the context of its production and reception. MIC25’s discursive practices reflected China’s economic goals and its global ambitions. By using language aligned with global industrial trends, MIC25 positioned China as a global leader in technological innovation. It constructed a vision of modernization that emphasized self-reliance and global competitiveness, reinforcing a collective national identity while appealing to international stakeholders.

Step 10: Draw conclusions

The final step involves linking the text and its discursive practices to broader social and political structures, explaining how the text functions within these structures to reproduce or challenge power relations. MIC25 reinforced global economic structures by presenting technological progress as the key to national prosperity. This aligned MIC25 with the dominant global capitalist framework, where innovation and technological leadership are seen as drivers of power and influence. At the same time, MIC25 subtly challenged existing global power structures by emphasizing New China’s self-reliance and positioning New China as a challenger to Western technological dominance. This discursive shift suggested that China was not only catching up but also poised to lead in the global technological race.

While this analytical framework is seen as a strength, it may also attract criticism for being overly ambitious. Critics may argue that combining linguistic, interpretative, and sociological approaches can lead to a lack of focus and coherence. The attempt to cover such a broad spectrum may dilute the analytical precision of each individual tradition. The researcher has attempted to be critical and iterative to minimize these risks.

Besides, MIC25 is a state-centric document, representing the official discourse of the Chinese government. This top-down perspective may not capture the diversity of views from other stakeholders within China, such as private industries, civil society, or international actors. By focusing primarily on MIC25, there may be a risk of missing how these other groups engage with or resist the policy. The inclusion of intertextual analysis may have helped address this by connecting MIC25's discourse to other texts, such as international trade agreements or reactions from global actors.

Having outlined the data analysis framework, the next section details the systematic procedure used to apply this framework to the MIC25 discourse, including data processing and coding.

## 3.5. Research procedure

With the analytical framework established, this study now moves into the systematic research procedure, which outlines the exact steps taken to code, categorize, and interpret the MIC25 discourse. This procedure ensures consistency in analysis and provides a clear roadmap for addressing the research questions.

Following the qualitative data analysis approach described by Creswell (2022), this research employed a systematic procedure to analyze MIC25 document and supplementary government texts. The steps below outline how the data was processed, coded, and interpreted to extract meaningful themes and insights.



#### Figure 2: Qualitative data analysis procedure

The first step involved collecting all the relevant raw data, which included the MIC25 document and other supplementary government materials which was discussed in section 3.3.

After gathering the data, it was organized and prepared for analysis. This step involved sorting and structuring the documents systematically, ensuring they were ready for detailed reading and coding. The organization process included segmenting the data into relevant sections or parts to facilitate easier analysis later on.

Next, the entire data set was read thoroughly. This step allowed for an in-depth immersion into the content, providing a preliminary understanding of the key points, patterns, and potential themes. The goal was to familiarize with the data and begin identifying significant elements for further investigation.

After familiarizing with the data, coding began, allowing for the identification of key terms and phrases that aligned with the research objectives and analytical framework. Using Microsoft Word, key terms, phrases, and ideas were systematically labelled and categorized. In the case of MIC25, key codes included concepts like "innovation," "quality," "global competitiveness," and "smart manufacturing," which were described in section 3.4. The coding helped break down the data into manageable sections for detailed thematic analysis.

Once the coding process was complete, themes were generated based on the patterns observed in the data. Related codes were grouped into broader categories, which then formed themes. Descriptions were created for each theme, explaining its significance. For example, themes like "innovation-driven development" or "technological self-reliance" emerged from this process, with detailed explanations of their roles within MIC25.

Following the identification of themes, they were interrelated and interpreted. This step involved examining how the different themes connected and contributed to a broader understanding of the document. In the analysis, themes such as "global competitiveness" and "innovation" were linked, showing how MIC25 constructed a narrative of China’s role in the global technological race.

After interpreting the relationships between themes, the meanings were explained in depth. This involved interpreting how the themes aligned with the research objectives and theoretical frameworks. For instance, the analysis explained how MIC25 reinforced ideas of globalization, technological progress, and national identity, drawing on theoretical concepts like Cultural Political Economy and Critical Discourse Analysis.

Finally, the accuracy of the analysis was validated through member checking. This step ensured the credibility of the findings by reviewing an expert who is familiar with the subject. For the thesis, experts in Chinese industrial policy were consulted to confirm that the interpretations of MIC25 were accurate and consistent with the broader context of China’s industrial and technological strategies.

This procedure ensured a systematic and rigorous approach. Each step, from data collection to theme generation and validation, was conducted to ensure that the analysis of MIC25 accurately reflected its discourse and broader ideological implications. While the research procedure ensured a systematic approach, maintaining the trustworthiness of the findings required additional steps to validate the analysis and ensure reliability.

## 3.6. Trustworthiness

Given the critical nature of discourse analysis, it is essential to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of this study’s findings. The sections outlines the measures taken to validate the research, including member checking, iterative analysis, and reflexivity, to ensure that the study’s interpretations are both accurate and reliable.

The trustworthiness of a thesis is essential in establishing the validity, reliability, and overall credibility of its findings. This study places a particular emphasis on ensuring trustworthiness. Given the critical nature of discourse analysis, the research employed an iterative process of continuous reflection and refinement, maintaining a stance of criticality throughout. Several strategies were applied to enhance trustworthiness, including ensuring data validity and reliability, minimizing bias, and implementing a rigorous, transparent analytical framework.

First, the validity and reliability of the data were foundational to this study. The primary source, MIC25, was obtained from the official Chinese government website. Official government documents are often considered valid and reliable sources due to the thorough review processes they undergo before publication. Scholars like Dryzek (2006) and Fairclough (2015) assert that such documents reflect the official stance of governments, having been scrutinized and verified through formal channels. In the case of MIC25, the document’s role as a cornerstone of China’s strategic efforts in Industry 4.0 made it highly relevant for this research, ensuring its appropriateness for addressing the research questions.

The critical selection of MIC25 as the primary data source aligned directly with the study’s objectives, offering an in-depth view of China’s national goals in technological innovation. This alignment contributed to the validity of the study, while the use of a verified and reliable government document minimized the risk of inaccuracies or misrepresentations. Importantly, this process was not static but iterative. Data selection and analysis were revisited throughout the study to ensure that they remained consistent with the evolving themes and interpretations that emerged during the research process.

Secondly, the study employed CDA, drawing upon the works of Fairclough (2015). CDA was chosen for its strength in uncovering the ways in which language shapes social realities and power relations. Given the focus on policy discourse, CDA’s tools, such as lexical analysis, modality, and intertextuality, were rigorously applied to dissect the discursive strategies used in MIC25 to construct China’s identity as a global technological leader. Besides, criticality was maintained throughout the analysis by consistently reflecting on the underlying assumptions, power structures, and ideological implications of the language used in MIC25. This required constant questioning of the data and analytical frameworks to avoid taking anything at face value, particularly when interpreting how power and dominance are encoded in the text. Moreover, the analytical process was iterative, not a one-time exercise. The data was revisited multiple times as new themes emerged or existing themes were refined. Initial coding and interpretations were continuously revised as deeper insights into the text were gained, ensuring a dynamic engagement with the data. As Wodak and Meyer (2016) emphasized, transparency is critical to CDA, and in this study, every step, from theme identification to data coding, was carefully documented. This level of transparency ensured that the analysis could be replicated or scrutinized by other researchers, contributing to the study’s overall reliability.

Thirdly, mitigating bias is crucial for the trustworthiness of any qualitative study. This research actively practiced reflexivity, the process of reflecting on how the researcher’s assumptions and perspectives might influence the data interpretation (Alejandro, 2020). By engaging in reflexivity, the researcher ensured that the analysis remained data-driven, minimizing the risk of subjective influence (Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Reflexivity was not a one-time effort but was integrated into each phase of the research, revisiting assumptions whenever new data or themes emerged.

Fourth, following Creswell and Poth (2018), member checking was employed to validate the findings. This process involved presenting the analysis to experts to ensure the interpretations accurately reflected the data and the discursive strategies identified in MIC25. Two experts were consulted: one specializing in Chinese studies and another in Critical Discourse Analysis. Their feedback helped confirm that the analysis accurately captured the intentions and strategic objectives embedded in the MIC25 discourse.

The member-checking process was iterative, involving multiple rounds of feedback and refinement. Each iteration provided deeper insights and corrections where necessary. For example, the experts reviewed key terms like "innovation-driven development" and "smart manufacturing," confirming that these terms were aligned with China’s strategic intent. Their feedback was integrated into the final analysis, enhancing the validity of the findings by ensuring they were grounded in the realities of the MIC25 discourse.

Finally, ethical rigor was also crucial to the trustworthiness of this research. The use of publicly available government documents ensured that the research adhered to ethical standards regarding data collection. Furthermore, transparency was maintained throughout the analysis, with clear documentation of the research process, ensuring the findings were accessible and could be verified by other researchers (Wodak & Meyer, 2016).

In conclusion, this research established its trustworthiness through the critical, iterative application of CDA, rigorous data selection, and careful bias mitigation. By triangulating data sources and incorporating member checking, the study ensured a robust, credible analysis of how New China is discursively constructed within the context of Industry 4.0. The iterative nature of the analysis, combined with a continuous stance of criticality, allowed for a dynamic engagement with the data, ensuring that the findings were both valid and reflective of the complexities of China’s industrial ambitions. These measures collectively contribute to the overall trustworthiness of the study, in alignment with best practices in qualitative research.

## 3.7. Chapter summary

This chapter outlines the research approach, process, and analytical framework used to explore how MIC25 discursively New China. The study follows a constructivist paradigm, emphasizing that social realities are shaped through discourse, making CDA a key methodological tool. A qualitative approach is employed to analyze the language, ideologies, and power dynamics embedded in MIC25, focusing on how discourse constructs China's global positioning in Industry 4.0.

The research design involves a case study of MIC25, with documentation as the primary data collection method. The study focuses on analyzing key discursive elements such as lexical choices, rhetorical strategies, and ideological constructs. The three-stage CDA framework is applied: textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice. This approach allows the study to uncover how language in MIC25 legitimizes China's ambitions for technological sovereignty and leadership.

Data analysis was carried out through a detailed examination of lexical patterns and grammatical structures, identifying how the text constructs China’s identity and aligns it with global technological trends. The trustworthiness of the study was ensured through an iterative process, member checking, and rigorous application of CDA to provide a critical and accurate interpretation of how MIC25 shapes national and global perceptions.

# CHAPTER 4: IMAGES OF NEW CHINA

Chapter 4 presents and discuss the findings of how the MIC25 initiative constructs the images of New China. By analysing key discursive strategies, this chapter addresses the first research question: What are the images of New China in MIC25?

The chapter begins with how the MIC25 portrays China as a global leader in next-generation industries, such as AI, robotics, and biotechnology, through strategic language, metaphors, and narrative framing. It uncovers the discourses that emphasize China’s transition from a manufacturing hub reliant on foreign technologies to a self-reliant innovator in Industry 4.0. By focusing on themes like technological superiority, state-led innovation, and global competitiveness, the analysis demonstrates how MIC25 projects China as a nation poised to lead the future of global technological advancements.

In doing so, the chapter offers insights into how MIC25 shapes the identities of New China across multiple dimensions.

## 4.1. New China as an inovation-driven nation

As the MIC25 strategy seeks to position China as a leader in next-generation technology, the initiative’s foundation lies in portraying China as an innovation-driven nation. This first section examines how the discourse of innovation permeates MIC25, particularly in sectors like AI, semiconductors, and robotics, and highlights China’s strategic ambition to lead on the world stage through continuous technological advancement.

### 4.1.1. Repositioning New China as next-generation AI nation

Moving from a broad focus on innovation, the section narrows in on MIC25’s portrayal of China as a pioneer in next-generation AI technologies. Here, the emphasis is on how China’s mastery over key AI sectors, such as semiconductors, aerospace, and biotechnology, becomes symbolic of its commitment to achieving global technological leadership and innovation autonomy.

The MIC25 initiative presents an ambitious and detailed vision of China as a global leader in next-generation AI technologies, encompassing critical sectors such as semiconductors, robotics, aerospace, and biotechnology. Through strategic use of lexical choices, metaphors, and discursive constructions, the initiative emphasizes China’s commitment to innovation-driven development, positioning the country as a pioneering force in the global technological landscape.

One of the key discursive strategies used in MIC25 to shape the image of New China is the consistent use of lexical choices that emphasize technological superiority. Themes such as "innovation-driven," "global leadership," and "technological breakthroughs" are used prominent throughout the document to underscore China’s ambition to lead the global race in next-generation IT and AI technologies. In particular, MIC25 frequently refers to the importance of semiconductors, robotics, aerospace, and biotechnology, framing these industries as critical pillars of China’s technological advancement.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Themes** | **Key terms** |
| **Innovation-driven** | Innovation, Innovative, Technology development, Technological progress, Innovation systems, Research and development (R&D), Creative technologies |
| **Technological breakthroughs** | Breakthroughs, Advances, Cutting-edge technology, Scientific discovery, Groundbreaking technology, Revolutionary technology |
| **Semiconductors** | Chips, Integrated circuits, Chip manufacturing, Silicon technology, Microprocessors, Electronic components, Semiconductor technology |
| **Robotics** | Robots, Automation, Robotic systems, Robotic arms, Industrial robots, AI-driven robotics, Automated machinery |
| **Aerospace** | Space, Satellites, Aviation, Space exploration, Spacecraft, Aerospace technology, Rocket technology |
| **Biotechnology** | Genetic engineering, Bioengineering, Biopharmaceuticals, Gene editing, Biomedical research, Genetic modification, Synthetic biology |

#### Table 1: Next generation IT

For instance, in the realm of semiconductors, the document emphasizes the need for independent development and technological autonomy, signaling a push to reduce reliance on foreign technologies (State Council, p. 18, section 2.1). Words like "mastering core technologies" and "cutting-edge research" depict semiconductors as fundamental to the broader national goal of self-reliance in critical technologies. Similarly, in the field of robotics, phrases such as "automation," "intelligent machinery," and "robotic innovation" highlight China’s focus on becoming a leader in both industrial and service robotics (State Council, p. 15, section 1.5). These lexical choices collectively build an image of China as a technological innovator, dedicated to pushing the boundaries of next-generation AI.

Another important aspect of the discursive construction of New China as a nation with next-generation IT in MIC25 is the attribution of agency to specific actors, primarily the state and domestic enterprises. Throughout the document, the Chinese government is portrayed as the central driving force behind the country’s technological transformation, overseeing the development of key industries and ensuring that innovation remains a top priority (State Council, p. 22, section 2.4). Phrases like "We will accelerate structural transformation" and "government-led development" frame the government as a proactive architect of technological progress, responsible for shaping the future of AI and high-tech industries.

Enterprises also play a significant role in this construction. MIC25 consistently assigns responsibility to domestic businesses to innovate and implement AI technologies, particularly in sectors like semiconductors, robotics, and biotechnology. However, this innovation is framed as occurring within the strategic framework set by the government, reflecting a top-down approach to national development. The interplay between government oversight and enterprise-led innovation reinforces the image of China as a nation with a coordinated strategy for next-generation IT.

The language in MIC25 is marked by high modality, which conveys both certainty and urgency regarding China’s leadership in next-generation AI. Terms such as "must," "will," and "should" are frequently used to emphasize the inevitability of China’s rise as a global technological power. For instance, statement like "We will let government promote and enterprises lead the innovation of business models" demonstrates a strong sense of national determination to secure technological dominance. The use of high-modality verbs creates a narrative of technological inevitability, where the future of China’s economy and global standing is inextricably linked to AI and innovation-driven development.

Moreover, MIC25 positions technological progress as both necessary and urgent, particularly in areas such as semiconductor manufacturing and robotics. The language implies that China’s technological future is non-negotiable; it is not merely an option but an imperative that must be pursued to ensure continued growth and global competitiveness.

The use of metaphors in MIC25 further reinforces the image of New China as a next-generation AI leader. Throughout the document, AI technologies such as robotics, aerospace, and biotechnology are described as the engines driving China’s economic and industrial modernization. Phrases like "innovation-driven path," and "manufacturing is the engine that will drive the new Chinese economy," present AI as a powerful force propelling China forward. This metaphor positions AI technologies as essential to the nation’s success, constructing a narrative in which technological innovation is the key to achieving national rejuvenation.

In addition, metaphors of rejuvenation are often used to link technological progress to the broader goal of restoring China’s status as a global power. The document frequently refers to the role of AI in rejuvenating the nation’s industries and positioning China as a leader in fields like semiconductors, biotechnology, and aerospace. These metaphors contribute to the overall narrative that AI is not just a tool for economic growth, but a critical component of China’s national identity and global aspirations.

The Made in China 2025 initiative constructs a powerful image of New China as a next-generation AI nation, leveraging strategic lexical choices, metaphors, and discursive strategies to position the country as a leader in key sectors such as semiconductors, robotics, aerospace, and biotechnology. Through the attribution of agency to the government and enterprises, the use of high modality to convey certainty, and the deployment of metaphors to depict AI as an engine of progress.

### 4.1.2. Rewriting China's role in innovation manufacturing

Building on its goal to dominate next-generation technology, MIC25 also shifts China’s role in manufacturing from a low-end producer to a high-tech, innovation-centric leader.

MIC25 calls for a move from low-end manufacturing to high-tech industries, such as robotics, artificial intelligence, aerospace, and green energy. This strategic repositioning is framed discursively as a break from the past, symbolizing China's capability to lead in advanced industries traditionally dominated by Western countries.

The MIC25 strategy is a rich text for discourse analysis, revealing how China constructs its role in innovation manufacturing through language, themes, and strategic narratives. This analysis focused on the key discourses that emerge from the document and how they shape China's envisioned role in the global manufacturing landscape.

First, on the discourse of technological independence, the document frequently uses terms like "indigenous innovation" and "self-reliance," emphasizing the importance of developing homegrown technologies. The document highlights "We must rely mainly on domestic equipment and companies" (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3). This discourse constructs a vision of New China as a self-sufficient technological powerhouse, reducing dependence on foreign technologies and fostering domestic innovation.

Second, on the discourse of innovation-driven, the central theme is innovation and the term is repeatedly highlighted as the core of the strategy. On analysis, the finding reveals that the term innovation and its derivatives are repeated 57 times in total.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Innovation | 48 times |
| Innovative | 4 times |
| Innovate | 3 times |
| Innovating | 1 time |
| Innovations | 5 times |

#### Table 2: Innovation

For example, "Make innovation the guiding theme of manufacturing with breakthroughs in key technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1)

This discourse underscores the centrality of innovation in China's manufacturing strategy, framing it as the primary driver of economic and technological progress.

Third, Innovation is on integration of IT and industrialization: The strategy emphasizes the integration of next-generation IT into manufacturing processes (State Council, 2015, p. 13, section 3.2). For example, "Promote the integrated application of industrial Internet, cloud computing, and big data across the entire industrial chain" (Section 3.2). This discourse highlights the modernization of manufacturing through digitalization and intelligent systems, positioning China at the forefront of the Industry 4.0.

The findings reveal that in its historical context, China situates its goals within the broader historical context of China's rise as a global power of manufacturing.

For example: "Building internationally competitive manufacturing is the only way China can enhance its strength, protect state security and become a world power" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). This connects the current strategy to China's historical trajectory, framing it as a continuation of the country's long-term development goals.

The analyses show that the document frequently mentions the urgent need to upgrade and innovate. For example: "The task of upgrading and accelerating technological development is urgent" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). The document also highlights the historic opportunity presented by the new wave of technological and industrial revolution. It argues "China must seize this historic opportunity to implement a strategy of reinvigorating Chinese manufacturing" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). This narrative creates a sense of urgency and opportunity, motivating stakeholders to act swiftly and decisively.

Fourth, innovation as comprehensive reform, the strategy outlines comprehensive reforms across various sectors to support manufacturing innovation. Take an example: "We need to further deepen reform and perfect policy and measures" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4). This narrative emphasizes the need for systemic changes and coordinated efforts to achieve the strategy's goals.

In conclusion, the MIC25 strategy constructs China's role in innovation manufacturing through a series of interconnected discourses and strategic narratives (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). The emphasis on technological independence, innovation-driven development, integration and modernization, and the urgency and opportunities shape a comprehensive vision New China in manufacturing. The discourse around 'innovation-driven development' is central to China’s MIC25 narrative. As Fairclough (2015) highlights, language is not merely reflective of social processes but constitutive, shaping perceptions of national and global power relations.

### 4.1.3. New China as state-supported innovation ecosystem

Furthering its role as an innovation-driven nation, MIC25 presents the government as a key architect in the development of China’s innovation ecosystem. Here, the focus shifts to how the state-led approach aligns public and private sectors, creating a collaborative framework that positions China as a centrally coordinated powerhouse in technological development.

Through the analyses of the language, themes, and strategic narratives, it is clear that the role of the state is framed as crucial in nurturing innovation. The policy positions the government not merely as a regulator but as an active participant in the creation of innovation ecosystems, involving both public and private sectors. Terms like "innovation-driven development" and "state-led innovation" recur, reflecting the centralized and structured approach.

Firstly, the discourse of state-led innovation reveals that New China is an active participant. The document frequently emphasizes the government's active role in fostering innovation, not just as a regulator but as a key participant.

For example: "We need to further deepen reform and perfect policy and measures" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4). This discourse constructs the government as a proactive entity that shapes and drives innovation, rather than merely overseeing it.

Secondly, on the discourse of centralized planning, New China implements a structured approach. Terms like "innovation-driven development" and "state-led innovation" recur, reflecting a centralized and structured approach to innovation. Take an example: "A national leading group for rejuvenating Chinese manufacturing will be established and led by the head of the State Council" (State Council, 2015, p. 37, section 4.8). Thus, China underscores the importance of top-down planning and coordination, positioning the state as the architect of the innovation ecosystem.

Thirdly, on the discourse of public-private collaboration, China will integrate different sectors together for innovation. The policy highlights the integration of public and private sectors in the innovation process. It discusses that "We will perfect the manufacturing innovation system, which is based on enterprises and guided by the market, and which integrates government, production, education, research and operations" (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.2). Consequently, this discourse promotes a collaborative model where the state facilitates and coordinates efforts across various sectors to drive innovation.

Finally, the government implements institutional mechanisms into the innovation process. The document outlines various institutional mechanisms to support innovation, including financial policies, talent cultivation, and fiscal incentives. For example: "Deepen financial reform by widening manufacturing financing channels and reducing financing costs" (State Council, 2015, p. 33, section 4.3). This surely highlights the state's role in creating a supportive environment for innovation through strategic interventions and resource allocation.

Narratively, the government is portrayed as an innovator itself, actively engaging in the creation and implementation of new technologies and systems. It says "Promote innovations in government management to support implementation of strategies, plans, policies and manufacturing standards" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4.1). Thus, this narrative positions the government as a dynamic force in the innovation landscape, capable of driving change and setting standards. Besides, in the same section, the pronoun ‘We' was used to emphasise the coordinated efforts to achieve the goals ("We need to further deepen reform and perfect policy and measures" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4)).

In conclusion, it becomes evident that the MIC25 frames the government and state enterprises as central actors in nurturing innovation. The language and themes emphasize a centralized, structured approach where the state plays a proactive and integrative role. The recurring terms "innovation-driven development" and "state-led innovation" reflect this centralized approach, positioning the government as both a facilitator and a driver of innovation.

Besides, by positioning the state as a central actor, the document legitimizes extensive government control and intervention in the innovation process. The emphasis on integrating public and private sectors suggests a collaborative model where the state coordinates and supports various stakeholders. The focus on institutional mechanisms and strategic support highlights the state's role in allocating resources and creating a conducive environment for innovation.

Overall, the MIC25 strategy constructs a vision of innovation that is heavily state-led, with the government playing a crucial role in shaping and driving the innovation ecosystem.

### 4.1.4. Smart manufacturing

In conjunction with an innovation-driven approach, MIC25 underscores the importance of "smart manufacturing" to position China as a leader in high-tech production. This section discusses how China’s smart manufacturing strategy integrates automation and digital technologies, reflecting the country’s commitment to securing a prominent role in global manufacturing through technologically advanced processes.

The MIC25 is a comprehensive blueprint aimed at transforming China into a global manufacturing leader. As Fairclough (2006) argues, discourses of globalization often legitimize national identities as competitive forces in global markets. The MIC25 policy discourse positions China not only as an emerging technological leader but as a pivotal actor in shaping the future of global manufacturing. Central to this transformation is the discourse of innovation dominance, which emphasizes China's ambition to lead in global innovation (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3). Terms like "technological leadership" and "innovation dominance" are not merely aspirational; they signal a strategic intent to position China at the forefront of global technological advancements (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3). This section explores the discourse of innovation dominance, and how it shapes China's strategic objectives.

First, the discourse of innovation dominance is prominently featured throughout the MIC25. The document repeatedly underscores the importance of innovation as the guiding theme for manufacturing and economic development. For instance, Section 2.1 states, "Make innovation the guiding theme of manufacturing with breakthroughs in key technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 5). This statement encapsulates the policy's core objective: to achieve technological leadership through continuous innovation.

The use of terms like "technological leadership" and "innovation dominance" serves multiple purposes. Firstly, it sets a clear and ambitious goal for China's manufacturing sector. By aiming for leadership rather than mere participation, the policy establishes a high benchmark for success. This ambition is not limited to incremental improvements but seeks transformative breakthroughs in key technologies (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1).

The emphasis on innovation dominance has several far-reaching purposes: From strategic resource allocation to national security. China seeks to increase funding: achieving technological leadership requires substantial investment in R&D. The policy likely prioritizes funding for R&D in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, biomedicine, and quantum computing. For example: "Support large manufacturing enterprises and groups to carry out pilot projects integrating production and finance" (State Council, 2015, p. 34, section 4.3). This prioritization ensures that resources are directed towards areas with the highest potential for innovation and global impact. Besides, innovation dominance is closely tied to national security (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2). By mastering core technologies, China aims to reduce vulnerabilities and secure its technological sovereignty.

Furthermore, the policy frames technological innovation as a battleground for global leadership. By aiming for innovation dominance, China positions itself in direct competition with other global powers (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3). This narrative emphasizes the need for China to lead in strategic technologies, enhancing its global standing and influence. Technological sovereignty is linked to national security. The policy underscores the importance of securing critical technologies to protect state interests. For example: "Make breakthroughs in a number of key technologies which have significant impact on improving industrial competitiveness" (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1). This narrative connects innovation with national security, highlighting its role in safeguarding China's technological and economic future.

To conclude, the discourse of innovation dominance in the MIC25 is a strategic declaration of China's ambition to lead in global innovation. By emphasizing technological leadership and innovation dominance, the policy sets a high benchmark for success and outlines a clear path towards achieving it. The purposes of this discourse are far-reaching, influencing resource allocation, and national security.

Through strategic narratives of technological self-reliance, global competition, and national security, the policy fosters a culture of innovation and positions New China as a global leader in technological advancements. By aiming for innovation dominance, China seeks not only to participate in but to lead global innovation efforts, securing its place at the forefront of the global technological landscape.

### 4.1.5. New China as a future-oriented workforce

To sustain its ambitious innovation goals, MIC25 envisions a future-oriented workforce capable of supporting China’s transition to a high-tech economy. This section shifts attention to the education and vocational strategies MIC25 promotes, underscoring how human capital development becomes a vital aspect of China’s technological sovereignty and international competitiveness.

This section focus on education is integral to China's broader strategy of achieving technological sovereignty and innovation dominance. By promoting the development of talent pipelines, the policy underscores the importance of human capital in securing China's technological future. This discourse frames the New China as not just an innovation producer but also as a centre for intellectual capital, with a workforce trained to sustain its tech-driven trajectory.

The first discourse of talent development was found on vocational education: The policy emphasizes the need for robust vocational education to develop a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation. For example: "Strengthen vocational education and skill training by enabling undergraduate universities to transform into applied technology universities" (State Council, 2015, p. 35, section 4.5). This discourse highlights the critical role of education in building a foundation for technological advancements and innovation.

The second discourse was found on intellectual capital. Human capital was categorised as a strategic asset. The policy frames human capital as a strategic asset essential for sustaining China's tech-driven growth.

Section 4.5 states "Increase the number of advanced manufacturing engineers by building engineering and innovation training centres in universities" (State Council, 2015, p. 35). This discourse positions China as a hub for intellectual capital, emphasizing the need to cultivate a workforce that can support and sustain technological innovation.

The third discourse was found for national competitiveness. The policy acknowledges the global competition for talent and the need to attract and retain top-tier professionals. For instance, "Select talented young professionals and students, especially those with a professional and technical background, to go abroad for study and training" (State Council, 2015, p. 35, section 4.5). This underscores the importance of developing a competitive edge in the global talent market to ensure a steady supply of skilled professionals.

Narratively, the policy views investment in education as a long-term strategy for achieving technological leadership and emphasizes the need to develop a skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and supporting technological advancements. The policy aims to position China as a global centre for intellectual capital, attracting and nurturing top talent.

To sum up, the emphasis on education in the MIC25 is a strategic move to cultivate a highly skilled workforce capable of driving innovation and sustaining China's tech-driven trajectory. By focusing on vocational education and talent development, the policy aims to build a robust talent pipeline that can support technological advancements and maintain China's competitive edge (State Council, 2015, p. 16, section 3.3).

The discourses of talent development and intellectual capital highlight the critical role of education in achieving China's innovation goals. Through strategic narratives of educational investment, workforce development, and positioning China as an intellectual hub, the policy underscores the importance of human capital in securing New China's technological future. By investing in education and talent development, New China is constructed to transition to a knowledge-based economy and establish itself as a global leader in innovation and intellectual capital.

### 4.1.6. New China as economic modernization hubs

Finally, MIC25 constructs economic modernization hubs as physical embodiments of China’s transition from traditional manufacturing to a high-tech knowledge economy. This section highlights how these hubs aim to foster regional growth and global competitiveness, reinforcing China’s commitment to a balanced and innovation-centric economic landscape.

The MIC25 emphasizes the development of innovation hubs and industrial zones as pivotal to China's economic modernization. These hubs are not merely infrastructural projects; they are discursively framed as physical embodiments of China's innovation-driven future. By promoting these centres, the policy aims to reshape China's image from an industrial, manufacturing-based economy to a high-tech, knowledge-based powerhouse (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). This section analyses and discusses the strategic importance of these innovation hubs and industrial zones, their discursive framing, and their implications for China's economic transformation.

On the discourse of modernization, the policy underscores the role of innovation hubs and industrial zones in driving economic modernization. For example: "Build a number of new industrial demonstration bases with highly efficient industrial chain synergies, strong core competitiveness and sound public service systems" (State Council, 2015, p. 29, section 3.7). This discourse positions these hubs as catalysts for modernizing China's economy, transitioning it from traditional manufacturing to advanced, high-tech industries.

On the discourse of innovation hubs, the policy frames these hubs as centres of innovation, where cutting-edge industries and futuristic cities thrive. For example: "Build manufacturing service functional zones that focus on modern services like research and design, information, logistics, business, and finance to improve influence capacity" (State Council, 2015, p. 30, section 3.8). It is obvious that this highlights the role of these hubs in fostering an environment conducive to innovation and technological advancements.

Last but not least, on the discourse of progress: The policy portrays these hubs as markers of progress, reshaping New China on the global stage. For example: "Develop a number of high-quality small and medium enterprise clusters" (State Council, 2015, p. 28, section 3.7). Thus, this emphasizes the transformative impact of these hubs, positioning New China as a leader in high-tech and knowledge-based industries.

On the narrative strategies, the policy aims to transition New China from a manufacturing-based economy to a high-tech, knowledge-based powerhouse. Section 3.7 states that "Promote coordinated development of industries in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Region and the Yangtze River Region" (State Council, 2015, p. 28).

This narrative underscores the strategic importance of these hubs in driving economic transformation and fostering high-tech industries. Besides, the policy promotes the development of innovation hubs and industrial zones across different regions to ensure balanced economic growth. The policy also aims to enhance China's global competitiveness by developing world-class innovation hubs and industrial zones.

Example: "Build a number of new industrial demonstration bases with highly efficient industrial chain synergies" (State Council, 2015, p. 29, section 3.7). These hubs create an ecosystem conducive to innovation, providing the infrastructure and resources needed for technological advancements.

In a nutshell, The MIC25's emphasis on developing innovation hubs and industrial zones is a strategic move to drive economic modernization and transition China from a manufacturing-based economy to a high-tech, knowledge-based powerhouse. These hubs are discursively framed as physical embodiments of China's innovation-driven future, where futuristic cities and cutting-edge industries thrive.

The discourses of modernization, innovation, and progress highlight the critical role of these hubs in reshaping China's economic landscape (State Council, 2015, p. 3, section 1.1). Through strategic narratives of economic transformation, regional development, and global competitiveness, the policy underscores the importance of these hubs in achieving China's innovation goals.

The implications of developing these innovation hubs and industrial zones are far-reaching, driving economic modernization, promoting balanced regional growth, enhancing global competitiveness, and fostering an innovation ecosystem. By investing in these hubs, China aims to position itself as a global leader in high-tech industries and secure its place at the forefront of the global technological landscape.

## 4.2. Global leader

Having established China’s innovation and modernization strategies, the analysis moves to MIC25’s narrative of China as a dominant force on the global stage. This section explores how China’s ambition for manufacturing and technological leadership is framed as a strategic imperative, signaling its intention to reshape both national and global perceptions of its industrial power.

### 4.2.1. Superiority and leadership

The narrative of global dominance is deepened in this section, as MIC25 constructs China’s leadership in manufacturing and technology as an inevitable outcome of its strategic goals. By emphasizing a powerful and assertive image, MIC25 projects a confident vision of China’s ascent, which positions it as a formidable global leader.

China's ambitions to become a global manufacturing leader are at the forefront of its economic policies, particularly in the 21st century, and this drive for dominance is deeply embedded in the representation and imagery of China in the Made in China 2025 (MIC25) initiative. The rhetoric in these documents plays a crucial role in shaping both national and international perceptions of China's manufacturing capabilities. Key terminology, such as "global manufacturing leader," "powerhouse," and "dominance," serves not only as descriptors but as strategic tools to project a powerful image of China on the world stage.

A lexical analysis reveals that the repeated use of assertive words like "leader" and "dominance" creates an image of China as an unstoppable force in manufacturing. These terms function as metaphors for strength and inevitability. They are not neutral labels but metaphorical constructs that communicate national pride, global competitiveness, and long-term planning. By analyzing these lexical choices, we can see how the modality of the language — its confident, assertive tone — reflects China's broader strategic ambitions. It positions China as an actor with agency and foresight, influencing both domestic and global perceptions.

For instance, the State Council's bold declaration that by "2049, the centennial of the founding of New China, China's manufacturing sector status will become more consolidated and China will become the leader among the world's manufacturing powers" (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3) uses a combination of assertive modality and metaphoric language to signal not just aspirations, but inevitable outcomes. The term "consolidated" suggests stability and durability, while "leader" signals an authoritative, almost uncontested position in the global industrial hierarchy. The agency attributed to China here is deliberate and forward-looking, creating an image of a nation in control of its trajectory.

The strategies behind this discourse operate on two levels. First, on a national level, the imagery of New China as a "global manufacturing leader" reinforces a narrative of progress and pride. This fosters a collective identity centered on economic achievement, which is essential for rallying public support for long-term industrial and technological investments. Second, on an international level, the imagery and representation of China as a formidable industrial power signal to other nations that China is not merely a participant in global competition but an emergent leader. The rhetoric positions New China as a proactive player, shaping global trends rather than reacting to them.

The discourse of MIC25 is not merely promotional; it is strategic and layered with meaning. The assertive use of terms like "leader" and "dominance" constructs an image of New China as an inevitable global leader in manufacturing. This modality reflects China's confidence, as seen in the document's acknowledgment that "global industrial competition is undergoing a significant adjustment that presents China with great challenges" (State Council, 2015, p. 3, section 1.1). By framing these challenges as surmountable obstacles, the imagery of China as a proactive force is reinforced.

Moreover, the "Three Steps" strategy outlined in MIC25 exemplifies a structured, methodical approach to achieving this global leadership. By breaking down its goals into milestones for 2025, 2035, and 2049, the document uses phased imagery to create a sense of inevitability. Each step represents not just incremental progress but markers on a preordained path to global dominance. The lexical choices here, such as "strategic manufacturing goals" and "realize," further emphasize the long-term vision of China not as a rising power, but as a power that is steadily consolidating its place at the top.

This metaphorical framing of China's rise as an "inevitable" process is vital for shaping both domestic and international perceptions. Domestically, it fosters national pride and confidence, positioning the government’s industrial strategies as not only achievable but essential for the nation's future. Internationally, it signals to global competitors and partners alike that China's ambitions must be taken seriously. The language in MIC25 thus serves a dual purpose: it represents New China as both an aspirational and inevitable leader, and it carefully constructs a global image of power and resilience that cannot be easily dismissed.

In conclusion, the language and lexical choices in MIC25 are far from neutral. Through the use of assertive modality and metaphors of leadership, the document represents New China as an inevitable force in global manufacturing. This rhetoric not only shapes national pride and identity but also signals to the international community that China’s rise is methodical, deliberate, and unstoppable. Through strategic language, China constructs an image of itself as a dominant power in global industrial competition, one that will continue to shape the world economy in the decades to come.

### 4.2.2. Global smart manufacturer

Continuing the theme of global dominance, MIC25 frames China as a "smart manufacturer," positioning itself as a leader in advanced manufacturing and self-sufficiency. This section discusses how MIC25’s focus on technological sophistication and independence redefines China’s role from a low-cost producer to a competitive high-tech innovator.

At this juncture, it is essential to examine how China, once an agrarian economy, has transformed into a global manufacturing powerhouse, and how it now seeks to rebrand itself as a smart manufacturer driven by innovation and technological self-sufficiency. This transformation is one of the defining economic narratives of the modern era, and the Made in China 2025 (MIC25) strategy plays a pivotal role in shaping the global image of New China. The framework of representation and imagery helps us explore how the discourse in MIC25 constructs an image of China not just as a manufacturing leader but as a technological innovator that aspires to lead globally in advanced industries.

Central to this rebranding is the lexical and metaphorical choices that portray China as a driver of cutting-edge technological advancements. The MIC25 explicitly states that China must "make innovation the guiding theme of manufacturing" (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1). This lexical choice reflects China’s shift from low-cost production to high-tech manufacturing, with innovation as the foundation for future competitiveness. The term "guiding theme" acts as a metaphor that elevates innovation to a principal, overarching role, suggesting that it will shape not just industrial output but China’s entire manufacturing ethos.

The document emphasizes China's desire to compete with technologically advanced economies like the United States, Germany, and Japan. Through an agency-oriented modality, phrases like "breakthroughs in key technologies" and "innovation-driven development" suggest that China is not a passive player in the global economy but an active, forward-thinking force that is setting the stage for future leadership in high-tech industries. This language positions China as a nation taking proactive agency, driving change rather than reacting to it, further reinforcing its image as a leader in robotics, artificial intelligence, biopharmaceuticals, and clean energy.

The metaphorical representation of China as a "global smart manufacturer" is integral to its new identity. By positioning itself at the forefront of innovation, China seeks to dismantle long-held stereotypes of being the "world’s factory" dependent on low-cost labor. The MIC25 discourse constructs an image of China as a forward-thinking nation, one that envisions itself as a leader in advanced manufacturing where technological sophistication, rather than cheap production, defines global competitiveness. The lexical contrast between "smart manufacturer" and "low-cost production" signals a major shift in how China wishes to be perceived globally.

Furthermore, China’s pursuit of self-sufficiency in key technological areas is an essential part of this rebranding. The MIC25 outlines China’s goal to "master core technologies" and "perfect the industrial supply chain" (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2), signaling a drive towards independence from foreign technology. This shift is crucial in framing China’s global image. The term "master" suggests not just competence but dominance, reflecting a confident, aspirational modality in China’s self-representation. By framing self-sufficiency as a core goal, China seeks to project itself as a nation capable of leading the global economy while reducing vulnerabilities in its industrial base.

This emphasis on innovation and self-reliance plays a key role in shaping the imagined identity of New China. For decades, China has been seen as an emerging economy reliant on foreign technologies and investments. However, the language in MIC25 is carefully chosen to craft a narrative of China as a modern, independent leader capable of technological breakthroughs and global leadership. The notion of self-sufficiency as "a necessary step for safeguarding national welfare and industrial security" (State Council, 2015, p. 7) further emphasizes China's strategic intent to position itself as resilient and self-reliant in the face of global challenges.

The document acknowledges the current gaps between China and other advanced economies, stating, "China is still in the process of industrialization" (State Council, 2015, p. 3). However, this admission is not portrayed as a limitation but as a springboard for growth. The modality here is optimistic and future-oriented, using the image of upward mobility to depict China’s journey towards technological leadership. This forward-looking rhetoric crafts a narrative of progress that both inspires national pride and reassures global stakeholders of China’s eventual dominance in high-tech industries.

The imagery of innovation-driven development serves a dual purpose. Domestically, it fosters a sense of national pride by presenting China as a self-reliant innovator, reshaping its national identity around modernization and technological sophistication. Internationally, this imagery positions China as a formidable competitor in high-tech industries, signaling that China is no longer content with its previous role in global supply chains. Instead, it aims to lead those industries, shaping global standards and norms in sectors like artificial intelligence, green energy, and biopharmaceuticals.

Moreover, the emphasis on innovation and self-sufficiency contributes to a vision of China as a global disruptor. As China continues to invest heavily in R&D and achieve breakthroughs in core technologies, it challenges the dominance of traditional technology leaders, particularly in industries that will define the future global economy. The metaphor of China "leading the charge" in industries such as 5G, artificial intelligence, and clean energy reinforces its image as a pioneering force that will drive the next wave of technological advancement.

In conclusion, the language and imagery in MIC25 are integral to constructing the image of New China as a global smart manufacturer. Through strategic lexical choices, metaphorical framing, and assertive modality, China positions itself as an innovation-driven economy that is not only modern and forward-thinking but also self-reliant and resilient. This rebranding serves to differentiate China from its past role as a low-cost producer and presents it as a leader in the high-tech industries of the future. By doing so, China redefines its global identity, projecting an image of inevitability in its rise to global leadership in technology and manufacturing.

This representation in MIC25 answers the research question by showing how the lexical choices and metaphors used in the document actively shape the image of New China as a smart manufacturer, positioning it as both a technological leader and a global force in high-tech innovation. Through these representational strategies, China asserts its ambition not just to compete but to lead on the global stage, crafting a narrative of a modern, innovative, and self-reliant nation.

### 4.2.3. Quality and branding to compete globally

Aligned with its vision of smart manufacturing, MIC25 highlights China’s emphasis on quality and brand development to enhance global competitiveness. This section transitions to a discussion on China’s shift toward high-quality production and globally recognized brands, reflecting an ambition to compete on excellence rather than cost.

China's recent emphasis on improving product quality and developing globally recognized brands is central to its broader ambition to enhance global competitiveness. Historically, China was known as the "world's factory," a label that emphasized its low-cost, mass-production capabilities. However, this reputation often came at the expense of product quality, with global consumers associating "Made in China" with lower-end goods. The strategic shift reflected in the Made in China 2025 (MIC25) policy aims to dismantle this outdated image by prioritizing quality and branding as key components of China's economic evolution. This repositioning seeks to craft a new image of China as a global player competing on metrics of excellence, innovation, and brand reputation, rather than solely on cost advantage.

At the heart of this transformation is China's policy focus on quality improvement, which the State Council has identified as a cornerstone for achieving global competitiveness. The directive declares, "quality first," positioning quality as a metaphor for China’s aspirations to rise beyond the low-cost production model. This lexical choice elevates "quality" to a defining principle of the Chinese economy, signaling that excellence and reliability are now integral to the "Made in China" label. By encouraging enterprises to "pursue excellent quality and build brand-name products with proprietary IPR" (State Council, 2015, p. 18, section 3.4), the document not only stresses quality but also ties it directly to intellectual property rights (IPR), associating Chinese brands with innovation and unique value.

China's emphasis on quality reflects a proactive agency in reshaping its global image. After decades of being perceived as a producer of low-cost goods, China is actively positioning itself as a competitor in industries where precision, reliability, and technological sophistication are paramount. By embedding quality improvement into its national strategy, China is signaling its determination and foresight to overcome past challenges with product reliability, which previously hindered its global reputation. This modality of self-improvement is not merely reactive but aspirational, with China aiming to challenge dominant perceptions in industries such as automotive, pharmaceuticals, and consumer electronics.

The document's language, particularly phrases like "build brand-name products with proprietary IPR" (State Council, 2015, p. 18), emphasizes that innovation and technological ownership are now essential to competing in high-value markets. This focus on proprietary intellectual property represents a significant shift in China's global branding efforts, moving away from being a manufacturer for foreign companies to producing its own globally recognized brands. The imagery of homegrown brands conveys China's aspiration to transition from an economy known for outsourcing to one that generates its own value through innovation and strong brand identity.

The second pillar of China's competitiveness strategy, brand development, is crucial for challenging the dominance of established global brands. Historically, Chinese manufacturing was heavily geared toward producing goods for foreign companies, meaning that Chinese firms themselves had little brand recognition. However, MIC25 introduces a decisive shift toward building "world-famous brands," a term that encapsulates China's ambition to achieve global branding prestige. By crafting an image of globally recognized Chinese brands, such as Huawei and Lenovo, China seeks to enter the realm of brand equity, where emotional connections with consumers and long-term loyalty become key drivers of success.

Branding in global markets is not merely about product recognition but about creating enduring value and symbolic power. The phrase "world-famous brands" serves as a metaphor for China's broader ambition to assert itself as a leader, not just in manufacturing but in the global marketplace, where brand identity plays a pivotal role in consumer decision-making. The lexical emphasis on "proprietary IPR" ties directly into this, linking brand development to technological innovation and signaling that Chinese brands will not only be competitive but will be synonymous with cutting-edge technology and quality. This combination of innovation and branding elevates China’s global standing and contributes to a reimagined national identity, one that competes on the highest global stage.

The success of Chinese companies in global markets, particularly brands like Huawei, Lenovo, and Haier, exemplifies how China’s strategic investment in branding is paying off. These brands have made significant strides in R&D, global outreach, and customer engagement, positioning themselves as premium competitors. This narrative of self-reliant innovation and brand-building serves as a key component of China’s effort to reshape global power dynamics in commerce, traditionally dominated by Western and Japanese brands. The agency-oriented language in MIC25, such as "encourage enterprises to build brand-name products, " depicts China as an active force, intent on shifting consumer perceptions and elevating its brands to global prominence.

This reimagining of Chinese brands has broader implications for global trade and industrial competition. As China improves its quality standards and builds brand equity, it is transforming its image from that of a producer of low-cost goods to a global competitor in premium sectors. This evolution is crucial for China’s long-term competitiveness because it allows Chinese companies to capture higher market shares in advanced economies where quality, branding, and innovation are paramount. The modality of this discourse is forward-looking, with China aiming not only to compete with established brands but to redefine global standards of quality and innovation.

Moreover, China's emphasis on quality and branding aligns with global economic trends that increasingly reward innovation, intellectual property, and differentiation over cost advantages. By creating brands that are associated with high quality and technological innovation, China positions itself as a leader in industries such as artificial intelligence, biotechnology, and clean energy—sectors that are expected to define the 21st century. This strategic focus on quality and branding enables China to transcend its historical role as the "world’s factory" and become a key player in innovation-driven industries, competing head-to-head with global giants.

In conclusion, China's strategic emphasis on improving product quality and developing globally recognized brands represents a critical evolution in its approach to global competitiveness. By focusing on the discourse of "quality first" and the creation of "world-famous brands," China aims to redefine what it means for a product to be "Made in China". The lexical choices, metaphors, and modality in MIC25 reflect China’s ambition to reshape its global identity, moving from low-cost manufacturing to leadership in innovation and branding. While challenges remain, particularly in shifting deeply ingrained global perceptions, the findings suggest that China is on a trajectory to becoming a major force in high-value industries, with the potential to recalibrate global power structures in international trade and commerce.

This analysis reveals that China's focus on quality and branding, as articulated in MIC25, constructs an image of a nation intent on redefining its place in the global economy. Through strategic lexical and metaphorical choices, China seeks to elevate its products and brands, asserting itself as a key player in the global marketplace, competing not just on price but on quality, innovation, and reputation.

### 4.2.4. A new leader in sustainable and green development

Moving from quality to sustainability, MIC25 also envisions China as a global leader in green technology and resource efficiency. This section explains how MIC25 constructs an image of China as an environmentally responsible power, with sustainable practices integral to its global competitiveness and evolving international image.

In recent years, China has made significant strides in redefining its development strategy, placing a strong emphasis on sustainability and green practices (Hao & Fu, 2023). This shift reflects China's recognition that sustainable development must be a core component of its global competitiveness. As China positions itself as a leader in global markets, it aims to reshape its international image by prioritizing green manufacturing, resource efficiency, and environmental innovation. These strategies are essential in crafting a new representation of China, not just as a global economic powerhouse but as a responsible steward of the environment, committed to addressing global ecological challenges.

A key pillar of China's strategy is its focus on green manufacturing, which the State Council identifies as a cornerstone of future industrial competitiveness. The directive emphasizes "green development" as a strategic necessity for China’s industrial evolution (State Council, 2015, section 2.3). This lexical choice, the use of "green" as a defining term, serves as a metaphor for a broader transformation. Green manufacturing signifies a commitment to environmentally conscious production processes that minimize pollution, optimize resource use, and reduce emissions. Through this terminology, China is crafting an image of progress and responsibility, positioning itself as a global leader in the transition to a sustainable, low-carbon economy.

Historically, China has been one of the largest emitters of greenhouse gases, a result of its rapid industrialization. The country has faced international criticism for its environmental record, with its heavy reliance on coal and other fossil fuels drawing scrutiny. However, by emphasizing green manufacturing in its industrial policy, China seeks to address these criticisms head-on and reshape its global image. The modality of the language in MIC25 reflects a confident, forward-looking approach to environmental challenges, demonstrating that China is not merely reacting to global concerns but proactively seeking to lead in this area.

The government's commitment to green development also signals a broader reimagining of China's national identity. As the world increasingly prioritizes sustainability, China’s focus on developing technologies that lower emissions and promote resource efficiency suggests a desire to be seen as a global environmental leader. The lexical framing of green manufacturing as an essential aspect of competitiveness transforms the notion of "Made in China" from one associated with environmental degradation to one synonymous with innovation and sustainability. By adopting green manufacturing practices, China is positioning itself to meet international standards and capitalize on the growing global demand for environmentally responsible products.

Beyond green manufacturing, China’s focus on resource efficiency is another crucial aspect of its sustainable development strategy. The 2015 State Council directive emphasizes "efficient resource use" as a key element in ensuring sustainable economic growth (State Council, 2015, p. 21, section 3.5). This lexical choice frames resource efficiency as a necessary evolution from China’s traditional model of high-volume, resource-intensive production. The language reflects a modality of responsibility, indicating that China is aware of the environmental toll of its rapid industrialization and is taking steps to rectify it by optimizing resource use, minimizing waste, and promoting recycling.

China's commitment to circular economy principles, where materials and products are reused and recycled, further underscores its strategic intent to become a global leader in sustainable practices. The circular economy is framed as a metaphor for a self-sustaining, regenerative system that mirrors China’s larger ambitions of economic and environmental renewal. By integrating these principles into its industrial policies, China aligns itself with global trends toward sustainability, setting the stage for its leadership in industries where reducing waste and promoting resource efficiency are paramount. This imagery of circularity not only demonstrates China’s commitment to environmental stewardship but also highlights its capability to adapt and thrive in a future where sustainability is a key competitive advantage.

The global implications of China's focus on green development are far-reaching. First, this strategic shift positions China as a leader in industries that are increasingly defined by their sustainability metrics, such as renewable energy, clean technologies, and sustainable manufacturing. As the world moves toward a low-carbon economy, China’s investments in these sectors allow it to capture market share in industries where environmental innovation is a critical factor for success. For example, China has made significant advancements in renewable energy technologies, including solar and wind power, where it now holds a leading position in the global market. The lexical and metaphorical framing of China as a "clean energy leader" contrasts sharply with its historical image as a polluting industrial giant, signaling a profound rebranding effort that appeals to environmentally conscious investors and partners.

China’s emphasis on sustainability and green technologies also serves to enhance its soft power. By positioning itself as a champion of global environmental causes, China seeks to influence international standards and norms, particularly in areas such as climate change mitigation and green technology development. This proactive stance allows China to play a leading role in shaping the future of global environmental governance, enhancing its reputation as a responsible global citizen. The metaphor of "green leadership" is a powerful one, as it portrays China as not only catching up with the West in terms of economic power but also setting new standards in the race toward a sustainable future.

In addition to enhancing its global competitiveness, China’s green strategy plays a critical role in reshaping its international image. Historically criticized for its environmental practices, China’s focus on green development demonstrates its determination to address these critiques and become a model of sustainable growth. The MIC25 discourse promotes this reimagined identity of China as a responsible, forward-thinking nation that is actively contributing to global sustainability efforts. By aligning itself with the environmental priorities of international investors and consumers, China aims to attract global partners who value sustainability, thereby reinforcing its position in the global economy.

However, while China’s focus on green manufacturing and resource efficiency represents a significant step forward, the country faces several challenges. The need to balance rapid economic growth with environmental sustainability is a complex issue, particularly given the historical reliance on resource-intensive industrial models. The MIC25 directive acknowledges this tension, stating that "a resource and investment-intensive development model that is driven by expansion cannot be sustained" (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.2). This lexical admission signals that China understands the inherent challenges in transitioning to a greener economy while maintaining its growth trajectory. The modality here is cautious but determined, reflecting the government’s recognition that achieving true sustainability will require both technological innovation and policy support.

Additionally, China’s leadership in green development is not without global competition. As the policy highlights, developed countries are also investing heavily in green technologies, creating a highly competitive landscape (State Council, 2015, p. 3, section 1.1). To stay ahead, China must continue to invest in research and development to maintain its edge in green innovation. The lexical emphasis on "innovation-driven development" in MIC25 reflects the government’s awareness that continuous technological advancement is crucial for sustaining its leadership in sustainable industries.

In conclusion, China's strategic emphasis on green development and resource efficiency marks a pivotal shift in its approach to global competitiveness. By prioritizing sustainable practices, green manufacturing, and circular economy principles, China is crafting a new global identity as a leader in the transition to a low-carbon, sustainable future. The lexical choices and metaphors embedded in MIC25 reflect China’s ambition to reshape its international image, align itself with global environmental concerns, and assert itself as a responsible global leader. While challenges remain, China’s commitment to green development positions it as a key player in the global shift toward sustainability, with the potential to redefine the standards of industrial and environmental leadership in the 21st century.

## 4.3. New China as a self-reliance nation in Industry 4.0

As MIC25 sets the groundwork for a modernized and competitive China, the strategy also emphasizes self-reliance in critical technologies associated with Industry 4.0. This section explores how China aims to achieve technological independence, reducing dependency on foreign technologies while advancing digital and automated manufacturing.

### 4.3.1. External independence

Focusing on external independence, MIC25 underscores China’s push for autonomy in critical technologies, reflecting the nation’s intent to secure self-sufficiency in global manufacturing and advanced industries. This section explains how MIC25 constructs this vision, fostering an image of China as a self-sustaining technological powerhouse.

As China embarks on its journey toward becoming a leading force in Industry 4.0, the Made in China 2025 (MIC25) policy underscores the country’s ambition for self-reliance in cutting-edge technologies and advanced manufacturing. The Fourth Industrial Revolution, characterized by the integration of automation, artificial intelligence (AI), and digital technologies into manufacturing, presents both challenges and opportunities. For China, becoming self-reliant in Industry 4.0 is not only a matter of maintaining global competitiveness but also of securing technological independence in key sectors. By focusing on strategic lexical choices, modality, agency, and metaphors, MIC25 constructs a narrative where China is positioned as a self-sufficient leader in advanced manufacturing, harnessing the power of innovation to transform its industrial landscape and reduce dependency on foreign technologies.

The lexical choices in MIC25 consistently reflect China’s ambition to lead in Industry 4.0 by emphasizing self-reliance in critical technologies. Terms such as "innovation," "independent," "core technologies," and "domestic capabilities" dominate the document, signaling the country’s commitment to achieving technological sovereignty. Phrases like "advanced manufacturing power" and "smart manufacturing" (State Council, p. 4, section 1.3) highlight China's focus on developing internal strengths in automation, robotics, AI, and other Industry 4.0 technologies. These lexical choices reinforce China’s drive to shift from being the "world’s factory" to a leader in high-tech manufacturing, where self-reliance in innovation is crucial for competing globally.

The term "smart manufacturing" is particularly significant, as it encapsulates the broader vision of integrating digital technologies into production processes to enhance efficiency and innovation. By using this term, MIC25 not only signals the importance of adopting advanced technologies but also positions China as an emerging leader in the digital transformation of manufacturing, aligning with global trends in Industry 4.0.

The modality in the MIC25 document is assertive and reflects a high degree of confidence in China's ability to achieve self-reliance in Industry 4.0 technologies. Phrases like "we must," "we will," and "strive to" (State Council, section 1.1) are used frequently, conveying a sense of obligation, urgency, and determination. This strong modality suggests that China sees the transition to smart manufacturing and self-sufficiency as both a necessity and an inevitable outcome of its strategic planning.

For example, the directive’s use of phrases like "we will become a global leader in advanced manufacturing" (State Council, p. 5, section 2.1) reflects a sense of certainty that China’s investment in Industry 4.0 technologies will lead to its dominance in the global industrial arena. This assertive modality not only instills confidence in the country’s industrial strategy but also demonstrates the government’s unwavering commitment to fostering innovation and achieving technological independence in critical sectors.

In MIC25, agency is distributed among various stakeholders, with the Chinese government, enterprises, and research institutions playing pivotal roles in driving the country toward self-reliance in Industry 4.0. The government is portrayed as the primary architect of the strategic roadmap, setting policies and providing support for technological innovation. Enterprises, particularly in the manufacturing sector, are positioned as crucial actors responsible for adopting and developing Industry 4.0 technologies, such as robotics, AI, and the Internet of Things (IoT), to enhance their productivity and global competitiveness.

Research institutions and universities also play a key role, particularly in fostering innovation and nurturing the next generation of skilled workers needed to lead China’s smart manufacturing revolution. The document emphasizes the need for collaboration across sectors, stating that "China must mobilize all social forces" to achieve its goals (State Council, p. 4, section 1.3). This collective approach to agency reflects the idea that self-reliance in Industry 4.0 is a national project that requires the combined efforts of government, industry, and society at large.

The metaphors used in MIC25 help illustrate the transformative journey China is undergoing to become a self-reliant leader in Industry 4.0. One of the most prominent metaphors is the idea of China becoming an "advanced manufacturing power," which symbolizes not only technological superiority but also national strength and independence. This metaphor portrays the country’s industrial transformation as a strategic evolution from traditional manufacturing to a high-tech, innovative economy capable of competing with the most advanced nations.

Another important metaphor in the document is the notion of "smart manufacturing" as a catalyst for growth. The term suggests a transformative leap from conventional production methods to fully digitized, automated, and AI-driven processes. By framing smart manufacturing as a central pillar of its industrial policy, China conveys the message that Industry 4.0 technologies are essential tools for securing the country’s economic future and reducing reliance on foreign technology.

Additionally, the metaphor of "mastering core technologies" is frequently employed, indicating that self-reliance is not merely about technological adoption but about ownership and control of critical innovations, such as AI, advanced robotics, and digital platforms. This metaphor reflects the broader goal of technological sovereignty, where China aims to not only implement Industry 4.0 solutions but also lead in their development and innovation.

Through its strategic use of lexical choices, assertive modality, collective agency, and transformative metaphors, Made in China 2025 constructs a vision of New China as a self-reliant leader in Industry 4.0. The focus on "innovation," "core technologies," and "smart manufacturing" highlights China's determination to achieve independence in advanced technologies, while the assertive language conveys the government's firm commitment to this goal. The distribution of agency underscores the collective effort required to transition into a new industrial era, where government, enterprises, and society all play critical roles in realizing this vision.

The metaphors of transformation, such as becoming an "advanced manufacturing power" and embracing "smart manufacturing," illustrate China's ambition to reshape its industrial landscape and secure its position as a global leader in the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This narrative not only emphasizes self-reliance but also aligns with the broader goal of ensuring that China’s technological progress translates into greater economic strength and global influence. As China continues its journey toward Industry 4.0, the country's pursuit of self-reliance becomes a key component of its broader strategy to lead in the industries of the future, securing both its technological sovereignty and its place in the global economy.

### 4.3.1. Toward domestic innovator

As part of its self-reliance strategy, MIC25 emphasizes the development of China’s domestic innovation capabilities. This section explores the policy’s approach to establishing a robust internal ecosystem of innovation, positioning China as a proactive creator of cutting-edge technologies rather than a passive consumer.

The MIC25 discursively constructs the image of New China as a self-reliant and innovation-driven nation, particularly within the context of technological sovereignty and industrial advancement. The discourse emphasizes China's shift from being a global manufacturing hub reliant on foreign technology to a technological leader with strong domestic capabilities.

The document frequently uses terms like "innovation," "core technologies," "independent," "domestic," and "self-sufficient," which reflect a focused intention to develop internal capabilities. For example, the phrase "master core technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2.2) points to China's aspiration for self-reliance in technological advancements. This strategic discourse positions China as a nation that no longer wishes to be dependent on external forces but instead seeks to cultivate a robust domestic innovation ecosystem.

In addition to the choice of terminology, the MIC25 employs high modality verbs such as "must," "will," and "need to," which convey a strong sense of obligation and determination. The phrase, "We must seize this historic opportunity to implement a strategy of reinvigorating Chinese manufacturing" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction), highlights an urgent and committed approach toward achieving technological independence. This modality not only reflects a strong commitment but also creates a narrative that suggests the inevitability of China's success in achieving technological self-reliance.

The document also uses active voice to assign agency to China and its enterprises, emphasizing their role in this transformation. Phrases such as, "China will innovate in accordance with the industrial supply chain" (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1), place China as the active agent driving innovation. The active constructions serve to frame China as a leader in innovation, taking charge of its own destiny rather than being a passive recipient of foreign technology or trends.

Moreover, the strategy uses metaphors to frame the journey toward self-reliance as a transformative process. For example, phrases like "building a strong foundation" and "laying the cornerstone" metaphorically describe the essential work that must be undertaken to achieve self-reliance. These metaphors invoke an image of China constructing its future brick by brick, solidifying its technological and industrial base. The metaphor "Building internationally competitive manufacturing is the only way China can enhance its strength" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction) ties the process of technological innovation to the broader themes of national strength and security.

Furthermore, the MIC25 strategy also highlights the importance of innovation-driven development as the backbone of China's industrial progress. This is evident in phrases like "Make innovation the guiding theme of manufacturing with breakthroughs in key technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1), which emphasize the necessity of developing homegrown innovation to achieve self-reliance. The term "breakthroughs" used in this context highlights the forward momentum China seeks in its technological trajectory.

The idea of mastering core technologies also emerges as a key discursive element of self-reliance. Phrases like "Master core technologies and perfect the industrial supply chain to cultivate domestic capabilities" (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2) stress the importance of gaining control over critical technologies to ensure that China can independently sustain and develop its industries. These core technologies are presented not only as industrial tools but also as symbols of national independence and security.

Moreover, the MIC25 outlines the development of a "National Manufacturing Innovation System," where "We will perfect the manufacturing innovation system, which is based on enterprises and guided by the market" (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1). The high modality verb "will" and the active voice construction here emphasize the proactive and determined steps that China is taking to strengthen its internal innovation structures, further underlining the importance of self-reliance.

Additionally, the emphasis on strengthening the "Four Foundations," "essential spare parts, advanced techniques, key materials, and industrial technology" (State Council, 2015, p. 17, section 3.3), indicates a focus on creating a solid technological and industrial base. The lexical choice of "strengthen" is used to communicate the need for reinforcement and resilience in critical areas of industrial production, signaling a commitment to enhancing self-sufficiency.

The strategy also incorporates a focus on intellectual property rights (IPR) as part of its drive toward self-reliance. The phrase, "Strengthen IPR reserves in major areas of manufacturing and build industrialization-oriented patent pools strategically" (State Council, 2015, p. 12, section 3.1), suggests that China is not only concerned with innovation but also with protecting and capitalizing on its innovations. This strategic use of patents is framed as a means to bolster China's competitive edge globally and enhance its self-sufficiency.

In summary, the MIC25 constructs China's journey toward domestic innovation through a careful selection of lexical choices, high modality, active voice, and metaphor. These discursive elements collectively emphasize China's pursuit of self-reliance, technological sovereignty, and innovation-driven development. The strategic narratives presented in the policy highlight China's determination to reduce its dependency on foreign technologies and establish itself as a global leader in high-tech industries, all while securing its long-term economic and national security goals.

### 4.3.3. New China as an internal facilitator

Concluding the self-reliance narrative, MIC25 highlights the role of technological diplomacy as a form of soft power, emphasizing China’s influence on global technology standards. This section discusses China’s ambition to shape international norms, leveraging its technological advancements to assert global leadership and foster collaboration.

The MIC25 not only focuses on domestic innovation and economic modernization but also emphasizes the role of "technological diplomacy" as a form of soft power (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). This aspect of the discourse highlights China's ambition to export its innovations and engage in international collaborations, thereby reshaping global technology standards and solidifying its position as a global innovation leader (State Council, 2015, p. 30, section 3.9). This analysis explores the strategic importance of technological diplomacy, its discursive framing, and its implications for China's global influence.

On the discourse of technological diplomacy, the policy underscores the importance of exporting Chinese innovations as a means of extending its influence globally. For example, "Encourage strong enterprises to develop international overall contract and total integration" and (State Council, 2015, p. 31, section 3.9). This discourse positions China as a key player in the global technology landscape, capable of setting standards and norms (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3).

On the discourse of soft power, China seeks ot have global influence. The policy frames technological diplomacy as a tool for enhancing China's soft power and global influence. For example, "It has supported China's position as a world power" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). The discourse "Strengthen outbound investment legislation to reinforce legal protection for manufacturing enterprises to establish global operations" (State Council, 2015, p. 36, section 4.7) highlights the role of technological diplomacy in promoting China's image as a benevolent and influential global leader.

The third discourse of standard setting position New China as a key in global technology standards. The policy aims to reshape global technology standards in favour of China's rise as an innovation leader. It highlights "At present, a new wave of technological and industrial revolution is aligning with the transformation of China's economic development and reshaping the structure of the international division of labour" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). Besides, the discourse "Encourage and support enterprises, research institutions, and industry associations to participate in the process of making international standards" (State Council, 2015, p. 12, section 3.1) emphasizes China's ambition to influence global technology standards and norms, thereby consolidating its leadership position.

Consequently, technological diplomacy enhances China's soft power by promoting its innovations and setting global technology standards. This focus on soft power helps China build a positive global image and extend its influence. The policy claims, "Encourage strong enterprises to develop international overall contract and total integration" (State Council, 2015, p. 31, section 3.9). China also attempts to expand its market: Exporting innovations and engaging in international collaborations open new markets for Chinese technologies.

Such discourse as "Support enterprises to perform mergers, equity investment and venture capital investment overseas" (State Council, 2015, p. 31, section 3.9) drives economic growth and strengthens China's global economic position. Also,

China may set global norms: by influencing global technology standards, China can ensure that its technologies are widely adopted, giving it a competitive edge. The policy highlights "Encourage and support enterprises, research institutions, and industry associations to participate in the process of making international standards" (State Council, 2015, p. 12, section 3.1). Finally, China can set up and lead international collaborations foster strategic alliances that can enhance China's technological capabilities and geopolitical influence. (State Council, 2015, p. 36, section 4.7).

Example: "Encourage foreign enterprises and research institutions to establish global research institutions in China" (State Council, 2015, p. 30, section 3.9). These alliances strengthen China's position in global innovation networks and enhance its geopolitical influence.

Synthesizing the data presented, one concludes that the MIC25's emphasis on technological diplomacy as a form of soft power is a strategic move to enhance China's global influence and reshape global technology standards. By promoting innovation exports and international collaborations, the policy aims to position China as a global leader in innovation and extend its soft power (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3). The discourses of technological diplomacy, soft power, and standard setting highlight the critical role of these strategies in enhancing China's global influence. Through strategic narratives of global leadership, collaborative innovation, and technological sovereignty, the policy underscores the importance of technological diplomacy in achieving China's innovation goals. The implications of technological diplomacy are far-reaching, enhancing China's global influence, driving economic benefits, setting global technology standards, and fostering strategic alliances. By investing in technological diplomacy, China aims to build a positive global image, expand its market reach, and consolidate its leadership in the global technology landscape.

## 4.4. Chapter summary

Chapter 4 reveals the findings of the various images of New China constructed by the MIC25 initiative. Through strategic use of language, metaphors, and discursive strategies, MIC25 shapes China’s image as a leading force in global innovation as well as a nation of self-reliance. The key representations of New China in MIC25 include: (1) China is positioned as a nation propelled by technological innovation, with an emphasis on cutting-edge technologies and a drive to lead the global AI revolution. (2) MIC25 emphasizes China’s goal to reduce dependence on foreign technologies and achieve technological sovereignty, particularly in critical industries like semiconductors and robotics. (3) The government is depicted as a central force in nurturing innovation, guiding both public and private sectors in creating a coordinated innovation ecosystem. (4) China is rebranded as a smart manufacturer, aiming for technological dominance through innovation and high-quality production. (5) MIC25 constructs China as a global advocate for green manufacturing, emphasizing sustainability and resource efficiency as central to its future competitiveness. (6) China aims to influence global technology standards and expand its geopolitical influence through exporting innovations and fostering international collaborations.

Thus, MIC25 presents the image of New China as a self-reliant, innovation-driven, and globally competitive nation, aspiring to lead in technological advancements and reshape its global identity.

# CHAPTER 5: DISCURSIVE CONSTRUCTION OF NEW CHINA

This chapter represents and discusses the findings of the research question 2: "How is New China discursively constructed in MIC25?" by examining how the policy uses discursive strategies to shape the image of New China as a technological leader. The chapter explores various themes that highlight the nation's shift toward innovation, modernization, and global leadership, particularly within the context of Industry 4.0.

Through these attributes, MIC25 discursively positions China as a global technological leader, legitimizing the country's industrial policies and aligning them with broader global trends. The chapter explores key concepts such as power, hegemony, and the naturalization of ideology, revealing how China's national identity is constructed around technological sovereignty, self-reliance, and strategic autonomy. It also considers how metaphors, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity contribute to the construction of New China, reinforcing its global ambitions and leadership in Industry 4.0.

By analysing linguistic elements, this chapter demonstrates how the discourse in MIC25 legitimizes China's path to technological dominance, supporting its vision of becoming a high-tech powerhouse. The exploration of these discursive strategies helps answer how New China is rhetorically shaped to align with the nation's goals, thus advancing its global competitiveness and securing its position as a leader in the evolving technological landscape.

## 5.1. Positive construction of New China as new leader

This section focuses on the discursive strategies used to construct the image of New China in MIC25 within the context of Industry 4.0. This section specifically addresses the positive self-presentation strategies that assign characteristics to New China, with an emphasis on technological innovation, modernization, and global leadership.

This section is pivotal in deconstructing how New China is framed discursively through the attribution of qualities like "innovative," "modern," and "self-reliant." These qualities not only project China as a technological leader but also position the country within the global narrative of Industry 4.0. The discussion will show how linguistic elements such as metaphors, intertextuality, and framing strategies contribute to this discursive construction, reinforcing China's national identity and ambitions under MIC25.

### 5.1.1. Technological innovation leadership

Moving deeper into China's leadership role, technological innovation emerges as the core theme driving its global strategy, underscoring the policy's vision for future industrial dominance. This section uses lexical choices that focus on "innovation," aligning China’s technological aspirations with global trends in Industry 4.0. The repetition of terms like "indigenous innovation" serves to reinforce technological self-reliance, a key to China's positioning as an independent global leader. Interdiscursivity is also at play, blending discourses of modernization, economic independence, and industrial progress to fit into the theme.

In the MIC25, positive attributes such as "innovative," "modern," and "global leader" are assigned to construct New China as a technologically advanced and globally competitive nation. These attributes serve to legitimize China's strategic goals under Industry 4.0, which aims to transition the country from being the "world's factory" to a leader in high-tech industries such as AI, robotics, and advanced manufacturing. This analysis examines how these attributes are discursively constructed and how they align with China's broader ambitions under Industry 4.0.

The attribute "innovative" is central to how China's technological identity is framed in MIC25. The policy emphasizes innovation as critical to China's strategy of economic transformation and self-reliance. The term "innovative" is frequently used to position China as pioneering advancements in AI, quantum computing, biotechnology, and automation. For example, the document highlights, "Promote trans-industrial and interdisciplinary collaborative innovation, digitalization, network technologies, and smart technologies in manufacturing" (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1). Fairclough (1992) notes that discourses of innovation are often employed to legitimize economic policies by linking them to modernity and progress. In this case, China's innovation is framed as essential for its economic independence and growth, positioning the country at the forefront of global technological progress. Besides, the policy emphasizes "indigenous innovation" and "domestic R&D" to suggest that China can reduce its dependence on foreign technologies, thus establishing itself as an independent leader in high-tech industries (European Commission & Joint Research Centre, 2019)

Innovation is at the heart of Industry 4.0, which focuses on integrating smart technologies and automation into manufacturing processes. China's emphasis on innovation aligns with the global shift toward smart factories and data-driven manufacturing. The discourse of innovation supports China's goal of achieving technological sovereignty, which aligns with Industry 4.0's emphasis on autonomous systems and digital manufacturing (Xu et al., 2018). Besides, MIC25 emphasizes significant investment in R&D, particularly in key strategic sectors such as AI, robotics, and green technologies as discussed in the previous chapter. This mirrors the global trend of Industry 4.0 which prioritizes innovation as a key driver of future competitiveness (Kagermann et al., 2013).

The attribute "modern" reflects China's ambition to present itself as an advanced industrial nation, fully integrated into the digital economy. The policy underscores a transition from traditional manufacturing to smart, automated production systems. The term "modern" is associated with China's shift toward high-tech manufacturing, with an emphasis on digitalization, automation, and the IoT. The document constructs China's modernity in contrast to its past as a centre for labour-intensive, low-cost manufacturing. Discursively, interdiscursivity, as noted by Fairclough (1992), refers to how different discourses, such as technological innovation and modernization, are blended to create a unified narrative of national progress. The document integrates these discourses to highlight the smart manufacturing systems that are central to China's industrial upgrading.

For example, "Develop pragmatic mechanisms for personnel hiring, placement, and training, and cultivate professional, technical, managerial, and administrative personnel to meet the demands of modern manufacturing (State Council, 2015, p. 6, section 2.1).

Being realised in Chinese dream, Industry 4.0 is fundamentally about the modernization of industries, with smart technologies reshaping production and digital integration enabling efficiency and competitiveness. First, The MIC25 positions China's modernization process as part of the global Industry 4.0 movement, where smart manufacturing plays a critical role in optimizing supply chains and reducing costs (Xu et al., 2018). This is essential for China's industrial base to become more automated and data-driven. Next, modernity in the policy also includes sustainable manufacturing, a key goal of Industry 4.0 globally. China's focus on green technologies aligns with global expectations of eco-friendly production and resource efficiency (Han et al., 2023).

The nomination of "global leader" reflects China's ambition to not only participate in but dominate global technological innovation. This is a key discursive strategy to assert China's role as a central player in Industry 4.0 and future global economic trends.

The document frames China as being on the verge of becoming the world's leading manufacturing power, aiming to surpass other major economies in strategic sectors such as AI, robotics, aerospace, and advanced materials (Wübbeke et al., 2016).

Fairclough (2003) argues that the use of such discourses legitimizes national policies by projecting an image of inevitable success and leadership. China's claim to global leadership is not merely aspirational but is presented as a logical outcome of its industrial policies. China's Belt and Road Initiative is also linked with this global leadership narrative, framing technological progress as part of China's broader goal of extending its influence globally through digital and physical infrastructure (Wang, 2014).

China's ambition to be a global leader in technology aligns directly with Industry 4.0's focus on global standard-setting and technological superiority. First, the policy emphasizes China's intent to lead in establishing global technological standards for key sectors such as 5G, AI, and robotics. Leadership in these areas allows China to shape global industrial practices, a key goal in Industry 4.0 (Xu et al., 2018). Second, MIC25 aims to place China at the centre of global high-tech supply chains, ensuring that China is not only a producer but also a developer of core technologies.

For example: "Make breakthroughs in a number of key technologies which have significant impact on improving industrial competitiveness" (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1)

This is essential for China's global leadership in Industry 4.0, where interconnected production and digital ecosystems are crucial for economic dominance (Gordon & Meia, 2022).

To conclude, in MIC25, the attributes "innovative," "modern," and "global leader" are not only descriptive but serve as part of a broader discursive strategy that aligns China's industrial policy with Industry 4.0. These attributes construct an image of New China as a technologically sovereign, modern, and globally influential nation. First, the emphasis on innovation highlights China's determination to lead in disruptive technologies and achieve technological independence, a key pillar of Industry 4.0. Besides, modernization, framed around smart technologies and digital manufacturing, aligns China's industrial transformation with global trends of automation and sustainability. Finally, the ambition to become a global leader reinforces China's strategy to dominate global supply chains and set technological standards, core goals of Industry 4.0. Thus, through these attributes, MIC25 situates China as a leader in the global industrial and technological landscape, reflecting its ambition to lead the Industry 4.0.

### 5.1.2. Self-reliance and strategic autonomy

As innovation leads the way, the necessity for self-reliance becomes integral to China's industrial strategy, highlighting the country’s determination to reduce foreign dependence. The section highlights positive self-presentation in interdiscursivity, where historical discourses of self-reliance (rooted in Maoist ideology) intersect with modern technological development, emphasizing China's need for technological sovereignty. Metaphors of autonomy and strategic independence are used to position China’s technological strategy as essential for national security. Fairclough’s (2015) notion of hegemony is evident as the discourse naturalizes the government’s role in ensuring technological self-sufficiency.

MIC25 is a strategic plan that aims to transform China from a manufacturing giant into a high-tech powerhouse. Central to this vision is the discursive construction of China as "self-reliant" and independent from foreign technologies. This subsection investigates how phrases like "indigenous innovation" are employed to position China within global technological competition.

In the MIC25, the construction of China as "self-reliant" and independent from foreign technologies plays a central role in the nation's strategic goals. The policy promotes China's development of domestic technological capabilities, particularly through the emphasis on "indigenous innovation." This discourse of self-reliance and independence reflects China's ambition to reduce its reliance on foreign technologies, establish technological sovereignty, and enhance its competitiveness in the global market. The use of phrases such as "indigenous innovation" not only positions China as a leader in technology but also signals its strategic response to global technological competition. This section explores how the discursive construction of China as self-reliant and independent is achieved in MIC25 and the broader implications of this positioning.

To begin with, indigenous innovation as a discursive strategy for self-reliance. "Indigenous innovation" is a key phrase in MIC25 and is crucial for understanding how China positions itself as self-reliant. The term refers to the development of technologies within China, using domestic resources, expertise, and knowledge systems. This concept is embedded in China's broader industrial strategy, which aims to reduce dependence on foreign technologies, especially from Western countries, and to foster technological sovereignty. This approach is designed to reduce China's dependence on foreign technology and to build a robust domestic innovation ecosystem. The document highlights, "External dependence of core technology will significantly decrease. China's ability to provide fundamental auxiliary items will greatly increase" (State Council, 2015, p. 27, section 3.6).

According to Fairclough (1992), the language used in policy documents is not neutral; it reflects and constructs social realities. In MIC25, the repeated use of indigenous innovation (82 times) constructs a narrative of China's capability to independently drive technological advancements. The phrase is intended to signal that China no longer needs to rely on foreign technologies to progress in strategic sectors such as semiconductors, AI, robotics, and advanced manufacturing. By promoting indigenous innovation, the policy constructs China as an autonomous actor in global technological development, positioning it against the backdrop of technological competition with other global powers, particularly the United States and the European Union (Li, 2018).

By deconstructing this argument, it becomes apparent that the emphasis on indigenous innovation is evident in the plan's call to perfect the manufacturing innovation system, which is based on enterprises and guided by the market, and which integrates government, production, education, research, and operations (State Council, 2015, p. 10, section 3.1). By fostering a comprehensive innovation system, China aims to create a self-sustaining cycle of technological advancement that is less vulnerable to external pressures and influences.

Reisigl and Wodak (2016) emphasize the importance of understanding discourses within their historical and political contexts. The emphasis on indigenous innovation is rooted in China's long-standing concern over its reliance on foreign technologies, particularly in high-tech industries. Historically, China has been dependent on foreign technologies for its industrial growth, but with the rise of global technological competition and increasing geopolitical tensions, particularly in the technology sector, the discourse of self-reliance has intensified. This discursive shift reflects China's recognition that control over advanced technologies is critical for national security, economic stability, and global leadership (Zenglein & Holzmann, 2019).

Furthermore, the nomination of New China as "technological sovereignty" is closely tied to the discourse of self-reliance in MIC25. China's emphasis on developing its own technologies through indigenous innovation is part of its broader strategy to secure technological sovereignty, the ability to control and manage key technologies without being subject to foreign influence or dependency. The policy constructs China's technological sovereignty as essential for its national security and economic resilience, particularly in a global environment where technological dominance is increasingly tied to geopolitical power.

van Leeuwen (2008), in his work on legitimation strategies in discourse, argues that certain discourses serve to legitimize state actions by appealing to values such as autonomy, security, and national pride. In this context, the discourse of self-reliance and independence in MIC25 legitimizes China's aggressive push to develop its own technological infrastructure, reduce reliance on foreign suppliers, and enhance its global competitiveness. By framing indigenous innovation as a path to sovereignty, the policy constructs an ethical argument for state intervention in the technology sector, positioning China's technological independence as not only desirable but necessary for its future.

The competitive aspect of China's self-reliance discourse becomes particularly apparent when considering its positioning within global technological competition. By promoting indigenous innovation, China is signalling its intent to challenge the technological dominance of established powers like the United States. Global technological competition is increasingly framed as a race for supremacy in fields like AI, quantum computing, and 5G networks. The document highlights "China will have a number of multinational enterprises and industrial clusters with strong international competitiveness, and the position of China in the global division of labour and the global value chain will improve significantly (State Council, 2015, p. 8, section 2.3).

In this context, the discourse of self-reliance is used to differentiate China from other nations, suggesting that China's technological model is unique, focused on domestic development rather than reliance on foreign partnerships.

Furthermore, the intertextuality of the self-reliance discourse in MIC25 is evident in how it draws on broader narratives of national rejuvenation and economic modernization. As Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" (2006) suggests, national identities are constructed through shared narratives and symbols. In the case of China, the narrative of self-reliance in technological innovation is intertwined with the broader goal of national rejuvenation, where China is depicted as reclaiming its place as a leading global power. This narrative aligns with President Xi Jinping's broader vision of the "Chinese Dream", which emphasizes national strength, self-sufficiency, and global leadership (Wang, 2014).

The discourse of self-reliance in MIC25 is also a direct response to the growing geopolitical tensions surrounding technology. In recent years, the relationship between China and the West, particularly the United States, has been marked by technological trade disputes, tariffs, and restrictions on Chinese access to key technologies, such as semiconductors and advanced chip-making equipment (Han et al., 2024). These external pressures have reinforced China's commitment to indigenous innovation as a means of achieving technological independence.

By emphasizing self-reliance, the policy constructs a narrative of resilience in the face of external challenges, framing China's technological development as a necessary defence against foreign technological restrictions. van Dijk (1998), in his analysis of power and discourse, suggests that dominant powers often use discourse to legitimize their actions by constructing an "other" as a threat or competitor. In MIC25, foreign technological dominance, particularly from the United States, is implicitly constructed as an obstacle that China must overcome to secure its technological future. This competitive framing not only justifies China's pursuit of indigenous innovation but also positions the country as a victim of foreign interference in its technological development (Chang, 2023).

In a nutshell, the discursive construction of China as "self-reliant" and independent from foreign technologies in MIC25 is a key element of the nation's broader strategy for technological sovereignty and global competitiveness. Through the promotion of indigenous innovation, the policy constructs a narrative that emphasizes China's ability to develop its own technologies, free from foreign dependence. This discourse of self-reliance is not just about technological development but also reflects deeper concerns about national security, economic resilience, and geopolitical competition.

By positioning China as an autonomous and innovative power, the policy aligns with broader global trends under Industry 4.0, where technological leadership is seen as critical for economic and political dominance. The discourse of self-reliance in MIC25 serves to legitimize China's state-led approach to technological development, framing it as both a necessity and a moral imperative in the face of global competition and external pressures. Ultimately, the emphasis on self-reliance and indigenous innovation reflects China's determination to secure its place as a global leader in technology while safeguarding its national interests.

### 5.1.3. Modernization and progress

As China's self-reliance aligns with its innovation goals, the narrative of modernization takes center stage, where progress is framed as a journey towards global leadership. The section uses metaphors of journey and progress to frame China’s transformation as a deliberate, forward-moving process, constructing the narrative of inevitable success. Positive-self presentation strategies emphasize continuous improvement, aligning with Industry 4.0’s emphasis on modernization, digitalization, and automation. The use of renewal metaphors connects China’s technological rise with the rejuvenation of national pride, reinforcing a narrative of revival and global leadership.

This subsection presents the findings from the critical discourse analysis of the MIC25, focusing on how the concept of New China is framed as a progressive, forward-thinking nation. The analysis reveals that metaphors and framing strategies play a central role in constructing a narrative that positions China as a leader in the global technological and industrial landscape. Drawing on Lakoff and Johnson's Theory of Metaphors (2003), this subsection examines how metaphors of journey, progress, and renewal are employed to frame China's technological transformation and global leadership ambitions. It is obvious that the MIC25 employs various metaphors and framing strategies to present New China as a progressive, forward-thinking nation.

A key finding is the use of the journey metaphor to frame China's technological and industrial development. In the MIC25, China's trajectory is often described as a path or road, suggesting that the country is on a long-term journey toward achieving global leadership in high-tech sectors. This metaphor constructs a narrative of ongoing progress, positioning China's technological transformation as a purposeful and strategic process.

The term "global" that was repeated 25 times and the term "path" was used 7 times in the MIC25 indicating that China's industrial and technological development is framed as part of a deliberate, forward-moving journey. This metaphor implies that China's current position is temporary and that the nation is steadily moving toward a future where it will play a dominant role in global technology and innovation.

Besides, one of the most prominent metaphors in MIC25 is that of a journey. The document frequently uses language that suggests movement and progression towards a goal (State Council, 2015, p. 2). For instance, it outlines a "Three Steps" strategy to turn China into a major manufacturing power by 2025, an intermediate level by 2035, and the global leader by 2049 (State Council, 2015, pp. 7-9, section 2.3). This metaphor of a journey frames China's technological transformation as a deliberate and planned progression, emphasizing the nation's forward momentum.

Furthermore, the journey metaphor is further reinforced by phrases like "seize this historic opportunity" and "capture the manufacturing high ground" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). These expressions suggest that China is on a path to reclaim its rightful place as a global leader, and that this journey is both strategic and inevitable. The metaphor of a journey not only highlights the progress being made but also frames the transformation as a collective national endeavour, requiring the participation and support of all citizens.

Finally, the journey metaphor also evokes the idea of overcoming obstacles. The policy highlights China's previous reliance on foreign technology as a barrier that it is overcoming through its focus on indigenous innovation. This metaphorical framing presents China's industrial policies as steps on a predetermined path to success, reinforcing the notion that progress is a must.

The journey metaphor serves several discursive functions in the construction of New China. First, it reinforces the idea that China's technological transformation is a process of forward momentum, where each stage of development brings the country closer to its goal of global leadership. Second, it suggests that technological and industrial advancement are inevitable, positioning China as a future leader in the global technological landscape. The metaphor aligns with China's ambitions under Industry 4.0, which emphasizes automation, digitalization, and smart technologies as critical components of future industrial success.

Another significant finding is the pervasive use of the progress metaphor to frame China's technological and industrial transformation. Progress is often conceptualized as moving forward or upward, symbolizing improvement and advancement. In the discourse of MIC25, China's shift from being the "world's factory" for low-cost goods to a global hub of high-tech innovation is framed as a progressive transformation.

Firstly, The document also employs metaphors of progress to frame China as a forward-thinking nation. Terms like "innovation-driven development," "quality first," and "green development" (State Council, 2015, pp. 5-6, section 2.1) are used to emphasize the nation's commitment to modernizing its manufacturing sector. These metaphors of progress suggest that China is not merely catching up with other nations but is actively shaping the future of global manufacturing.

Secondly, phrases such as "advancing toward technological sovereignty" are frequently used in the document, positioning China's technological development as part of a broader narrative of national progress. This framing suggests that China is not only moving forward but also improving its position in the global technological hierarchy.

Next, The emphasis on "intelligent manufacturing" and the integration of next-generation IT into industrial processes (State Council, 2015, pp. 7-9, section 2.3) further reinforces the metaphor of progress. For example, the MIC25 highlights " At present, a new wave of technological and industrial revolution is aligning with the transformation of China's economic development and reshaping the structure of the international division of labour" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction).

 By focusing on cutting-edge technologies like artificial intelligence, big data, and cloud computing, the document frames China as a nation that is at the forefront of technological innovation. This framing strategy positions China as a leader in the global race for technological supremacy, highlighting its commitment to continuous improvement and modernization.

Last but not least, the progress metaphor also constructs China as a modern and future-oriented nation. By focusing on smart manufacturing, automation, and next-generation technologies, the policy frames China's industrial strategy as aligning with global trends in Industry 4.0. This framing positions China as a leader in emerging fields such as AI, 5G, and biotechnology, further reinforcing its image as a country at the forefront of global progress (Atkinson, 2024).

The use of the progress metaphor in MIC25 highlights China's ambition to position itself as a global leader in technological innovation. The metaphor not only reflects China's industrial modernization but also serves to distance the country from its historical identity as a low-cost manufacturing hub. By emphasizing progress, the policy constructs New China as a dynamic and forward-thinking nation, ready to lead the global economy through innovation and technological advancements.

The progress metaphor also functions ideologically, suggesting that technological innovation is inherently desirable and necessary for national development. This aligns with the goals of Industry 4.0, which frames technological progress as essential for maintaining global competitiveness. Through this metaphor, MIC25 constructs China's technological transformation as both a national priority and a global imperative.

The renewal metaphor is another key finding in the discourse, closely linked to President Xi Jinping's broader vision of the "Chinese Dream" and the "great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation." In the context of MIC25, the renewal metaphor suggests that China's technological transformation is not only about future progress but also about reclaiming a lost status of greatness. This metaphor frames China's industrial strategy as part of a larger process of national rejuvenation, where technological leadership is a critical component of China's return to global prominence.

The document frequently refers to the need for "upgrading" and "transforming" the manufacturing sector (State Council, 2015, pp. 5-6, section 2.1). These terms suggest a process of renewal and revitalization, framing the transformation as a necessary step to rejuvenate the nation's economy and industrial capabilities.

Besides, phrases such as "the overall rejuvenation of the Chinese manufacturing" (State Council, 2015, p. 37, section 4.8) and "the Chinese dream to rejuvenate the Chinese nation" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction) are used to evoke a sense of national rebirth through technological and industrial transformation. These metaphors of rebirth and renewal suggest that China's rise as a technological power is not only an economic strategy but also a cultural and historical imperative. This metaphor of rebirth frames the technological and industrial transformation as a renewal of national strength and vitality, akin to a phoenix rising from the ashes.

The metaphor of renewal is also evident in the emphasis on "green production" and "sustainable development" (State Council, 2015, pp. 5-6, section 2.1). By promoting environmentally friendly practices and technologies, the document frames China's transformation as not only economically beneficial but also ecologically responsible. This dual focus on economic and environmental renewal positions New China as a progressive nation that is committed to sustainable development and global well-being.

Finally, The central metaphor of renewal is evident throughout the document. The renewal metaphor also reflects China's desire to move away from its past reliance on foreign technologies and to establish itself as a leader in indigenous innovation. This framing reinforces the notion that self-reliance and technological independence are central to China's national rejuvenation.

The renewal metaphor ties China's technological transformation to a broader narrative of national identity and historical continuity. By framing New China as undergoing a process of rejuvenation, the policy connects technological progress with a sense of national pride and collective destiny. This metaphor also serves to legitimize state intervention in technological development, as the government is portrayed as leading the country's renewal through MIC25.

The renewal metaphor further aligns with global trends in Industry 4.0, where countries are encouraged to revitalize their industries through innovation and digitalization. In this context, China's technological renewal is framed as essential for its global competitiveness and its ability to shape the future of global industrial production.

Ultimately, the findings from the analysis of MIC25 reveal that metaphors of journey, progress, and renewal are central to the discursive construction of New China as a progressive, forward-thinking nation. These metaphors frame China's technological and industrial transformation as part of a broader narrative of national progress, modernization, and rejuvenation. First, the journey metaphor constructs China's development as a strategic and inevitable process, emphasizing forward momentum and long-term vision. Second, the progress metaphor positions China as a modern, innovative nation, aligning its industrial strategy with global trends in Industry 4.0. Lastly, the renewal metaphor ties China's technological transformation to a sense of national pride and historical continuity, framing technological leadership as a critical component of China's national rejuvenation. These metaphors not only construct a powerful image of New China but also serve to legitimize the state's industrial policies and its role in leading the country's technological transformation. Through these framing strategies, MIC25 positions New China as a global leader in technology and innovation, ready to shape the future of global industry.

The use of metaphors of journey, progress, and renewal in MIC25 serves several framing strategies. First thing first, by framing the transformation as a journey, the document legitimizes the strategic steps being taken to achieve technological self-reliance and global leadership. It suggests that the path to progress is well-planned and inevitable, requiring national unity and effort. Charteris-Black (2011) explores how political leaders use metaphors to justify actions and policies. The journey metaphor is a common rhetorical strategy for legitimizing gradual processes of reform or transformation, as it suggests direction, purpose, and eventual success.

Secondly, the metaphors of progress and renewal are used to motivate citizens and stakeholders to support the transformation. By presenting the transformation as a forward-thinking and responsible endeavour, the document aims to inspire collective action and commitment. Musolff (2016) discusses how metaphors in political discourse often serve to inspire and mobilize collective action. In the context ofMIC25, metaphors of progress and renewal can be seen as devices to galvanize stakeholders, encouraging them to contribute to national goals. Besides, This policy highlights how metaphors shape both individual and collective perceptions of goals, such as national development. In MIC25, metaphors of progress are used to frame the transformation which, according to Slingerland (2008), can be realised as a moral imperative, motivating citizens to align with the government's vision.

Finally, the metaphors also serve to position China within the global context, which is highlighted in the policy, "It has supported China's position as a world power (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). By emphasizing innovation, sustainability, and modernization, the document frames China as a leader in the global technological landscape, capable of setting standards and influencing global trends. Bhatia (2017) discusses how nations use discursive strategies to position themselves in global contexts. MIC25 uses metaphors to construct a narrative of China's global leadership, especially in terms of setting technological standards.

To encapsulate the argument, it becomes clear that MIC25 employs metaphors of journey, progress, and renewal to frame New China as a progressive, forward-thinking nation. Using Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Theory of Metaphors, it is evident that these metaphors serve to legitimize the strategic goals, motivate collective action, and position China as a global leader in technological innovation. Through these framing strategies, the document constructs a narrative of inevitable progress and renewal, emphasizing China's commitment to becoming a high-tech powerhouse.

## 5.2. Intertextuality and interdiscursivity

This section explores the critical role of intertextuality and interdiscursivity in shaping the image of New China. These concepts are integral in understanding how the document intertwines multiple historical, cultural, and political narratives to present a cohesive and forward-looking vision of China in the 21st century. By analysing the connections between different discourses, both domestic and international, MIC25 not only reflects China's technological ambitions but also frames these aspirations within a broader narrative of national rejuvenation and global leadership.

Intertextuality in MIC25 refers to the incorporation of references, ideas, and discourses from a wide range of sources, including traditional Chinese values, socialist ideals, and contrasts with Western development models. This strategy allows the document to anchor its vision of New China within familiar cultural and historical frameworks, while also distinguishing China's approach from that of other nations. Through these intertextual connections, MIC25 constructs a national identity that emphasizes the continuity of China's historical mission, technological self-reliance, and moral authority.

Interdiscursivity, on the other hand, refers to how different types of discourses, from political ideology to economic strategy, are woven together to construct a new narrative of China's global role. MIC25 does this by integrating discourses from China's Maoist past, reform-era pragmatism, and the contemporary emphasis on innovation under Xi Jinping's leadership. This synthesis creates a multifaceted image of New China: one that is rooted in its socialist legacy but is also aligned with global trends in technology and economic modernization.

In this section, the discursive strategies of intertextuality and interdiscursivity are essential in constructing the image of New China as technologically advanced, historically rooted, and globally competitive. By drawing on traditional values, historical narratives, socialist ideals, and contrasts with Western models, MIC25 creates a compelling vision of a nation that is both progressing toward future leadership in global technology and reconnecting with its historical mission of national rejuvenation. These strategies are not just rhetorical devices but are integral to framing China's industrial transformation as part of a broader, historically significant narrative, legitimizing its path towards becoming a global high-tech powerhouse.

### 5.2.1. Intertextuality of New China

The intertextual foundation laid by traditional Chinese values and historical narratives of rejuvenation serves as a precursor to exploring how contrasting global models further define China’s unique development path. This section heavily utilizes intertextual references to traditional Chinese values like Confucianism, which stress collective effort and social harmony, alongside references to Maoist-era self-reliance and socialist ideals. It contrasts Western market-driven models with China’s state-led approach, emphasizing a unique path to modernization. The contrastive framing reinforces China's distinct identity and approach to technological and industrial advancement.

Intertextuality refers to how a text references or contrasts with other texts and discourses. The discourse of New China in MIC25 weaves together traditional Chinese values, socialist ideals, and contrasts with Western development models to create a unique vision for China's future. This analysis explores how intertextual elements are embedded in the policy to construct a narrative of China's technological and industrial transformation.

The discourse of New China draws significantly on Confucian ideals of collective responsibility, social harmony, and unity (Sandel & D'Ambrosio, 2018). MIC25 emphasizes the need for collective effort and national unity to achieve technological innovation, reflecting core Confucian values.

For instance, phrases such as "mobilize all social forces" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4) and "work with courage and determination" (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3) echo Confucian principles of working toward societal harmony and the collective good. By invoking these traditional values, the policy intertextually aligns its vision of development with deeply ingrained cultural ideals, legitimizing the state-led effort to achieve technological leadership (Wang, 2014).

The concept of national rejuvenation is a recurring theme in Chinese political discourse and history. MIC25 draws on this concept to present its vision of China's technological rise as part of a long-standing mission to restore China's global prominence.

The policy document sets the goal to "transform China into the global manufacturing leader before the centennial of the founding of New China" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). This statement intertextually links with historical narratives, such as the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation", a core theme promoted by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) (Carrai, 2021), to emphasize that technological modernization is not only an economic objective but also a continuation of China's historical mission.

MIC25 also references Maoist and socialist discourses, particularly in its emphasis on state-led development. The document advocates for the government to take a central role in guiding industrial transformation, reflecting the ideological foundations of socialism in China.

For example, section 4.1 of the policy outlines the state's responsibility to plan, coordinate, and support industrial transformation (State Council, 2015). This aligns with socialist ideals of collective effort and state control over economic development, referencing the model that has underpinned China's economic policies since the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The policy highlights, " mobilize all social forces to work with courage and determination" (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3). By drawing on these socialist principles, the policy reinforces the legitimacy of the government's role in driving technological progress (Zenglein & Holzmann, 2019).

Next, a major intertextual contrast in MIC25 is its advocacy for "government-led development" (State Council, 2015, p. 6, section 2.2), which is positioned against the market-driven models common in Western neoliberal economies. The policy rejects the notion that free markets alone can drive innovation, highlighting the importance of government intervention.

The document emphasizes that the government must play a central role in planning, coordinating, and supporting industrial transformation contrasting this with Western models that prioritize market mechanisms and minimal state intervention. This contrast highlights China's unique approach, asserting that long-term strategic planning is more effective for achieving sustained industrial and technological growth than short-term market-driven gains (Kania, 2017; Zenglein & Holzmann, 2019).

Another point of contrast is China's emphasis on indigenous innovation, which diverges from Western models of global integration and interdependence. The policy advocates for the development of self-reliant technological capabilities, particularly in critical sectors like semiconductors and AI, where China has historically relied on foreign technologies. Section 3.1 of the policy emphasizes the need to master core technologies and reduce dependence on foreign technologies, reflecting a strategy of technological sovereignty. This stands in contrast to Western approaches that encourage cross-border technological exchange and global supply chains. The document positions China as a nation focused on achieving technological self-reliance, thus differentiating its development model from that of Western nations (Li, 2018; Zenglein & Holzmann, 2019).

Furthermore, MIC25 also contrasts its long-term strategic vision with the short-term profit-driven focus often associated with Western economic models. The policy outlines specific milestones for 2025, 2035, and 2049 (State Council, 2015, pp. 7-9, section 2.3), underscoring the importance of sustained, long-term planning in achieving technological leadership. This emphasis on long-term foresight contrasts with the immediate, profit-driven goals characteristic of Western neoliberal models. The intertextual contrast critiques the perceived short-sightedness of Western practices, positioning China's approach as more strategic and aligned with its cultural values of patience and long-term vision(Wang, 2014).

To begin with, while MIC25 draws heavily on traditional Chinese values, it also integrates aspects of Western development models, particularly in its emphasis on modernization and innovation. The policy embraces key trends of Industry 4.0, including intelligent manufacturing, digitalization, and next-generation IT (Section 3.2), which are hallmarks of modern Western development strategies. The policy highlights " Manufacturing innovation will be the theme, improving quality and performance the core, integration of the next-generation IT into manufacturing the main thread, intelligent manufacturing the main priority, and meeting the demands of economic and social development and national defence the goal" (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1).

By incorporating these elements, the document presents New China as a forward-looking nation, able to balance its cultural heritage with cutting-edge technological advancements. This intertextual synthesis shows how China can merge traditional values with modern innovation, positioning itself as a global leader in high-tech manufacturing (Kania, 2017; Xu et al., 2018).

Secondly, the policy also acknowledges the importance of integrating the discourse of global cooperation with competition. While it emphasizes technological sovereignty, MIC25 also promotes engaging with global resources and markets to improve international competitiveness The policy outlines "We will promote the internationalization of major industries and guide enterprises to strengthen international competitiveness" (State Council, 2015, p. 30, section 3.9). This intertextual integration of global cooperation reflects a recognition that international collaboration remains essential for achieving technological leadership. By balancing self-reliance with global engagement, China positions itself as both an independent technological power and an active participant in the global technological ecosystem (Zenglein & Holzmann, 2019).

Finally, MIC25 integrates Western business practices, particularly in its emphasis on product quality and brand building. The document calls for a focus on quality-first development and the creation of world-famous Chinese brands (State Council, 2015, p. 5, section 2.1), aligning with global standards in manufacturing and marketing. By emphasizing quality and branding, the policy reflects an integration of Western business models into China's industrial strategy. This intertextual reference to global business practices serves to enhance the policy's credibility and align China's development goals with global market expectations (Xu et al., 2018).

In conclusion, the discourse of New China in MIC25 is a rich and complex intertextual tapestry, drawing on traditional Chinese values while contrasting with Western development models. By referencing Confucian ideals, historical narratives of rejuvenation, and socialist principles, the policy aligns itself with deeply ingrained cultural and ideological values. Simultaneously, it contrasts sharply with Western models through its emphasis on state-led development, indigenous innovation, and long-term planning. The integration of modernization, global cooperation, and quality branding reflects a synthesis of both discourses, constructing a unique and forward-looking vision for China's future as a global leader in high-tech manufacturing. This intertextuality not only legitimizes the policy but also positions it as a distinctive and strategic approach to national development.

### 5.2.2. Interdiscursivity of New China

As China blends historical legacies with contemporary pragmatism, the interplay of Maoist and reform-era discourses solidifies the state's legitimacy in steering China’s path toward technological sovereignty. Interdiscursivity is crucial here, combining Maoist collectivism and self-reliance with Deng-era pragmatism and market-driven reform to craft a discourse of technological sovereignty. State-led narratives are juxtaposed with the market’s role in innovation, creating a balanced vision of China’s past and future. The section also references Xi Jinping’s "Chinese Dream" as a modern integration of these historical discourses, framing China’s technological rise as part of its national rejuvenation.

Interdiscursivity refers to the way different discourses are woven together to create new meanings or reinforce existing ones. In the MIC25, the concept of New China is constructed through an intricate interplay of historical and cultural discourses, notably from the Mao-era and reform-era. By integrating elements from both periods, the policy document situates technological modernization as a continuation of China's historical development while adapting to contemporary global realities. Using CDA, this analysis explores how interdiscursivity in MIC25 draws on both Maoist and reform-era discourses, merging them to legitimize China's strategic direction and frame New China as both rooted in its socialist past and prepared for a high-tech future.

The Maoist era (1949–1976) provides foundational ideological frameworks that continue to shape China's development narrative (Walder, 2015). In MIC25, references to collectivism, self-reliance, and state leadership evoke Maoist discourses, particularly in their emphasis on centralized control and indigenous innovation. These themes are central to the interdiscursive construction of New China as a nation that is able to modernize without sacrificing its socialist ideals.

First thing first, the discourse of state-led development, a hallmark of Maoist ideology, is central to MIC25. The document underscores the government's pivotal role in planning, guiding, and coordinating the country's industrial modernization efforts, reflecting the Maoist belief that the state should direct economic and social progress.

For example, phrases such as "mobilize all social forces" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4) and "A national leading group" (State Council, 2015, p. 37, section 4.8) highlight the importance of collective national effort. This aligns with Maoist discourses that stressed the role of the state as the primary driver of societal transformation, as seen in large-scale campaigns such as the Great Leap Forward. The policy continues this tradition by emphasizing that technological transformation requires coordinated state intervention, reinforcing the narrative that New China is both an economic and political project guided by socialist values (Xi, 2022; Yongnian, 2009) – the policy highlights "we must put the socialist system to good use" (State Council, 2015, p. 32, section 4). Besides, The document calls for "strengthening strategic planning and guidance" (State Council, 2015, p. 37, section 4.8), reflecting a centralized approach to ensure that all efforts are aligned with national goals. This is reminiscent of the Five-Year Plans from the Mao era, which were used to direct economic and social development.

Secondly, the Mao-era concept of self-reliance (自力更生), which emphasized reducing dependence on foreign technology and prioritizing domestic capabilities, finds clear echoes in MIC25. The policy's focus on indigenous innovation and "mastering core technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2) reflects a discourse of technological sovereignty, a modern adaptation of Mao's push for self-reliance during times of external threats and economic isolation (Chen, 1979).

For example, the call to reduce reliance on foreign technology in the policy - "external dependence of core technology will significantly decrease" (State Council, 2015, p. 27, section 3.6) - is reminiscent of Maoist campaigns to develop indigenous industries, particularly during the Cold War when China was isolated from much of the international community. The policy's language integrates this historical discourse to frame technological independence as a continuation of China's longstanding goal of maintaining sovereignty in the face of foreign pressures (Heilmann, 2018).

By drawing on these Maoist discourses, MIC25 aligns New China with a tradition of self-sufficiency and state-led transformation, reinforcing the idea that national progress depends on the ability to innovate from within while adhering to socialist principles.

On the other hand, the reform era initiated by Deng Xiaoping in the late 1970s marked a significant shift in China's economic discourse, introducing pragmatic policies, market reforms, and a degree of global economic integration. While MIC25 retains elements of Maoist state control, it also incorporates reform-era ideas of market-driven innovation, modernization, and opening up, blending these with earlier socialist discourses.

Firstly, the reform-era discourse of pragmatism and market-oriented reform is visible in MIC25's recognition of the private sector's role in fostering innovation. Deng's focus on "letting some people get rich first" as a way of catalysing broader economic growth has been adapted in the policy, which emphasizes the importance of entrepreneurship and market competition alongside state control (Vogel, 2011).

For example, the policy highlights the need to "encourage innovation" (State Council, 2015, p. 11, section 3.1) and " give markets the decisive role" (State Council, 2015, p. 6, section 2.2) within the framework of state guidance, a reflection of the reform-era pragmatism that introduced market mechanisms while maintaining the state's overarching role. This interdiscursive blending suggests that New China is as much a product of market-oriented modernization as it is of socialist planning (Gore, 2010; Lampton, 2019).

Another crucial element of reform-era discourse is the concept of opening up to the global economy, which was central to China's economic transformation under Deng (Vogel, 2011). MIC25 integrates this discourse by acknowledging the need for global cooperation and competition, despite its emphasis on indigenous innovation and self-reliance.

For example, section 2.2 stresses the importance of "engaging with global markets and resources" (State Council, 2015, p. 7) while simultaneously developing domestic capabilities. This reflects the reform-era discourse of balancing global integration with national interests, a theme that was central to China's economic opening in the 1980s and 1990s. By combining Maoist self-reliance with Deng's openness, MIC25 constructs New China as a nation that is both self-sufficient and globally competitive (Heilmann, 2018).

Thus, this interdiscursive blending allows the policy to maintain a focus on technological sovereignty while still advocating for strategic engagement with the global economy, positioning China as a global leader in innovation while safeguarding its national interests.

Under Xi Jinping's leadership, the discourse of national rejuvenation and the Chinese Dream has been central to China's development narrative (Carrai, 2021). Xi's emphasis on the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" frames technological innovation as a key driver of China's return to global prominence (Xi, 2022). MIC25 draws heavily on this discourse, positioning New China as both a continuation of historical missions and a futuristic vision of technological leadership.

The Chinese Dream, as articulated by Xi Jinping, emphasizes the restoration of China's global status through technological advancement and national rejuvenation (Wang, 2014). This theme is interdiscursively integrated into MIC25, where the country's goal of becoming a global manufacturing leader is framed as part of its broader historical mission.

For example, the policy's goal to "transform China into the global manufacturing leader before the centennial of the founding of New China" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction) directly references the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation". This interdiscursive connection ties technological modernization to China's broader political and historical objectives, reinforcing the notion that New China is the culmination of both past struggles and future ambitions (Carrai, 2021).

In line with Xi's vision of China as a global power (Xi, 2022), MIC25 emphasizes technological sovereignty as a means of securing national security and international influence. This reflects Xi's broader discourse on the need for China to "master core technologies" (State Council, 2015, p. 7, section 2.2) to avoid reliance on foreign powers and ensure its place as a global leader in innovation.

From the policy, the emphasis on indigenous innovation and the goal to reduce dependence on foreign technologies – " External dependence of core technology will significantly decrease" (State Council, 2015, p. 27, section 3.6) reflect this push for technological sovereignty. By combining the Maoist discourse of self-reliance with Xi's vision of global leadership, the policy constructs a narrative in which China's technological rise is both a national imperative and a geopolitical strategy

In summation, it can be inferred that the interdiscursive construction of New China in MIC25 exemplifies interdiscursivity, blending elements from China's Maoist past, its reform-era pragmatism, and the contemporary discourse of national rejuvenation under Xi Jinping. By weaving together these diverse discourses, the policy presents New China as a nation that balances socialist values with market-driven innovation, emphasizing both technological sovereignty and global engagement. The Mao-era discourse of state control and self-reliance provides the ideological foundation for state-led technological development, while reform-era ideas of pragmatism and market reform introduce a flexible approach to modernization. Finally, Xi Jinping's vision of national rejuvenation frames technological advancement as part of a broader historical mission to restore China's global status. This interdiscursive blending not only legitimizes China's current technological strategy but also constructs a narrative in which New China is positioned as a global leader capable of balancing its socialist legacy with the demands of the modern, high-tech world.

### 5.2.3. Summary

In Section 5.3, the analysis of intertextuality and interdiscursivity within the MIC25 highlights the complex layers of meaning embedded in the discursive construction of New China. Through the strategic blending of historical, cultural, and global narratives, MIC25 effectively positions China as a technologically advanced nation, deeply rooted in its cultural heritage while striving for modernity and global leadership.

Intertextuality plays a crucial role in this construction by incorporating traditional Chinese values, socialist ideals, and contrasts with Western development models. By invoking Confucian principles of collectivism, Maoist-era concepts of self-reliance, and the more market-oriented reformist policies of Deng Xiaoping, the MIC25 creates a narrative that positions technological advancement as both a cultural and political necessity for China's future. Additionally, by drawing contrasts between China's state-led development model and the market-driven approaches favoured by the West, the discourse reinforces China's unique path toward innovation and modernization. This dual emphasis allows China to claim leadership in global technology while framing its journey as distinct and culturally anchored.

Interdiscursivity is equally important in shaping the image of New China. By weaving together discourses from different time periods, including Maoist collectivism and reform-era pragmatism, MIC25 constructs a narrative of technological innovation that is both forward-looking and grounded in China's historical mission of national rejuvenation. This approach blends socialist ideals with contemporary goals, presenting technological self-reliance not just as an economic objective but as part of a larger geopolitical and cultural project. The incorporation of Xi Jinping's vision of the "Chinese Dream" and the "Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation" further solidifies this image, positioning technological advancement as central to China's return to global prominence.

The discursive strategies identified in this section, such as the invocation of historical continuity, the contrast with Western models, and the integration of global discourses on technological advancement, construct New China as a nation poised to lead in the 21st century. This positioning reinforces the legitimacy of China's industrial policies and underlines the importance of state intervention in achieving technological sovereignty.

As we transition to Section 5.4, the focus shifts from the linguistic construction of New China's identity to the power dynamics and social relations embedded within MIC25. The discursive strategies identified in Section 5.2, particularly the emphasis on collective effort, state leadership, and technological self-reliance, serve as a foundation for understanding how various social actors, including the government, the public, and foreign nations, are positioned in relation to China's technological and industrial ambitions. Section 5.4 will explore how these power relations are constructed and maintained, revealing the hierarchical structures that shape the roles of the state, society, and international actors in China's journey toward global leadership.

## 5.3. Modality and certainty

As we explore the power dynamics embedded in MIC25, the government’s role as the dominant agent in China’s technological rise becomes clear, with its authority constructed through discourses of certainty and modality. Modality plays a significant role, with high-certainty verbs ("must," "will") reflecting the government’s hegemonic authority over technological advancement. Linguistic certainty underscores the inevitability of state leadership, while lexical choices such as "strategic planning" and "guidance" frame the government as both necessary and unavoidable in driving industrial transformation. Fairclough’s concept of power as embedded in language is central to this discursive construction of authority.

### 5.3.1. The state-led innovation

Having established the state's leadership role, the focus now shifts to the public's role as contributors, where the power dynamics between the state and society are reinforced through a top-down narrative of collective participation. The section uses modality to convey the certainty of state control, while metaphors such as "protector of national interests" reinforce the state’s hegemonic position. Fairclough’s analysis of agency is evident as the public’s role is passive, framed as secondary to the state’s strategic vision. The state’s role is legitimized through metaphors of security and protection, naturalizing its leadership.

Lexical choices in MIC25 are carefully curated to highlight the government’s central role in China's technological future. Terms like "leading group," "strategic planning," and "guidance" frequently appear, portraying the government as the architect of industrial rejuvenation. This discursive positioning reflects a top-down model, where the government is presented as not only necessary but inevitable in driving China’s technological innovation. Fairclough (2015) argues that modality and certainty in language reflect the degree of authority. Phrases such as "must lead" and "will establish" are used to convey high modality, signifying the government’s determination and obligation to assume control over industrial progress.

The agency is predominantly assigned to the government, which is framed as the main actor responsible for planning, implementing, and supervising all aspects of technological innovation. The policy outlines that "a national leading group for rejuvenating Chinese manufacturing will be established and led by the head of the State Council" (State Council, 2015, p. 37). This active agency positions the government not only as the initiator but also the key executor of the plan, reinforcing its hegemonic role. According to Fairclough (2015), the ability to assign agency to certain actors while excluding or marginalising others is a form of discursive power. Here, the government’s role is elevated above that of other social actors, including enterprises and citizens, who are depicted as supportive but secondary to the state’s leadership.

Metaphors also play a critical role in reinforcing the government’s hegemonic status. The government is metaphorically constructed as the "protector of national interests," responsible for safeguarding China's technological sovereignty. The discourse of technological self-reliance is tied to national security, where the state is depicted as a defensive force against external threats. This metaphor not only legitimizes the government’s dominant position but naturalises its control by linking it to national survival and prosperity. The document's emphasis on reducing reliance on foreign technology reinforces this, presenting the government's intervention as essential to securing China’s future as a global technological leader.

Furthermore, the naturalisation of ideology occurs through the repeated framing of the government’s role as necessary and unquestionable. Fairclough (2015) posits that hegemonic ideologies become naturalised when they are presented as common sense or in the best interests of society. MIC25 achieves this by positioning the government’s leadership as a historical continuity, stating that "strong manufacturing is essential for national prosperity and security" (State Council, 2015, p. 1, introduction). The historical context creates a narrative of inevitability, where government control over manufacturing and innovation is seen as an unbroken tradition that ensures national success. By doing so, the policy interdiscursively links technological advancement with patriotism, reinforcing positive self-presentation of the government and negative other-presentation of external actors who may threaten China’s autonomy.

The discourse also constructs an imagined community of national unity, where the government’s vision for technological rejuvenation becomes a collective project involving all social forces. The policy calls for the mobilisation of enterprises, educational institutions, and the general public to support the state’s initiatives. This framing constructs the government as a central coordinator, while the collective participation of society is framed as a patriotic duty, aligning with Fairclough’s (1992) concept of intertextuality. The policy interdiscursively references historical periods of collective mobilisation, such as the industrialisation efforts under previous Chinese regimes, to reinforce the idea that societal support of the government’s leadership is not only beneficial but necessary for national success.

Lastly, the government’s power is further legitimized through the strategic use of modality and certainty. The policy frequently employs high-modality verbs such as "must," "will," and "should," which create a sense of urgency and obligation. For example, the document asserts, "We must rely on domestic innovation to drive our technological independence" (State Council, 2015, p. 37). This modality conveys the inevitability of the government’s plan and frames technological self-reliance as non-negotiable, positioning the state’s control as essential for securing the nation's future. The repeated reference to global competitiveness and hegemonic framing reinforces the idea that without the government's strategic intervention, China would be left vulnerable in the global industrial hierarchy.

In conclusion, the MIC25 document discursively constructs the Chinese government as the hegemonic leader of New China’s technological and industrial transformation. Through lexical choices, agency assignment, modality, and metaphors, the government is positioned as the central actor responsible for safeguarding national sovereignty, achieving technological self-reliance, and mobilizing society to support its strategic vision. These discursive strategies naturalize the government’s dominance, presenting it as both a historical necessity and the protector of China’s future prosperity, thus reinforcing the hegemonic power dynamic within the text.

### 5.3.2. State control and public participation

As the public’s role in China’s technological future is clarified, the discourse of global competition further highlights China’s balancing act between self-reliance and global cooperation. Power asymmetry is emphasized through lexical choices that frame the public as followers, while the state remains the decision-maker. Modality reflects certainty in the state’s directives, presenting public participation as essential yet subordinate. Gramsci’s concept of hegemony is clear here, where public compliance is framed as both patriotic duty and naturalized obedience, reinforcing the hierarchical relationship between the state and society.

In MIC25, the Chinese public is discursively positioned as collective participants in the nation's technological advancement, where their role is framed as one of support and contribution rather than decision-making. This relationship reflects underlying power asymmetries, where the state maintains hegemonic control, directing public action towards the achievement of national goals. The ideological framing of public participation naturalizes state power, portraying the government’s leadership as essential to the country's success in Industry 4.0.

The policy frequently calls for national unity and collective effort in advancing China’s technological capacity, invoking the idea of the public as followers of the state's strategic vision. For instance, Section 1.3 of the MIC25 policy emphasizes the need to "mobilize all social forces to work with courage and determination" (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3). This language constructs the public as a unified body, tasked with supporting the government’s plans without room for dissent or alternative perspectives. As Fairclough (2015) argues, such discourse reflects the naturalisation of power dynamics, where the public is not explicitly coerced but rather discursively shaped to accept their subordinate role.

van Dijk (1998) also highlights how discourse can be used to maintain power by constructing the public as passive, which is evident in MIC25’s representation of the people as contributors, not decision-makers. By framing the public’s role as that of implementation rather than agenda-setting, the policy reinforces a hegemonic structure in which the state holds the authority to define national priorities. The top-down power dynamic is maintained through this construction, where the public is mobilized to achieve state-set goals but does not participate in defining them.

Furthermore, MIC25 positions the public as a necessary support mechanism for the state's technological ambitions, emphasizing their instrumental role in achieving national innovation capacity. For example, Section 4.5 calls for the public to contribute through education, labour, and entrepreneurship, but always within the confines of government directives, it states "We will strengthen overall planning and classified guidance on manufacturing talent development and implement manufacturing talent cultivation plan" (State Council, 2015, p. 35, section 4.5). While the public is presented as essential for progress, their role remains reactive, serving the objectives of the state rather than shaping them.

The naturalisation of ideology occurs here as the state’s goals are presented as universally beneficial, aligning public interest with state interest. This reflects Gramsci’s (1971) concept of hegemony, where the dominant class’s interests are framed as those of the entire society. In this case, the state's technological vision is positioned as the public's shared mission, thereby legitimizing the hierarchical power structure that grants the state control over decision-making while relegating the public to a supportive, non-decision-making role.

The public’s participation is consistently framed as part of a collective effort that is essential for national success, but always under the leadership of the government. Sections 2.1 and 2.2 of the document emphasize collective action for national innovation, but within state-defined guidelines (State Council, 2015, pp. 5-7). This framing reinforces the idea that technological advancement is a state-driven project, where the public's role is to comply with, rather than challenge, the government's strategic direction.

As Fairclough (2015) notes, the modality of discourse, phrases such as "we must" and "we will," reflects certainty and authority, reinforcing the state's hegemonic position. By using such high-modality language, the policy frames the government's leadership as inevitable and indisputable, naturalizing the public’s subordinate position in the process. The power asymmetry between the state and the people is thus discursively constructed and sustained, with the public positioned as passive participants who are mobilized for collective action but have limited agency in shaping that action.

In summary, in MIC25, the Chinese public, including enterprises and individual citizens, are constructed as key participants in the nation’s technological advancement. However, their role is largely reactive, following the guidelines and policies set by the state. The state’s hegemonic control is reinforced through the discursive construction of the public as instrumental to national goals, but without the power to define or influence those goals. This naturalisation of ideology highlights the hierarchical power structure in which the state holds decision-making authority, while the public’s participation is essential yet circumscribed by the boundaries set by the government.

### 5.3.3. Global competition and national sovereignty

Finally, as we move from national dynamics to the international stage, China’s global strategy becomes a delicate balance of competing for technological dominance while engaging in strategic collaboration. The section uses a dual framing strategy, presenting foreign nations as both rivals and partners. Ideological tension in discourse is evident, where foreign actors are constructed as competitors in the race for technological supremacy but also necessary collaborators in certain sectors. Metaphors of competition and cooperation position China’s global ambitions within a complex geopolitical landscape, emphasizing both its technological independence and its strategic engagement in international standards and partnerships.

In MIC25, foreign nations are discursively framed through a dual lens of competition and cooperation, reflecting the complex interplay between global competition and national sovereignty. On the one hand, foreign actors are portrayed as technological rivals that China must surpass, while on the other, they are constructed as strategic partners essential for China's rise to global leadership. This duality reflects broader geopolitical power dynamics, where China must balance its ambitions for technological self-reliance with the need to engage globally. Drawing on Fairclough’s (1992, 2015) critical discourse analysis, this section explores how power, hegemony, and the naturalisation of ideology shape these narratives, reinforcing China's global aspirations.

The competitive framing of foreign nations in MIC25 underscores the hegemonic power dynamics between China and its global rivals. Foreign nations are constructed as technological adversaries, reflecting an "us vs. them" narrative that reinforces national identity by distinguishing between insiders (China) and outsiders (foreign nations). According to van Dijk (2008), such discourses are often used to bolster national unity and differentiate between the nation-state and external entities. MIC25 mirrors this by framing the global landscape as a battlefield for technological supremacy.

For instance, the policy highlights how China faces a "two-way squeeze" from both developed and developing nations, with developed countries pursuing "Manufacturing Renaissance" strategies and developing nations expanding their industrial capabilities (State Council, 2015, p. 3, section 1.1). This rhetoric positions foreign nations as threats to China's ambitions, emphasizing the urgency for China to surpass its competitors in technological and industrial innovation. By framing global technological advancements, such as 3D printing, mobile internet, cloud computing, and bioengineering, as external pressures (State Council, 2015, p. 3), the discourse establishes the global competition as a strategic challenge China must overcome.

A central theme in MIC25 is the pursuit of technological self-reliance, framed as essential for safeguarding national sovereignty. The policy repeatedly stresses the need to master core technologies and reduce external dependencies, particularly in advanced equipment and key industries (State Council, 2015, p. 27, section 3.6). By doing so, the document constructs foreign nations not only as competitors but also as potential threats to China's sovereignty, reflecting Foucault’s (2009) concept of power operating through discourses of security. In this context, external dependence is framed as a vulnerability, with technological independence portrayed as crucial for national survival and security.

The emphasis on reducing foreign reliance, particularly in areas like AI, robotics, and semiconductors, highlights the intersection of geopolitical tensions and industrial strategy. Foreign technologies are presented as potentially compromising China’s national security, necessitating state-led efforts to secure technological sovereignty. This naturalises the ideology of self-reliance as not only an economic necessity but also a patriotic duty, framing the state's role in achieving technological dominance as indispensable.

While MIC25 frames foreign nations as rivals, it also presents them as strategic collaborators, acknowledging the need for international cooperation to enhance China’s technological capabilities. This duality reflects Fairclough’s (1992) notion of contradiction in discourse, where competing ideologies coexist. The policy encourages foreign investment in high-end sectors like next-generation IT, bio-pharmaceuticals, and new materials, positioning foreign nations as valuable partners who can contribute to China’s technological advancement (State Council, 2015, p. 30, section 3.9).

This cooperative framing is evident in the promotion of joint ventures, collaborative development, and the establishment of global research centres in China (State Council, 2015, p. 31). Such partnerships are framed as mutually beneficial, facilitating knowledge transfer and innovation, while still positioning China as the ultimate beneficiary of these collaborations. This reflects Gramsci’s (1971) theory of hegemonic alliances, where the dominant power (China) strategically engages with external actors to consolidate its leadership while maintaining control over its trajectory.

The discourse in MIC25 further positions foreign nations as collaborators in the process of global standard-setting, an area where China seeks to assert its influence. The policy calls for Chinese enterprises, research institutions, and industry associations to participate in the making of international standards, thereby shaping the global industrial landscape (State Council, 2015, p. 12, section 3.1). By promoting internationalization of Chinese standards, the policy underscores the interdependence between national sovereignty and global engagement.

This highlights a strategic tension: while China seeks self-reliance, it simultaneously acknowledges the need to integrate into the global system to shape the rules of global competition. The involvement of foreign nations in standard-setting is framed as a pathway for China to lead rather than follow in the international arena, reinforcing China’s hegemonic aspirations on the global stage.

In summary, in MIC25, foreign nations are discursively constructed through a dual lens: as technological rivals that China must surpass to secure its national sovereignty, and as strategic collaborators essential for achieving global leadership. This dual discourse highlights the complex geopolitical power dynamics at play in China's rise. On the one hand, the emphasis on technological independence and national security underscores the urgency of surpassing global competitors. On the other hand, the policy also recognizes the necessity of international cooperation in enhancing China’s technological prowess.

Through the framing of foreign nations as both threats and partners, MIC25 constructs a nuanced narrative that reflects China’s strategic balancing act between asserting its independence and engaging globally. This discourse not only reinforces the state’s central role in protecting China’s sovereignty but also highlights the necessity of leveraging global resources to achieve China’s technological ambitions.

## 5.4. Chapter summary

This chapter addresses the research question: How is New China discursively constructed in MIC25? It explores how MIC25 employs various discursive strategies to shape the image of China as a technological leader within the global context of Industry 4.0. By focusing on themes such as technological innovation, self-reliance, modernization, and global leadership, the policy uses linguistic elements like metaphors, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity to craft a narrative of national progress and rejuvenation.

Key discursive strategies include positively presenting New China as "innovative," "modern," and "self-reliant" to project an image of technological sovereignty. Through metaphors of "journey" and "progress," MIC25 positions China on an inevitable path toward global dominance in high-tech sectors. Intertextuality references traditional Chinese values and socialist ideals, while contrasting Western models to legitimize China's distinct development approach. Interdiscursivity blends historical legacies from the Maoist and reform eras with contemporary narratives like Xi Jinping’s "Chinese Dream," integrating them into a cohesive vision of China’s technological future. The chapter concludes that MIC25 constructs New China as a forward-thinking, globally competitive nation, aligning with its aspirations under Industry 4.0.

In MIC25, New China is discursively constructed through various discursive practices that shape the nation’s image as a technological powerhouse. Key discursive strategies include:

First, it is positive self-presentation. MIC25 assigns attributes like "innovative," "modern," and "self-reliant" to China. This discursive strategy frames China as a global leader in technological innovation, aligning with global Industry 4.0 trends. By focusing on "indigenous innovation" and "technological sovereignty," China is portrayed as capable of achieving self-reliance and reducing dependency on foreign technologies.

Second, it is metaphors of progress, journey, and renewal. Metaphors such as "journey" and "progress" are employed to frame China’s technological transformation as a forward-moving process, symbolizing modernization and national rejuvenation. The "renewal" metaphor ties technological growth to China’s broader goal of reclaiming its global status, further reinforcing the country's ambition to lead global technological standards.

Third, it is intertextuality. Traditional Chinese values (e.g., Confucianism, collective responsibility), socialist ideals (e.g., Maoist self-reliance), and contrasting Western neoliberal models are used to create a distinctive vision of China’s path toward innovation. The intertextual references legitimize China's unique developmental model, which contrasts with market-driven approaches by highlighting government-led innovation and long-term strategic planning.

Fourth, it is interdiscursivity. MIC25 merges discourses from different historical periods, blending Maoist state control and reform-era market pragmatism with modern technological ambitions under Xi Jinping’s leadership. The policy integrates these historical elements into a unified narrative of national rejuvenation, positioning China’s technological rise as both a national imperative and a geopolitical strategy.

Finally, hegemony and naturalization of state power. The discourse emphasizes the state’s central role in driving technological innovation, presenting government leadership as necessary and inevitable. Through high-modality language ("must," "will"), the policy naturalizes the state’s control over technological advancement and mobilizes public participation as part of a collective effort to achieve national goals.

In conclusion, MIC25 constructs New China as a technologically sovereign, modern, and globally influential nation. Through the use of discursive strategies such as metaphors, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity, the policy legitimizes China’s industrial transformation and its ambition to lead in the global technological landscape under Industry 4.0.

# Chapter 6: MOTIVATIONS BEHIND NEW CHINA

This chapter introduces the rationale behind the structured construction of New China, examining how the nation’s approach is aimed at fostering an innovation ecosystem, securing national sovereignty, and realizing the Chinese Dream. To address why New China is being built in these particular ways, we explore three main ambitions that drive this transformation: establishing a robust and sustainable innovation ecosystem, strategizing self-reliance to solidify national sovereignty, and embodying a vision that captures and advances the Chinese Dream.

This chapter begins with delving into the technologies and frameworks that China has employed to build an innovation ecosystem. By fostering collaboration across diverse sectors, from government to academia to private industries, China promotes a model that goes beyond traditional, hierarchical modes of technological advancement. This approach not only addresses current global market demands but also reinforces China’s aspirations to emerge as a leader in Industry 4.0, where technological interdependence is essential. Consequently, this chapter serves to elucidate how China’s unique ideological framework, combined with strategic planning and national goals, shapes New China’s innovative and economic landscape, ultimately contributing to its ambitions of global prominence and self-sustaining growth.

## 6.1. Building innovation ecosystems

In constructing New China’s technological and industrial identity, the ideology of the innovation ecosystem offers a framework where collaboration and cross-sectoral integration drive development, diverging from traditional top-down or purely market-driven models. Innovation ecosystems, as defined by Benitez et al. (2020), emphasize a networked structure where technological advancement emerges from the shared efforts of diverse entities, companies, government, academia, and research institutions. This ideology reframes technological growth as a collective endeavour, recognizing that complex challenges like rapid digital transformation, resource scarcity, and global competition cannot be fully addressed by any single sector alone.

### 6.1.1. Technologies to build innovation ecosystems

Building on the question of how New China is constructed and framed within policy and ideology, this section delves into the role of technology in creating robust innovation ecosystem framework with four main pillars. The transformation into a (1) collaborative, cross-sectoral model signals a strategic departure from hierarchical approaches. This shift, highlighted by MIC25, sets a framework where (2) technology serves not only as a functional tool but as a collaborative and ideological symbol guiding China’s path within the global technological landscape. MIC25 highlights the importance of (30 fostering Industry 4.0 innovations to enhance productivity and growth. Finally, also addresses the need to (4) reduce risks and strengthen productivity and growth. Through this lens, the construction of New China's technological backbone reflects an effort to cultivate resilience, leadership, and shared advancement across sectors.

First, the ideology of innovation ecosystems has become a central concept within Industry 4.0 literature, reflecting a transformative approach to understanding and fostering technological progress. Unlike traditional, hierarchical models of innovation, which emphasize either market-driven or top-down government-led advancements, the innovation ecosystem model highlights a collaborative, cross-sectoral network. This network includes companies, governments, universities, and research institutions, all working together to promote shared growth, minimize economic risks, and enhance productivity across technological sectors (Pasi et al., 2022). The theoretical underpinnings of this approach can be traced to the shifting demands of Industry 4.0, where rapid technological developments require more interconnected, interdependent forms of innovation to remain globally competitive. Scholars like Fukuda (2020) argue that fostering such ecosystems is essential to navigate the uncertainty, cost, and complexity inherent in modern technological advancements.

MIC25 reflects the innovation ecosystem ideology in its framing of China’s technological strategy. In positioning China as a proactive participant within a collaborative global network, MIC25 integrates the values of partnership, interconnectivity, and cross-sectoral collaboration, presenting China’s development within Industry 4.0 as both independent and cooperative. The policy consistently emphasizes collective national effort and coordination across sectors, aiming to integrate academic institutions, government, private industry, and international partners in the pursuit of technological leadership. This approach resonates with Fukuda's (2020) assertion that collaborative frameworks mitigate risk and ensure consistent growth in high-stakes technological fields.

Secondly, MIC25, China’s comprehensive policy document aimed at guiding the country's transition into an advanced technological powerhouse, integrates the principles of innovation ecosystems into its discourse. By framing technological progress as a collaborative endeavour, MIC25 reflects a shift from a purely state-led or market-centric ideology to one that recognizes the necessity of collaboration. n alignment with recent studies like Ma and Xu (2017), who found out that by fostering synergy within the Shenyang equipment manufacturing industry, the initiative aims to create a robust collaborative innovation model that can be replicated in other regions.

For instance, MIC25 explicitly calls for the "deep integration of next-generation IT into manufacturing" as a strategy for industrial upgrading (State Council, 2015, p. 3, section 1.1). This integration aims to harness resources and expertise from a range of stakeholders, including public institutions, private enterprises, and research centres, to foster a sustainable and innovative ecosystem. Here, the language of MIC25 aligns with the innovation ecosystem model by portraying technological progress as a networked endeavour, requiring input and cooperation from diverse sectors. Moreover, by presenting technological transformation as a collective task, MIC25 encourages the creation of shared infrastructure, knowledge exchange, and partnerships. This strategy reflects the understanding that modern technological advancements, especially in fields like AI, robotics, and big data, require concerted and coordinated effort rather than isolated initiatives.

Thirdly, the policy emphasizes collective effort, the integration of various sectors, and strategic alliances across borders and industries, positioning China as a leader in Industry 4.0. The finding not only reflects this innovation ecosystem ideology but also naturalizes it as central to China’s economic trajectory. The discussion further reveals how the policy constructs power relations within the global technological landscape, positioning China as a proactive and collaborative leader in advancing innovation ecosystems.

Finally, the innovation ecosystem concept is rooted in the shift from linear models of technological advancement (Fukuda, 2020; Pasi et al., 2022). Industry 4.0 literature has increasingly emphasized this framework, with scholars such as Valackienė and Nagaj (2021) noting that the complexity and speed of Industry 4.0 advancements demand partnerships across sectors to drive growth. According to Fukuda (2020), innovation ecosystems are critical for mitigating risks that individual entities cannot address independently, such as high R&D costs, resource scarcity, and rapidly evolving market demands. These ecosystems foster collective innovation by pooling resources, expertise, and infrastructure across sectors, thereby enabling technological advancements that benefit all actors involved.

From a CDA perspective, the way MIC25 articulates the role of innovation ecosystems also serves to reinforce China’s hegemonic positioning in the global technological landscape. Drawing on Fairclough's (2006) concept of hegemony, MIC25's emphasis on cross-sectoral and cross-border collaboration presents New China not just as a participant but as a leader in the global innovation ecosystem. This construction of power through discourse also positions New China as a guiding force in the shift toward a collaborative technological framework, aligning its goals with those of Industry 4.0 while simultaneously challenging Western dominance in advanced manufacturing and high-tech innovation.

The policy’s use of modality, for example, reflects an assertive stance on New China’s leadership within the innovation ecosystem. Phrases like "we must lead" and "will establish" emphasize certainty and commitment, presenting New China’s rise as a technological power as inevitable and necessary (State Council, 2015, p. 37, section 4.8). This high-modality language not only reinforces the state’s role as the primary agent of change but also naturalizes China’s position within the global innovation ecosystem. By framing collaboration as both a national and international imperative, MIC25 reflects an ideology of collective progress, positioning China’s advancement as beneficial not only for itself but for the global technological community.

Furthermore, MIC25's discourse on reducing dependence on foreign technology through "indigenous innovation" supports its strategic autonomy while reinforcing its role within the global ecosystem. By advocating for technological sovereignty alongside cross-sectoral collaboration, MIC25 constructs a ideological tension for New China as both a cooperative global player and an independent innovator. This aligns with Fairclough's (2015) idea of establishing cultural and ideological dominance by promoting an image of New China that is simultaneously collaborative and self-sustaining, strengthening its leadership in a global context where technological sovereignty is increasingly linked to geopolitical influence.

The language used in MIC25 reflects a deliberate attempt to naturalize the ideology of the innovation ecosystem, positioning it as an inherent and necessary element of China’s development strategy. This naturalization process, as Fairclough (2015) argues, involves embedding ideologies within discourse in such a way that they appear self-evident, rather than constructed. By repeatedly framing innovation ecosystems as essential to China’s economic transformation, MIC25 reinforces the belief that collaborative networks are integral to national progress, presenting them as indispensable for achieving technological advancement and sustaining global competitiveness.

For instance, MIC25 emphasizes the urgency of integrating sectors and mobilizing "all social forces" in pursuit of national development goals, which aligns with the innovation ecosystem ideology (State Council, 2015, p. 4, section 1.3). This portrayal of technological advancement as a shared societal mission frames the ecosystem model as common sense, a natural approach to meeting the demands of Industry 4.0. Through such discourse, MIC25 subtly shifts the narrative away from traditional state-led or market-centric models toward a framework that appears naturally suited to China’s development. This naturalization process positions the innovation ecosystem not only as a response to external pressures but as an organic part of China’s strategic landscape. These findings are consistent with the work of Rong et al. (2021) who confirmed that the emphasis on complementarity-based collaboration within and between regional innovation ecosystems, supported by informed governmental policies, significantly boosts the national innovation system

Moreover, by incorporating this collaborative framework into its discourse on technological self-reliance, MIC25 presents innovation ecosystems as compatible with China’s broader national goals, such as economic sovereignty and security. This alignment reinforces the idea that collaborative innovation is not a foreign or imposed concept but an intrinsic part of China’s path toward modernization. This aligns with Fairclough’s (2015) observation that ideologies gain traction when they are integrated into national narratives, allowing MIC25 to leverage the innovation ecosystem model to enhance China’s strategic autonomy while simultaneously contributing to global technological advancement.

In conclusion, the discourse of MIC25 reveals how China has embraced the innovation ecosystem ideology to position itself as a leader in Industry 4.0. By framing technological advancement as a collaborative, cross-sectoral effort, MIC25 reflects the ideological shift toward networked innovation, legitimizing China’s role within this global landscape. This analysis shows that MIC25’s discourse on innovation ecosystems is not only a reflection of current global trends but also a strategic manoeuvre that uses the principles of power, hegemony, and naturalization of ideology to bolster China’s position as a dominant force in the high-tech world. Through the language of collaboration and shared progress, MIC25 integrates the innovation ecosystem model into its vision of national development, positioning China as a cooperative yet self-sustaining actor capable of shaping the future of global technological advancement.

In effect, MIC25 naturalizes the ideology of innovation ecosystems as an essential component of China’s technological rise, embedding it within a narrative that presents cross-sectoral collaboration as both a national necessity and a global imperative. This strategy not only aligns with the demands of Industry 4.0 but also reinforces China’s hegemony within the global innovation landscape, presenting its advancement as a collective benefit while enhancing its geopolitical influence.

### 6.1.2. Ideological tensions in innovation ecosystem

Exploring the ideological conflicts within New China’s innovation model, this section delves into the tensions between centralized control and collaborative networks. MIC25 advocates for an ecosystem that combines state leadership with collaborative integration, resulting in a unique model that challenges traditional neoliberal or market-driven frameworks. By framing state control as essential to national innovation, this hybrid approach reflects an ideological balancing act that shapes New China’s dual role as an independent power and an active global participant.

The MIC25 initiative presents a vision for transforming China into a global leader in high-tech manufacturing by establishing an innovation ecosystem that combines the efforts of companies, government, educational institutions, and other actors. This ambitious framework, which promotes collaboration and technological advancement, also reveals ideological tensions rooted in the Chinese state’s approach to construct New China in innovation and industrial policy. The ideological constructs within MIC25 can be understood as interactions between power, hegemony, and the naturalisation of state-centered ideologies. By examining these tensions, such as state-led versus market-driven innovation, national security versus global collaboration, and the push for sustainable development amid rapid industrial growth, Discursive strategies were found to consolidate China’s leadership in Industry 4.0. These findings, in comparison with recent studies, highlight a unique approach to innovation ecosystems that blends collaborative networks with centralized control, positioning China as both a competitive global actor and a self-sufficient technological power.

A core component of MIC25 is the emphasis on a hybrid innovation ecosystem that involves companies, universities, research institutions, and think tanks. This collaborative network is framed as both market-guided and state-directed, underscoring the government’s leading role in orchestrating collaboration: "We will perfect the manufacturing innovation system, which is based on enterprises and guided by the market, and which integrates government, production, education, research, and operations" (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1). By framing this network in terms of a balanced public-private partnership, MIC25 emphasizes the state's hegemonic role in shaping innovation as a form of ideological control, aligning disparate actors with national goals.

According to Fairclough (2010), hegemony in discourse allows the dominant class, in this case, the state, to assert authority subtly by framing its actions as essential for societal progress. MIC25’s approach exemplifies this by positioning the government as the main architect of collaboration, even within ostensibly market-driven processes. Unlike traditional neoliberal models, in which market dynamics dictate innovation (Harvey, 2005), MIC25 reflects an ideological shift by balancing market mechanisms with state intervention, thereby normalizing a top-down approach within an ecosystem that still appears collaborative. Recent studies by Pasi et al. (2022) reveal similar trends in other state-directed innovation ecosystems, yet MIC25 is distinct in the degree of authority that the Chinese state exerts over even market-driven actors, promoting what is effectively a managed competition model in contrast to fully autonomous market-led innovation.

The MIC25 document prioritizes technological determinism, viewing advancements in areas like automation, big data, and intelligent manufacturing as essential to China’s competitiveness in Industry 4.0. The document states, "Promote the integrated application of industrial Internet, cloud computing, and big data across the entire industrial chain from R&D and design to manufacturing, operations, management, sales, and service" (State Council, p. 13, section 3.2). By presenting technology as the primary driver of economic and industrial transformation, MIC25 creates a deterministic discourse that portrays technological advancement as inevitable and desirable.

However, this deterministic view sidelines potential social inequalities that may emerge as China rapidly advances toward automation. Fairclough’s (2015) concept of naturalisation explains how certain ideologies become accepted as "common sense" through repeated discursive emphasis. MIC25’s narrative frames technological progress as the sole route to economic viability, subtly relegating social impacts to secondary importance. Ghobakhloo et al. (2022) corroborate this concern, noting that similar deterministic narratives in Industry 4.0 policies tend to prioritize automation and digitalization at the expense of workforce inclusivity. MIC25, by emphasizing progress over social equity, reinforces an ideology where technological gains are pursued even if they lead to disruptions in employment. This highlights a key tension within the innovation ecosystem between advancing technology and addressing the social inequalities it may exacerbate. However, Ghobakhloo et al. (2022) found out that The deterministic approach of Industry 4.0 policies often overlooks the inclusivity of the workforce. The focus on technological adoption and digital transformation can marginalize workers who lack the necessary skills or access to training opportunities. The systematic review on SMEs' adoption of Industry 4.0 technologies points out that knowledge competencies and value chain digitalization readiness are crucial for promoting digital transformation. Besides, The study identifies key aspects such as new skills, training, and education as essential for adapting to the evolving work environment. However, the rapid pace of technological change poses challenges for social policy, particularly in ensuring that the workforce is adequately prepared and included in the digital economy (Sima et al., 2020).

MIC25 advocates a collective, ecosystem-based approach that unites actors across various sectors in a process of coordinated innovation, promoting the role of enterprises, universities, and government as key players in joint initiatives. This collective approach is underscored by the policy’s call to "Enable key enterprises to play a leading role and universities and research institutions to play a supporting role to build a number of innovation coalitions" (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1). This emphasis on collaboration reflects a modern innovation ecosystem model, where networked stakeholders work interdependently (Fukuda, 2020).

However, despite its rhetoric of collaboration, MIC25 maintains a strong element of state control. The policy’s language constructs the ecosystem as one in which each actor’s role is predefined and state-supervised, ensuring alignment with national priorities. Fairclough’s (2015) idea of ideological naturalisation is evident here: MIC25 frames state control as a natural component of collaborative innovation, subtly reinforcing the government’s authoritative position within the ecosystem. This stands in contrast to Western models, which more often privilege stakeholder autonomy (Valackienė & Nagaj, 2021). Thus, MIC25 naturalises state influence within a collaborative context, creating a unique ecosystem that appears open but remains closely monitored by the state. In comparison, studies like those by Golovianko et al. (2023) argue that hybrid models, such as those promoted in South Korea and Japan, still allow for more flexible roles within ecosystems, suggesting that MIC25’s approach remains particularly centralized.

One of MIC25’s goals is to foster Industry 4.0 innovations, with intelligent manufacturing and digitalization as main pillars. The policy’s stated goal is to "promote the full integration of next generation IT and industrialization and take intelligent manufacturing as the main priority" (State Council, p. 13, section 3.2). This focus on technological advancement aligns with the ambitions of Industry 4.0 and global competitiveness, portraying rapid technological gains as essential for maintaining China’s industrial prowess.

The discourse of progress in MIC25, however, reveals an ideological tension between pursuing technological gains and ensuring sustainable development. Although the document incorporates sustainability initiatives, such as reducing operation costs and faulty products by 50% by 2025 (State Council, p. 15, section 3.2), the primary emphasis is on rapid industrial advancement. This framing prioritizes economic and technological benefits over environmental sustainability, highlighting a pragmatic approach to Industry 4.0 where technological progress takes precedence. Fairclough’s (2015, p. 32) concept of hegemonic discourse is relevant here, as MIC25 frames technological advancement as essential, normalizing the focus on high-speed growth while placing sustainability as a secondary objective. Studies by Ibekwe et al. (2024) and Lee and Kim (2023) underscore similar tensions in international Industry 4.0 policies, yet MIC25 is distinctive in its unyielding focus on technological progress despite environmental implications, aligning with the ideological stance of technological determinism.

A key objective of MIC25 is securing China’s competitiveness within the global arena, particularly through risk mitigation and productivity enhancement. Statements like "Strengthen network security of intelligent manufacturing control systems and overall system security" (State Council, p. 13, section 3.2) emphasize the need for domestic technological security as China engages in global markets. This dual emphasis underscores an ideological tension between global integration and national sovereignty.

Fairclough’s (2015) notion of discourse as a site for ideological struggle is evident here, as MIC25 seeks to position China as a leading global competitor while simultaneously protecting its autonomy. The policy’s language reflects an approach to innovation ecosystems that is not merely collaborative but also protective, creating an implicit boundary against foreign influence. This tension is well-documented in other state-led policies, yet studies like Zenglein and Holzmann (2019) show that MIC25’s ecosystem model is particularly resistant to neoliberal pressures, as China actively reinforces national security within a globally competitive framework. This duality positions China as both a proactive player in Industry 4.0 and a state-centered actor focused on safeguarding national interests.

The discourse within MIC25 also reveals an ideological tension between the desire for global collaboration and the imperative of national security. Despite promoting cross-sector collaboration, the document emphasizes the need for stringent control over core technologies, stating that "Support enterprises to improve the ability of on-line quality monitoring, on-line control, and product life-cycle quality tracking" (State Council, p. 18, section 3.4). The prioritization of system security and quality control highlights a need to protect the innovation ecosystem from external vulnerabilities.

This focus on security contrasts with the collaborative ethos of MIC25, which emphasizes open networks and partnerships across various sectors. Here, we see Fairclough’s (2015) concept of power dynamics within discourse at play, as MIC25 constructs a narrative that blends openness with control, allowing collaboration while limiting external influence. Comparatively, studies like those by Sansana et al. (2021) and Golovianko et al. (2023) highlight how similar hybrid approaches are also emerging in other rapidly industrializing countries, though MIC25 uniquely emphasizes security as a core principle, blending collaborative ideals with a guarded stance on national security.

In summary, the MIC25 document presents a complex, state-led approach to innovation ecosystems, marked by an intricate web of ideological tensions. By positioning China as both a global competitor and a self-reliant technological power, MIC25 reflects an ambitious vision where collaboration, technological advancement, and national security are carefully balanced within a centrally controlled ecosystem. Drawing on Fairclough’s theories of power, hegemony, and ideological naturalisation, we can see how MIC25 frames state oversight as essential to achieving technological independence while constructing a narrative of cooperative innovation. In comparison to recent studies, MIC25’s approach stands out for its distinct blend of market-driven elements with a heavy state influence, as well as its willingness to prioritize technological advancement and security over social equity and sustainability. Ultimately, MIC25 represents a state-controlled ecosystem model tailored to both integrate with and protect China’s stake in Industry 4.0, creating a pathway for China to assert its hegemony in the global technological landscape.

## 6.2. Planning national sovereignty

Moving from collaborative frameworks to sovereign strategies, this section considers why New China emphasizes self-reliance as central to its development. MIC25’s approach to securing national sovereignty underscores the need to reduce dependence on foreign technologies while fostering domestic capabilities. This strategy reflects China’s ambition to protect its economic and technological interests, positioning self-reliance as both a practical necessity and an ideological stance. Through this approach, MIC25 constructs a self-reliant, independent model of New China, solidifying its place in the global order.

### 6.2.1. Planning self-reliance framework

In pursuit of sovereignty, this section this section presents and discusses the findings of how MIC25’s self-reliance framework builds a foundation of domestic innovation, production, and security. By prioritizing control over core technologies, MIC25 constructs a discourse of independence that aligns with national interests. This framework emphasizes China’s goal of technological self-sufficiency, framing autonomy as integral to economic resilience and global competitiveness. Through the lens of self-reliance, MIC25 illustrates how New China is constructed to thrive independently amid complex global pressures.

China’s MIC25 policy reflects the country’s ambition to reduce foreign dependency, elevate domestic production, and secure technological independence in the face of complex global pressures. The discursive strategies were found in MIC25, particularly through the lens of power, hegemony, and the naturalization of ideology. The policy’s emphasis on innovation capability, production capability, and core technologies showcases China’s strategic framework for self-reliance as essential to bolstering national strength and shaping its role in the global order.

Innovation capability stands at the forefront of MIC25’s self-reliance agenda, enabling China to develop cutting-edge technologies domestically rather than relying on foreign innovation. The directive to "perfect the manufacturing innovation system…which integrates government, production, education, research and operations" underscores a tightly coordinated approach where state power plays a central role in guiding technological advancements (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1). The choice of language here suggests that innovation is not a neutral or isolated process but is systematically cultivated and controlled within a state-driven structure. Marcato (2022) agrees that MIC25 highlights that the Chinese government is actively involved in shaping the innovation landscape by improving the ability of Chinese enterprises to manage power relations in global innovation governance.

By centralizing control over innovation, China’s government implicitly reinforces its authority over strategic sectors, further extending its power within both national and global contexts. Fairclough’s (2015) concept of "power in discourse" applies here, as the language of MIC25 reflects state intervention as essential for realizing innovation goals. Such discourse functions to both legitimize and normalize state dominance in the innovation ecosystem, thereby naturalizing a centralized approach to technological advancement.

China’s drive to enhance its production capability, which includes developing domestic manufacturing of advanced technologies, is pivotal in establishing a self-sustained industrial base that can support independent growth. This emphasis is especially apparent in statements like, "Develop precision machine tools… and integrated manufacturing systems" and "Support enterprises to improve…on-line quality monitoring, on-line control, and product life-cycle quality tracking" (State Council, p. 23, section 3.6; p. 18, section 3.4). Here, the MIC25 invokes a discourse of competitive excellence, framing China’s enhanced production capabilities as integral to gaining and sustaining hegemonic control within the global economy. Thí study corroborates the findings of Marcato (2022), who found out that the plan is not just about participating in global production networks but about creating dynamic capabilities and strengthening local technological capacities.

Fairclough's (2015) concept of hegemony sees such discourse as a means to establish ideological control, where the emphasis on domestic production capability aligns with a broader ideological ambition to challenge Western industrial hegemony. The strategic focus on production capability legitimizes China’s position as a leading industrial power and contests the prevailing hegemony of established economies. By embedding state-directed industrial control as a national good, MIC25 naturalizes state dominance in key industries and presents it as critical for safeguarding national interests, thus reinforcing the ideological framework of self-reliance.

A major theme in MIC25 is technological independence, which involves reducing reliance on foreign sources for essential technologies. Terms like "fundamental proprietary materials" and the goal to source "70% of the essential spare parts and key materials" domestically by 2025 exemplify China’s commitment to self-sufficiency (State Council, p. 16, section 3.3; p. 17, section 3.3). This pursuit of self-sufficiency is not merely an economic objective but also a symbolic assertion of autonomy, situating China as a resilient, independent force on the global stage.

Fairclough’s (2015) naturalization of ideology concept highlights how discourse can embed ideological frameworks within public consciousness as commonsensical truths. By emphasizing domestic sources and self-sufficiency, MIC25 constructs an image of technological independence as an unquestionable good, a vital national objective that should be universally accepted. This naturalization strategy frames China’s reliance on itself not only as advantageous but as an ideological stance essential for securing sovereignty. This emphasis on self-sufficiency aligns with recent research by Golovianko et al. (2023) on sustainability and independence in the face of global competition, which suggests that countries increasingly view technological self-sufficiency as a pathway to environmental and economic resilience.

MIC25’s focus on establishing a "robust domestic supply chain" and securing control over "core technologies" underscores the policy’s role in fortifying national security and protecting critical industries (State Council, p. 18, section 3.3; p. 8, section 2.3). The language surrounding core technologies and a domestically reliant supply chain reflects an underlying belief in security through self-reliance. The emphasis on "developing fundamental industrial software like operating systems and security" reveals a strategic shift towards reducing vulnerabilities associated with foreign technology dependencies (State Council, p. 23, section 3.5).

Fairclough’s (2015) idea of power as an embedded discourse is evident in how MIC25 articulates core technologies and a secure supply chain. By underscoring security and control, the policy reflects a discourse of protective nationalism, where technological self-sufficiency is crucial to national integrity. This framework of security and independence reflects broader global concerns about technological dependencies and echoes recent studies, such as Zenglein and Holzmann (2019), that underscore how geopolitical factors are prompting many nations to safeguard their technological assets.

Through the lens of CDA, MIC25’s references to "R&D investment" and "intellectual property" signify deeper ideological commitments to sustaining technological control and economic dominance. The document’s call to increase R&D allocations and secure IP rights establishes an ideological framework in which intellectual ownership becomes central to China’s global standing. Statements emphasizing the development of "intellectual property" and encouraging "R&D investment" reinforce the ideological pursuit of hegemony by suggesting that the future of China’s industrial power hinges on proprietary technology (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1).

By prioritizing intellectual property, MIC25 positions China as a competitive innovator, implicitly challenging Western nations that have traditionally held technological supremacy. This hegemony-oriented discourse of intellectual ownership aligns with Harvey’s (2005) observation on how neoliberal economic policies have increasingly equated technological control with global power. In this framework, IP becomes not only a legal or economic asset but a symbol of China’s capacity to innovate autonomously, shaping public and global perception of China’s industrial dominance.

MIC25’s focus on acquiring and developing high-end equipment reflects an ideological commitment to achieving cutting-edge industrial capabilities. The document’s ambition to "develop precision machine tools" and create "integrated manufacturing systems" suggests that possessing advanced equipment is fundamental to transforming China’s industrial base into a global competitor (State Council, p. 23, section 3.6). Such discourse naturalizes the ideology that advanced manufacturing capabilities are a national imperative and a crucial element of state-driven progress.

Fairclough’s (2015) concept of naturalization explains how MIC25 subtly frames high-end equipment not only as tools for production but as symbols of national progress and pride. By embedding the development of advanced manufacturing systems within an ideological narrative of technological nationalism, the document fosters public support for state-led initiatives to bolster self-sufficiency and global standing. This finding is also aligned with Li (2018), who claims that the initiative also aims to train and attract talent, and achieve green manufacturing and environmental sustainability.

China’s self-reliance strategy in MIC25 reflects a complex interplay of power, hegemony, and the naturalization of ideology. The document’s discourse around innovation capability, production capability, and core technologies positions China as both a resilient industrial power and a burgeoning technological hegemon. Through language that emphasizes autonomy and security, MIC25 constructs a self-reliant framework that resonates with ideological commitments to national strength and sovereignty. This discourse also aligns with broader global trends, as nations increasingly seek self-sufficiency to mitigate geopolitical risks. By invoking principles of power, hegemony, and ideological naturalization, MIC25 not only charts a pathway for China’s technological future but also reshapes the discourse around national autonomy and industrial independence on the global stage.

### 6.2.2. Ideological tensions in strategic planning

This section addresses the ideological tensions within China’s self-reliance strategy, exploring the friction between market-led practices and state-centered control. MIC25’s emphasis on centralized planning contrasts with open-market principles, framing state intervention as essential to New China’s sustainable progress. By positioning autonomy as a strategic response to global dependencies, this discourse of state-led development reflects New China’s ideological commitment to safeguarding sovereignty, illustrating the intricate balance between domestic control and global interdependence.

The ideological tensions underlying this state-led push for self-reliance were found and that the policy articulates a vision of centralized industrial strategy where concepts of power, hegemony, and the naturalization of ideology frame China’s path to achieving technological independence and reducing reliance on foreign innovation.

A key ideological tension within MIC25’s state-led approach arises between centralized control over innovation and the market-led practices traditionally seen in high-tech industries. MIC25 emphasizes the need to "perfect the manufacturing innovation system…which integrates government, production, education, research, and operations" (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1), constructing a vision of innovation that is tightly coordinated and supervised by the state. This directive exemplifies Fairclough’s concept of "power in discourse", where the state’s intervention is portrayed as essential for cultivating an innovation ecosystem that can sustain domestic technological progress (Linde et al., 2021).

The reliance on state intervention in MIC25 contrasts sharply with recent studies that advocate for market-driven approaches in fostering technological development. Pasi et al. (2022) argue that open-market networks, rather than centralized control, allow for more adaptive and responsive innovation ecosystems. Here, MIC25’s emphasis on power held by the state over the market indicates a distinct ideological stance: by discursively positioning state-led development as crucial, the document not only legitimizes government intervention but also challenges the neoliberal logic of market supremacy in innovation. This framing of state-directed innovation could be interpreted as an attempt to reclaim national autonomy within a global market dominated by competitive, capitalist structures.

Another ideological tension appears in MIC25’s focus on enhancing domestic production capability, as seen in goals to "develop precision machine tools…manufacturing equipment and integrated manufacturing systems" (State Council, p. 23, section 3.6). By emphasizing the strategic importance of domestic manufacturing, MIC25 constructs an ideal of hegemonic self-sufficiency. This focus is intended to solidify China’s role within the global supply chain, positioning the country as a powerful, autonomous manufacturer of advanced technologies.

This discourse of hegemonic self-sufficiency draws on Gramsci’s theory of hegemony, as adapted by Fairclough, suggesting that MIC25 seeks not only to build production capacity but to challenge the global hegemony held by technologically advanced Western economies (Fairclough, 2013). However, this approach runs counter to research suggesting that the global economy’s interdependent structure benefits from collaborative rather than isolated industrial practices. Omar et al. (2012) argue that technology and manufacturing ecosystems benefit from integrated supply chains across borders, which allows for faster advancements and shared benefits.

By promoting self-reliance in production capabilities, MIC25 stands ideologically at odds with this interdependent model, asserting a nationalist discourse that prioritizes domestic security and power over global cooperation. Thus, the state-led push for production self-sufficiency in MIC25 is less about economic efficiency and more about asserting autonomy within a global order that has long favored open borders for technological and industrial collaboration.

The MIC25’s focus on "technological independence" explicitly addresses the need to reduce dependency on foreign technology, exemplified by statements such as, "By 2025, 70% of the essential spare parts and key materials will have domestic sources" (State Council, p. 17, section 3.3). This emphasis on technology sovereignty reflects an ideological tension between independence and the collaborative structures that underpin global technology industries. Through CDA, this focus can be viewed as a "hegemonic strategy", where discourse on core technologies operates as a means of constructing China’s industrial autonomy within a global market that historically has prioritized interconnectedness.

However, this nationalistic focus on technological independence is challenged by recent studies indicating that closed, autonomous technology systems can create vulnerabilities rather than security. Li et al. (2022) emphasize that integrating with global tech ecosystems provides greater resilience, as collaborative frameworks allow countries to pool resources, share risks, and jointly innovate. In contrast, MIC25’s push for a domestic-centered supply of core technologies suggests a shift towards national control over technological knowledge, but it also imposes the ideological stance that security and autonomy can only be achieved through closed, independent frameworks. This naturalizes a binary discourse where technological independence is discursively opposed to collaboration, even if this may limit the benefits of open, collaborative innovation systems.

A central theme in MIC25 is the development of a "domestic supply chain," particularly by strengthening research into "fundamental proprietary materials" to ensure self-sufficiency (State Council, p. 16, section 3.3). This aim to "improve China’s self-sufficiency in the proprietary materials supply chain" reflects a naturalization of state-centered ideology within the policy. According to Fairclough (2015), "naturalization" in discourse occurs when ideologically loaded perspectives are embedded within language, presenting a particular worldview as common sense. He says "Ideologies come to be ideological common sense to the extent that the discourse types which embody them become naturalized" (Fairclough, 2015, p. 113). In this case, the framing of self-sufficiency as essential to national stability suggests that only a domestically controlled supply chain can secure China’s industrial future.

This strategy of naturalizing self-sufficiency places MIC25 at odds with the neoliberal principles of open markets and resource interdependence. While neoliberal market structures promote open trade and cross-border supply chains as economically beneficial, MIC25 frames reliance on global supply chains as a vulnerability rather than an advantage. Higgott (2004) highlights that neoliberal globalization is increasingly under pressure, as national security concerns drive countries to reevaluate the benefits of open trade versus the risks posed by external dependencies. By aligning self-sufficiency with national security, MIC25 ideologically repositions domestic control over supply chains as the logical, and even necessary, response to global market uncertainties.

Another area where MIC25 reveals ideological tension is its emphasis on intellectual property (IP) and R&D investments to secure China’s control over advanced technologies. The document stresses the importance of "R&D investment" and "intellectual property" as central to China’s technological trajectory, discursively positioning IP control as essential for national growth and security (State Council, p. 10, section 3.1). By asserting control over IP as a priority, MIC25 constructs a discourse of economic sovereignty that challenges the norms of open knowledge exchange often celebrated in global research networks.

This framing aligns with Harvey’s (2005) critique of neoliberalism, which sees IP and knowledge as globally shared resources that promote market efficiency and innovation. However, MIC25’s focus on state control over IP suggests a departure from the neoliberal view, instead naturalizing an ideology where state ownership of intellectual assets is paramount. This divergence reflects an ideological commitment to autonomy, where knowledge, research, and innovation are not universal goods but strategically controlled assets within the state’s power structure.

MIC25’s prioritization of high-end equipment for manufacturing reflects a discourse where advanced technology is not just an economic tool but a symbol of national achievement. The document’s directive to "develop precision machine tools" illustrates a state-led push to modernize China’s industrial base as part of a broader national strategy (State Council, p. 23, section 3.6). This discourse naturalizes an ideological stance in which modernization equates to autonomy, asserting that achieving industrial parity with the global leaders is essential to securing China’s position in the global order.

However, this approach contrasts with the market-oriented, global standards common in industry. Y. Li et al. (2019) argue that adopting shared technological standards promotes international cohesion, allowing for smoother integration and greater efficiency. Yet MIC25’s state-led approach frames high-end equipment as an area where China must independently excel, reflecting a tension between achieving national modernization and aligning with global norms. By embedding this discourse of modernization within nationalistic terms, MIC25 constructs a framework where domestic production standards are presented as equally, if not more, valuable than global benchmarks.

China’s state-led push for self-reliance in MIC25 is fraught with ideological tensions that reflect a complex navigation between centralized state control and global interconnectedness. Fairclough’s CDA reveals how MIC25 uses discourse to assert power, establish hegemonic dominance in domestic industries, and naturalize self-sufficiency as a commonsense goal. These ideological stances challenge the neoliberal, open-market principles that underpin much of global industry, positioning China as a self-reliant powerhouse committed to technological independence.

Comparing MIC25 to recent studies illustrates the broader ideological conflicts between national security and open collaboration, and between domestic control and global interdependence. By framing state-led autonomy as essential, MIC25 advances a discourse that challenges traditional globalization norms, positioning China’s state-driven model as an alternative approach to navigating the complexities of the modern industrial landscape.

## 6.3. Harbouring Chinese dream

This section contextualizes the ideological motivations driving New China’s construction within the Chinese dream. As a vision of national rejuvenation, economic power, and global leadership, the Chinese dream provides a narrative that links historical prominence to future ambitions. By framing technological progress and cultural values as intertwined, this vision discursively constructs New China’s rise as both a restoration and a transformation, constructed to assert China’s leadership on the global stage.

### 6.3.1. Construction of Chinese dream

Delving deeper into how the Chinese dream shapes New China’s construction, this section illustrates and explains the findings of how MIC25 emphasizes key themes like national pride, economic power, and technological leadership. The techno-determinist ideology embedded within the Chinese Dream frames technology as the main driver of national success, presenting New China’s future as one of inevitable global influence. This narrative naturalizes China’s ambitions, positioning New China’s rise as a historic trajectory reinforced by cultural continuity and modern progress.

The Chinese dream, as articulated in MIC25, constructs a vision for China’s future that emphasizes economic, technological, and cultural growth, all underscored by a deep sense of national pride and continuity with China's historical past. This vision is built upon key terms and themes such as "national rejuvenation", "global power", "historical prominence", "economic development", "self-reliance", and "modernization". These terms were found to collectively shape a narrative that legitimizes China's global ambitions. Additionally, a "techno-determinist" ideology, where technological progress is presented as the primary driver of national development, plays a crucial role in constructing China’s rise as both natural and inevitable.

The notion of "national rejuvenation" is central to the Chinese Dream, symbolizing China’s desire to reclaim its historical prominence. This framing positions China’s current ambitions as a restoration rather than a new ascent, suggesting that China's rise is a return to a natural state of global leadership.

The discourse around national rejuvenation is closely linked to economic and industrial power, as reflected in statements like, "Building internationally competitive manufacturing is the only way China can enhance its strength, protect state security and become a world power" (State Council, p. 1, introduction). This emphasis on manufacturing as a foundation for national rejuvenation aligns with a techno-determinist ideology, which portrays technological and industrial progress as essential to national strength. By presenting manufacturing as a crucial aspect of China's revival, the discourse naturalizes the idea that economic modernization is the primary path to historical greatness.

The vision of national rejuvenation is reinforced by a long-term goal: "By 2049, the centennial of the founding of New China, China’s manufacturing sector status will become more consolidated and China will become the leader among the world’s manufacturing powers" (State Council, p. 8, section 2.3). This timeline aligns the Chinese Dream with a future in which technological and industrial strength are central to reclaiming historical prominence. By embedding this techno-determinist perspective, the discourse constructs national rejuvenation as an inevitable outcome driven by technology and industrialization.

The Chinese Dream envisions China attaining "global power" by advancing in manufacturing, technology, and innovation. This ambition reflects Fairclough’s concept of "power", as it positions China’s pursuit of global leadership as both a natural and stabilizing influence on the world stage.

Techno-determinism plays a central role here, as the discourse implies that technological superiority is the foundation of China’s global influence. Statements such as "We will have the capability to lead innovation and possess competitive advantages in major manufacturing areas, and will develop advanced technology and industrial systems" (State Council, p. 8, section 2.3) emphasize that China’s global rise depends on technological innovation. This framing naturalizes China’s ambitions by presenting global power as an outcome of inevitable technological progress.

The goal of achieving "a number of multinational enterprises and industrial clusters with strong international competitiveness" by 2025 (State Council, p. 8, section 2.3) further supports this framing. Through such language, the discourse constructs an image of a future where China’s competitive edge in innovation is both achievable and inevitable, presenting China’s rise to global power as a natural result of its technological advancements.

The Chinese dream also draws on China’s past as a major global civilization, underscoring the importance of "historical prominence" and "cultural heritage". This emphasis on history positions China’s current ambitions as part of a continuum with its cultural and scientific legacy, which Fairclough (2015) describes as a "naturalization of ideology," the framing of specific beliefs as "common sense."

The document highlights the cultivation of a manufacturing culture with "Chinese characteristics" that blends traditional values with modern industrial practices: "We should reinforce the industrial base… cultivate a manufacturing culture with Chinese characteristics, and realize the evolution of manufacturing from large to strong" (State Council, p. 5, section 2.1). By embedding cultural values in the industrialization process, the discourse creates a seamless link between China’s historical achievements and its modern goals.

Techno-determinist ideology functions here as a bridge between past and future, suggesting that technological progress is a modern embodiment of China’s historical greatness. By referencing achievements like space missions and supercomputer development, the discourse frames China’s technological ambitions as a continuation of its past accomplishments, thus legitimizing the pursuit of modern greatness as an expression of historical continuity.

Economic development is presented as a cornerstone of the Chinese dream, essential for both national rejuvenation and achieving global power. The document highlights industrialization and modernization as primary drivers of economic growth, describing the manufacturing sector as "the engine that will drive the new Chinese economy" (State Council, p. 4, section 1.3).

By emphasizing economic growth through industrial and technological progress, the discourse aligns with a techno-determinist ideology, which views technological advancement as the key to economic success. The focus on innovation and quality improvement aims to elevate China’s manufacturing sector to a leading global position, reinforcing the belief that economic growth is inherently linked to technological progress. This narrative of economic development positions China as a self-reliant and independent economic powerhouse, naturalizing the idea that the nation's future prosperity relies on high-quality, competitive industries.

Modernization is essential for achieving the Chinese Dream, encompassing transformations across industry, infrastructure, and public services. The document outlines ambitious plans for modernizing manufacturing and improving infrastructure to support economic growth: "This new domestic demand requires rapid improvement of manufacturing technologies and innovation, improved commodity quality and safety, and upgraded public infrastructure" (State Council, p. 3, section 1.2).

From a techno-determinist perspective, modernization is presented as the pathway to prosperity, with technology being both the method and the goal. This framing implies that without technological advancement, China cannot achieve true modernization. Consequently, the discourse naturalizes the belief that modernization, particularly in areas like infrastructure and manufacturing, is critical for China’s future. By reinforcing the idea that technological progress is the primary driver of national success, modernization becomes inseparable from technological advancement within the Chinese dream.

National security is another critical component of the Chinese Dream, with a focus on achieving "technological independence". The document stresses the importance of reducing reliance on foreign technologies to protect national sovereignty, stating, "We will increase significantly. External dependence of core technology will significantly decrease" (State Council, p. 27, section 3.6.11). This focus on self-reliance reflects a strategic response to international pressures, framing technological independence as essential to safeguarding China’s interests.

Through a techno-determinist lens, technological autonomy is seen as crucial for maintaining national sovereignty. By framing technological self-reliance as a prerequisite for security, the discourse naturalizes the view that independence in core technologies is critical for China’s stability and growth. This positioning is reinforced by language such as "strengthen safety reviews for investment and financing, acquisition and reorganization" (State Council, p. 32, section 4.1), which suggests that China’s future security depends on controlling its technological resources.

The findings indicate that the Chinese Dream is constructed through a discourse that heavily relies on a techno-determinist ideology. This ideology frames technological progress as essential to national rejuvenation, global power, and security. By using terms such as "national rejuvenation", "global power", "historical prominence", "economic development", "self-reliance", and "modernization", the discourse constructs a vision in which China’s rise to global leadership is portrayed as both desirable and inevitable.

This discursive construction aligns with Fairclough’s concepts of power, hegemony, and naturalization of ideology. The techno-determinist framing reinforces the idea that technology is the main driver of national success, presenting China’s development as a historical necessity rather than a strategic choice. Recent studies support this analysis, noting that China’s emphasis on techno-determinism and self-reliance reflects a global trend in which nations increasingly view technology as critical for sovereignty, competitiveness, and national identity. By embedding these beliefs into the Chinese Dream, the discourse positions China’s rise as an outcome determined by technological advancement, framing it as a natural and justified shift in the global order.

### 6.3.2. Ideological tensions in Chinese dream

Addressing ideological tensions within the Chinese dream, this section explores how New China must reconcile global integration with self-reliance, and modernization with cultural preservation. The ambition to lead in innovation and secure national sovereignty introduces conflicts between open collaboration and protectionist measures. These tensions reveal the challenges New China faces in maintaining internal cohesion while navigating complex international dynamics, highlighting the need to balance competing ideologies within a unified vision.

While the Chinese dream was found to present a unified vision of China’s future, it is also underpinned by complex ideological tensions that reflect competing priorities and perspectives. The ambition to balance "national rejuvenation", "global power", "historical prominence", "economic development", "technological innovation", "self-reliance", and "national security" reveals inherent contradictions within the Chinese Dream. These tensions arise primarily from the attempt to reconcile global integration with nationalistic self-reliance, economic modernization with cultural traditionalism, and the desire for technological superiority with concerns over global stability.

A central ideological tension within the Chinese dream lies between the desire for global integration and the push for nationalistic self-reliance. On one hand, China’s ambition to become a "global power" requires it to engage deeply with the international community, develop multinational enterprises, and assert its presence within global markets. The Chinese dream emphasizes "international competitiveness" and the goal of fostering "multinational enterprises and industrial clusters with strong international competitiveness" by 2025 (State Council, p. 8, section 2.3). This implies a reliance on global networks, markets, and partnerships that necessitate some level of interdependence with other nations.

However, the emphasis on "self-reliance" and technological independence runs counter to this global integration. The Chinese Dream promotes technological autonomy as essential to national security, with explicit goals to reduce "external dependence on core technology" (State Council, p. 27, section 3.7). This focus on self-reliance reflects a techno-nationalist ideology that views foreign reliance as a potential vulnerability, thus prioritizing domestic innovation and control over key technologies. This ideological tension becomes particularly pronounced in the context of ongoing geopolitical tensions, where China’s push for technological independence is often interpreted as an attempt to decouple from global supply chains. As Li et al. (2024) argues, this creates a paradox in which China simultaneously seeks to lead in the global economy while shielding itself from perceived external threats, resulting in an ambivalent stance towards globalization.

Another significant ideological tension within the Chinese Dream is the juxtaposition of economic modernization with cultural traditionalism. The Chinese Dream frames "modernization" and "technological innovation" as essential for national progress, positioning technology as the driving force behind China’s economic development and global influence. Statements such as "This new domestic demand requires rapid improvement of manufacturing technologies and innovation" (State Council, p. 3, section 1.2) underscore the emphasis on modern industrial practices and technological advancement as key to achieving the dream.

Yet, at the same time, the Chinese dream places a strong emphasis on "cultural heritage" and "historical prominence", linking China’s future to its ancient past. The goal to cultivate a manufacturing culture with "Chinese characteristics" (State Council, p. 5, section 2.1) highlights a desire to integrate traditional values within modern practices. This reflects a cultural nationalism that seeks to maintain a distinct Chinese identity amidst rapid modernization. However, the pursuit of a uniquely "Chinese" path to modernization can create ideological conflicts, as the drive for technological superiority and modernization may sometimes necessitate adopting global norms and practices that are at odds with traditional Chinese values. Ho and Fung (2016) highlight this as a broader tension in China’s national discourse, where the state aims to foster economic progress without compromising cultural identity, resulting in a dual narrative that is not always easy to reconcile. Moreover, the historical context of China's national identity construction reveals a persistent struggle to reconcile modernity with cultural tradition. Since the 19th century, China has faced an identity crisis, exacerbated by repeated defeats by Western powers. The intellectual elite's efforts to develop a new cultural and national identity have been marked by a tension between embracing modernity and maintaining traditional values (Meissner, 2006).

The Chinese dream’s techno-determinist emphasis on "technological innovation" and "national security" introduces yet another ideological tension: the conflict between the pursuit of technological superiority and the commitment to global stability. The Chinese dream seeks to position China as a leader in innovation, emphasizing advancements in key sectors such as artificial intelligence, telecommunications, and manufacturing. The document outlines ambitions to "lead innovation and possess competitive advantages in major manufacturing areas" (State Council, p. 8, section 2.3), suggesting that technological superiority is central to achieving Chinese dream.

However, this focus on technological dominance can create friction with other countries, especially those who view China’s technological rise as a threat to their own economic and security interests. By framing technological independence as crucial to "national security", the Chinese dream fosters a protectionist stance that promotes self-reliance over open collaboration. This approach can lead to tensions in international relations, as China’s emphasis on technological control may be interpreted as an attempt to assert dominance, potentially destabilizing the global balance of power. A recent study by March and Schieferdecker (2023) and suggest that this emphasis on techno-sovereignty reflects a growing trend where nations, including China, prioritize technological self-sufficiency at the expense of collaborative innovation, creating ideological frictions around the notion of shared global progress. Furthermore, the geopolitical ambitions of major economies like the United States and China to dominate the global economy pose challenges for other nations. For instance, the European Union and India are striving for technological sovereignty to counteract digital colonization and technological hegemony. This involves developing policies that integrate into global value chains while maintaining control over critical technologies (Dementiev, 2023).

An additional ideological tension within the Chinese dream stems from the techno-determinist narrative, which prioritizes "technological progress" as the primary pathway to national success. The Chinese dream’s emphasis on rapid technological development and industrial modernization suggests that prosperity will naturally follow technological advancement. However, this approach risks overshadowing issues of social equality and economic inclusivity. By positioning technology as the "engine" driving the economy, the Chinese Dream implies that technological growth will benefit all segments of society equally, yet this assumption may not hold in practice.

In reality, the focus on high-tech industries and competitive manufacturing sectors may exacerbate existing inequalities by privileging urban, highly skilled populations over rural or less skilled groups. Recent research points to growing regional disparities within China as technological investments concentrate in affluent urban centers, leading to a widening gap between urban and rural areas (Wang et al., 2019). This raises questions about the inclusivity of the Chinese Dream and whether its benefits will be equitably distributed across society. For example, the equalization of public services is another critical factor in addressing regional disparities. An empirical study has shown that equalizing public services can promote regional equality in incomes and consumption (Li et al., 2017).

Thus, the narrative of technology-driven progress introduces an ideological tension between national prosperity and social equality, challenging the Chinese Dream’s promise of a universally prosperous future.

The Chinese dream’s focus on "economic development" and "modernization" also brings to light an ideological tension between economic expansion and environmental sustainability. The vision promotes rapid industrialization and infrastructure development as pathways to growth, positioning manufacturing as "the engine that will drive the new Chinese economy" (State Council, p. 4). However, this emphasis on growth raises concerns about environmental degradation and sustainability (Hao & Fu, 2023), especially as China continues to rely on resource-intensive industries to fuel its progress (Piovani, 2017).

While the Chinese government has acknowledged the importance of sustainable development, there remains an inherent tension between short-term economic objectives and long-term environmental goals. As China pursues aggressive industrialization to fulfill the Chinese dream, environmental sustainability often takes a backseat, leading to policy contradictions. Recent studies (T. Li et al., 2019) argue that the push for economic expansion under MIC25 conflicts with China’s commitments to reducing emissions and achieving green development, revealing a fundamental ideological tension within the Chinese dream. Balancing industrial growth with ecological sustainability thus remains a significant challenge for China as it seeks to achieve its ambitious vision (Chen & Chen, 2021; T. Li et al., 2019).

The Chinese dream is marked by a series of ideological tensions that reflect the complexities of balancing competing priorities. The vision of national rejuvenation, global power, and technological superiority is challenged by contradictions between global integration and self-reliance, modernization and cultural preservation, technological advancement and social equality, and economic growth and environmental sustainability. While the Chinese dream promotes a unified path toward national success, these underlying tensions suggest that the pursuit of such an ambitious vision will require careful negotiation of conflicting ideologies. These ideological tensions underscore the challenges that China faces as it navigates a rapidly changing global landscape, striving to assert its influence while maintaining internal cohesion and addressing the diverse needs of its society.

## 6.4. Chapter summary

This chapter explores the structured construction of New China, aiming to answer the question of why it is designed in such specific ways. Through a detailed examination of three main ambitions, building a collaborative innovation ecosystem, achieving national self-reliance, and embodying the Chinese dream, the ideological and strategic motivations are uncovered shaping New China's development.

Initially, the chapter focuses on China’s approach to fostering an innovation ecosystem. Here, cross-sectoral integration among government, academia, and industry supersedes traditional top-down models, establishing a framework of collective technological advancement essential for leadership in Industry 4.0. This ecosystem ideology positions collaboration as central to China’s competitive edge, ensuring that technological progress is a shared, resilient endeavor across multiple sectors.

Furthermore, the chapter reveals how MIC25 promotes self-reliance as fundamental to China’s sovereignty, aiming to reduce dependency on foreign technologies and resources. Through a strategic focus on domestic production and innovation, China strengthens its position as a secure, autonomous actor in the global landscape.

Finally, the chapter addresses the Chinese Dream, which combines national pride, technological prowess, and cultural heritage to position China as a world leader. By aligning technological and industrial growth with historical continuity, the Chinese Dream constructs a narrative of China’s rise as both natural and inevitable, deeply intertwined with its identity and global ambitions.

In sum, the chapter illustrates that New China’s unique construction reflects a careful blend of ideological commitment and pragmatic policy, promoting a vision of sustainable growth, national autonomy, and global influence.

# CHAPTER VII: CONCLUSION

The journey is approaching its destination, giving the researcher the chance to look back and recap the whole project. Here in this chapter, I summarize key findings, reflect on implications, and consider new paths for research, closing a journey that reveals the powerful role of policy narratives in shaping both national identity and global presence.

## 7.1. Summary of the study

This section reviews the study’s purposes and revisits the research questions and provides a basis for presenting the findings.

Being triggered by the great transformation from a "world factory" to a powerhouse of smart manufacturing of China in the Industry 4.0, and with his background in sociolinguistic, specifically CDA, the researcher was motivated to carry out this research. The overarching aim is to investigate the ways in which New China is discursively constructed and its motivations behind New China. The research questions were set to serve the aim:

*Research question 1) What are the images of New China constructed in MIC25?*

*Research question 2) How is New China discursively constructed in MIC25?*

*Research question 3) Why is New China constructed in such ways?*

These questions act as a guiding framework for this whole thesis.

To address the questions, the literature review grounds the study in relevant theory, providing a basis for understanding MIC25’s role as a discursive formation. Key frameworks include CDA, national identity theory, and the discourse of technological sovereignty. This theoretical foundation and the engagements with themes like the Chinese dream and global technological competition, and various ideological tensions and motivations behind the transformation aid in examining the "what", "how" and "why" of New China in discourse.

Then, the CDA methodology was outlined providing relevant frameworks for analysing MIC25 and related texts, explaining how the research design addresses each research question. The qualitative, constructivist approach were set on interpreting MIC25’s discursive strategies to understand the "what," "how," and "why" behind its language choices. This foundation supports the in-depth analyses of New China by detailing the process for identifying and interpreting China’s national discourse on technology and identity.

Overall, the findings were around recurring themes and terms of "innovation," "sovereignty," and "leadership." The themes highlight China’s transformation from China to New China. Besides, linguistic strategies such interdiscursivity, interdiscursivity of and cultural continuity, and other rhetoric devices were strategically used to construct techno-nationalist ideals within New China. The language of self-reliance and technological sovereignty in MIC25 was found to serve socio-political aims, legitimizing state-led innovation and reinforcing China’s stance in global competition. The key findings are presented in the following section.

## 7.2 Key findings

This section presents the findings separately for three research questions in the subsections.

##### ***7.1.1. Images of New China***

In addressing the first research question, "What are the images of New China in MIC25?", this study finds that MIC25 constructs a multi-faceted image of New China as a technologically advanced, self-reliant, and globally influential nation. These findings reveal how MIC25 presents New China as a leader propelled by cutting-edge technological innovation, particularly emphasizing a commitment to artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies, portraying China as an active frontrunner in the global AI revolution.

A major aspect of this image is New China’s drive for technological sovereignty. MIC25 highlights the country's goal to reduce reliance on foreign technologies, particularly in crucial industries such as semiconductors and robotics. This drive for independence shifts China’s image from a traditionally manufacturing-dependent economy to one with advanced autonomous capabilities, essential to its national security and international influence.

Moreover, MIC25 depicts the government as the central force nurturing and coordinating innovation across both public and private sectors. This image underscores a state-driven approach to fostering a unified, coordinated innovation ecosystem. By placing the government at the helm of technological development, MIC25 reinforces China’s strategic intent to ensure that its technological advancement aligns closely with national goals, contributing to a cohesive and state-guided vision for New China’s future.

Further, MIC25 rebrands China as a “smart manufacturer,” moving beyond conventional mass production to prioritize advanced, high-quality, and automated manufacturing processes. This shift portrays China as a leader in intelligent manufacturing, aligning the nation with the standards of Industry 4.0. It reshapes China’s role in the global manufacturing landscape, promoting a high-tech, quality-driven approach that emphasizes innovation at the core of production.

Additionally, MIC25 presents China as a proponent of green manufacturing, where sustainability and resource efficiency become integral to its competitive advantage. By promoting environmentally sustainable practices, MIC25 positions China as a responsible global actor, adhering to and potentially setting new standards for sustainable industrial development. This emphasis on green manufacturing bolsters China’s image as a forward-thinking player on the international stage, attuned to global expectations for sustainability.

Finally, MIC25 portrays China as a standard-setter and influencer in global technology, with ambitions to shape international norms and expand its geopolitical presence. Through exporting its innovations and setting technology standards, China aims to assert its influence over the global technology landscape, reinforcing its role as a central force in defining the future of global tech governance.

These findings collectively illustrate how MIC25 constructs an image of New China that aligns with technological leadership, self-reliance, sustainable innovation, and a strengthened geopolitical role, responding to the first research question by showing how China’s ambitions are embedded in MIC25’s discourse.

##### ***7.1.2. Discursive construction of New China in Industry 4.0***

MIC25 uses a range of discursive strategies to construct New China as a technologically sovereign, innovative, and globally influential nation.

First, MIC25’s discourse is characterized by positive self-presentation, where attributes such as “innovative,” “modern,” and “self-reliant” are assigned to New China. This frames New China as a leader aligned with global Industry 4.0 trends. By emphasizing themes of “indigenous innovation” and “technological sovereignty,” MIC25 portrays China as self-sufficient and capable of reducing reliance on foreign technologies, reinforcing an image of resilience and independence.

Second, MIC25 employs metaphors of "engine", "path," “progress,” “journey,” and “renewal” to frame China’s technological advancement as a forward-moving, transformative process. These metaphors symbolize modernization and national rejuvenation, suggesting that technological growth is part of a greater path toward reclaiming China’s historical status. Through the metaphor of “renewal,” MIC25 underscores China’s ambition to lead in global technological standards as a natural evolution of its national mission.

Third, MIC25 integrates intertextual references to traditional Chinese values, such as Confucianism and collective responsibility, alongside socialist ideals like Maoist self-reliance. By contrasting these values with Western neoliberal models, MIC25 legitimizes China’s distinctive approach to development, emphasizing government-led innovation and long-term planning over market-driven methods. This intertextuality not only celebrates China’s unique path to innovation but also reinforces its ideological autonomy.

Fourth, MIC25 uses interdiscursivity to blend elements from different historical periods—merging Maoist state control, market pragmatism from the reform era, and modern technological ambitions under Xi Jinping’s leadership. This blending of discourses creates a cohesive narrative of national rejuvenation, positioning China’s technological ascent as both a continuation of its historical resilience and an essential strategy for modern geopolitical influence.

Finally, MIC25’s discourse emphasizes hegemony and naturalizes state power by positioning the government as the central driver of technological advancement. Through high-modality language, such as “must” and “will,” MIC25 frames state leadership as both necessary and inevitable, portraying technological progress as a collective national effort led by the state. This naturalization of state power fosters a perception of unity and collective purpose in achieving technological self-reliance and global influence.

Together, these findings illustrate MIC25’s portrayal of New China as an innovative, self-reliant nation on a progressive path toward reclaiming global influence. The discourse creates an image of China as technologically advanced, ideologically independent, and strategically united under state-led innovation, aligning with the first research question’s aim to define the images of New China projected in MIC25.

##### ***7.1.3 Motivations behind New China***

In examining why MIC25 constructs New China in such specific ways, the findings highlight three core ambitions within the policy: fostering a collaborative innovation ecosystem, achieving national self-reliance, and embodying the Chinese dream. These ambitions reveal the ideological and strategic motivations that shape the narrative of New China.

First, MIC25’s focus on creating a collaborative innovation ecosystem reflects a shift from a traditional top-down approach to a cross-sectoral model that integrates government, academia, and industry. This collaborative framework positions collective technological advancement as central to China’s strategy, portraying a resilient and unified front essential for global competitiveness in Industry 4.0. By emphasizing collaboration, MIC25 presents innovation as a shared national effort, critical to strengthening China’s competitive edge and ensuring sustainable technological progress across multiple sectors.

Second, the policy underscores self-reliance as vital to national sovereignty, with MIC25 positioning technological self-sufficiency as fundamental to China’s global standing. Through a strong focus on domestic production and indigenous innovation, MIC25 constructs an image of China as secure and autonomous, aiming to reduce dependency on foreign technologies. This emphasis on self-reliance supports China’s vision of an independent technological landscape, reinforcing the idea that autonomy in critical industries is essential for both national security and international influence.

Lastly, MIC25 aligns with the Chinese dream, combining national pride, cultural continuity, and technological leadership to position New China as both natural and inevitable. By embedding technological and industrial advancements within the narrative of the Chinese dream, MIC25 strengthens a collective sense of pride in China’s technological identity. This approach frames New China’s growth as both a return to historical prominence and a vision for the future, situating technological achievements as an integral part of national rejuvenation.

These findings illustrate how MIC25’s construction of New China serves to reinforce an image of resilience, independence, and historical continuity. The discourse thus presents New China’s technological ascent as strategically inevitable and deeply tied to its identity, answering the question of why MIC25 constructs China’s rise in these specific ways.

## 7.2. Implications

The findings of this study extend beyond MIC25’s immediate discourse, offering insights into how language and policy intersect to shape national identity and international influence in Industry 4.0. This section presents the theoretical, methodological and practical implications.

### 7.2.1. Theoretical implications

This research makes a significant contribution to the field of Critical Discourse Analysis by applying it to the analysis of technological policies in the context of Industry 4.0 and China's MIC25. Through the lens of CDA, this study delves into the language, power relations, and ideologies embedded within China's industrial policy discourse, providing a fresh perspective on how such policies are crafted, justified, and projected both domestically and internationally.

The theoretical foundations of Fairclough's CDA, with its focus on the interconnectedness of discourse, ideology, and social practice, have proven instrumental in technologies, social advancement, and techno-determinism. This research extends CDA's application by examining technological discourse in national policy contexts to reveal the framework of innovation ecosystem in Industry 4.0, the framework of national sovereignty and the construction of Chinese dream, such areas that has not been extensively explored within traditional CDA studies.

The application of CDA to the study of technological policies provides a deeper understanding of how language is used to construct national and global identities in relation to industrial and technological advancement. This research illuminates and deconstructs the models of Industry 4.0 management. In this way, CDA has proven effective not only in unpacking the socio-political and ideological functions of policy discourse, offering insights into how language is used to reinforce national objectives but also in deconstructing economic and technological motivations and models.

Furthermore, the research advances CDA's utility in exploring the geopolitical tensions of policy discourse. By mapping various ideologies in Industry 4.0, CDA has proved to be effective to emerge in new fields. The findings highlight that Fairclough's (2015) concept of naturalisation of ideology can be used to fully capture the techno-determinist ideology.

To China studies, while a substantial body of research has explored China's industrial transformation, this study adds a new dimension by focusing on the discursive strategies used to articulate and promote this transformation in China.

The rise of Industry 4.0, this technological revolution presents immense opportunities for nations to improve productivity, enhance efficiency, and drive innovation. Moreover, it also presents numerous opportunities for discourse, and the significance of discourse in policy implementation, which has been improved by (Kahl & Grodal, 2016) researching the outperformance of IBA against Remington Rand in early technology market and now in the modern market, the MIC25 has attracted trade war, sanction and tariff, and more to name.

Through a detailed analysis of linguistic features in official documents, this study reveals how China discursively constructs itself in various ideological tensions, showing the flexibly of ideology that Chinese government projects.

From an ideological perspective, the discourse surrounding Industry 4.0 in China reflects deeper socio-political motivations. On the global stage, China's discourse challenges the dominance of Western technological powers and seeks to establish the country as a counterbalance to the U.S. and Europe in areas like AI and automation (Ye, 2022). The geopolitical motivations behind this discourse are clear: through initiatives like MIC25, China aims to secure its position as a global technological leader while also expanding its influence through projects such as the BRI, which facilitates its role in global infrastructure development.

Domestically, the discourse serves to legitimize state interventions in the industrial sector and bolster national pride by emphasizing China's technological achievements. By framing itself as a leader in Industry 4.0, the state fosters a sense of unity and social cohesion around its industrial and technological policies, thus maintaining domestic stability. The use of nationalist language in industrial policies highlights China's narrative of resilience and self-sufficiency, which resonates with broader ideological frameworks that promote the country's autonomy in technological development.

Moreover, the research contributes to a broader understanding of Industry 4.0 by highlighting the global power dynamics embedded within technological innovation. Industry 4.0 has become a battlefield for technological supremacy, and China's strategic discourse is central to its efforts to reshape the global economic order. This study, therefore, provides crucial insights into the global implications of China's engagement with Industry 4.0, particularly as it relates to technological sovereignty and the growing tensions between major global powers over technological leadership.

### 7.2.2. Methodological implications

This study's methodological approach, grounded in CDA using Fairclough’s framework, offered distinct advantages for examining the complex discursive construction of New China within the MIC25 policy. Through a structured, constructivist research design, this method effectively illuminated the ways in which MIC25’s language fosters national identity and legitimizes technological ambition. The methodological choices made in this study contributed significantly to the depth and rigor of the findings, with implications for both CDA and policy discourse analysis.

First, the alignment of this study with a constructivist paradigm proved crucial. By viewing social realities as constructed through discourse, this approach enabled a nuanced investigation into how MIC25 strategically uses language to frame and legitimize national identity. The constructivist paradigm supported the exploration of complex ideological themes within MIC25, allowing for insights that might not have emerged under a more positivist approach.

The application of Fairclough’s (2015) three-dimensional CDA model was instrumental in unpacking MIC25’s narrative layers. This multi-level approach provided a systematic way to examine lexical choices, metaphors, and rhetorical strategies. The ten step analytical framework has proved effective in analyzing, interpreting and explaining recurring themes like “innovation-driven development” and “technological sovereignty,” with discursive practice, and densely imbedded ideological stance in each term behind these themes

The value of CDA has been used successfully in deconstructing the discursive strategies that underpin MIC25’s portrayal of New China. This process demonstrated CDA’s efficacy in identifying both overt and subtle ideological threads that support the state’s technological and national goals.

Moreover, Fairclough’s (2015) CDA enabled an in-depth examination of intertextuality and ideological autonomy within MIC25, where China’s strategic use of traditional values juxtaposes the policy against Western neoliberal models. This intertextuality serves as a form of ideological reinforcement, portraying China’s path to modernization as one that maintains autonomy from Western influences. Here, CDA was particularly effective in tracing how MIC25’s narrative aligns with Chinese cultural and historical continuities, illustrating China’s unique position in the global technological landscape​.

The iterative process inherent to CDA added further rigor to this study’s findings. By engaging in cycles of analysis, validation, and refinement, the study was able to enhance the accuracy and trustworthiness of its conclusions. This iterative process, which included feedback from domain experts, helped ensure that the final interpretations accurately reflect the socio-political and cultural complexities of China’s Industry 4.0 discourse. As a result, the application of CDA proved to be not only a robust methodological choice but also one that could be adapted and validated through iterative feedback and expert input.

In sum, this study’s methodological approach showcases the value of CDA in analyzing complex national discourses that serve as tools for global positioning. The constructivist-CDA framework offered valuable insights into how MIC25’s language functions as a discursive mechanism, shaping perceptions of China’s identity and technological future. This approach has broader implications for future studies in policy discourse, particularly in understanding how language strategically constructs national identity and international stance in an era defined by technological competition.

### 7.2.3. Practical implications

The findings of this thesis carry significant implications for policymakers, especially in the context of Industry 4.0 and the role of discourse in shaping national and international industrial strategies. By applying CDA to China's MIC25 and its broader engagement with Industry 4.0, this research highlights the importance of understanding the power relations, ideologies, and motivations embedded within policy discourse. Policymakers, both in China and other nations, can draw valuable insights from the socio-political and ideological constructions that influence technological policies and their global impact.

One key implication for policymakers is the need to recognize the discursive power of language in crafting policies that promote technological innovation and industrial transformation. As this thesis has demonstrated, the discursive strategies employed by China, particularly the focus on self-reliance, innovation, and technological leadership, serve multiple functions. These include legitimizing state interventions in the economy, reinforcing national pride, and projecting global influence. Policymakers must, therefore, be mindful of how their use of language can shape public perception, influence domestic socio-political dynamics, and impact international relations. Understanding how these discourses construct national identities and industrial ambitions can offer new strategies for framing policy initiatives in ways that resonate with both domestic and global audiences.

A central implication for China's policymakers is the need to balance nationalist discourse with the practical realities of global cooperation. While China's MIC25 emphasizes self-reliance and reducing dependence on foreign technologies, the global nature of technological innovation requires cross-border collaboration and international partnerships. Policymakers must navigate this delicate balance, ensuring that nationalistic rhetoric does not alienate potential allies or stifle opportunities for global cooperation, particularly in areas such as AI, automation, and green technology. The research shows that while China uses discourse to assert its sovereignty and leadership, policymakers should also focus on fostering an open and collaborative approach to technological development to avoid geopolitical tensions.

This research also has implications for policymakers in other countries, particularly those who are responding to China's rise as a technological power. As Chapter 6 demonstrated, China's Industry 4.0 narrative is not just about domestic industrial transformation but also about geopolitical influence. Policymakers in other nations need to be aware of how China's strategic use of discourse in policies like MIC25 positions itself as a global competitor. This understanding is essential for formulating policy responses that address the challenges posed by China's technological rise while fostering innovation and competitiveness within their own countries.

In addition, the findings of this thesis suggest that technological policy discourse plays a crucial role in social cohesion and domestic stability. The Chinese government's use of discourse around technological advancement and industrial policy serves to promote national unity, foster a sense of pride in technological achievements, and legitimize state-led interventions. This underscores the broader implication that policymakers should be aware of how industrial narratives can be leveraged to promote domestic goals, particularly in managing social change brought about by rapid technological advancements. Governments must craft their discourses carefully to ensure that the societal benefits of Industry 4.0 are emphasized while addressing potential concerns related to job displacement, automation, and inequality.

Moreover, policymakers should recognize the role of discourse in managing the transition to Industry 4.0. As technological transformation accelerates, the social and economic consequences of these changes must be managed through inclusive and forward-thinking policy frameworks. This suggests that discourse can be a powerful tool in shaping public expectations, managing resistance to technological change, and building consensus around industrial policies. Policymakers globally should adopt similar strategies to ensure that their narratives align with broader social and economic objectives, while addressing the concerns of various stakeholders, including workers, businesses, and international partners.

Finally, this research highlights the need for greater transparency and openness in policy discourse. The CDA framework reveals the ideological underpinnings of China's industrial policies, showing how the state constructs narratives that serve its strategic objectives. For policymakers, this underscores the importance of ensuring that policy discourse is not just a tool for promoting state-led agendas but also a means of fostering genuine dialogue with stakeholders. Transparency in how policies are communicated, both domestically and internationally, is crucial for building trust, fostering collaboration, and ensuring that the benefits of Industry 4.0 are widely shared.

In conclusion, the implications of this research for policymakers are profound. By applying CDA to the context of Industry 4.0, this thesis demonstrates the central role that discourse plays in shaping industrial policies, managing domestic transformations, and positioning nations in the global technological race. Policymakers must be attuned to the power of language in constructing national narratives and must carefully balance domestic and global objectives in their industrial strategies. Furthermore, collaboration, transparency, and an understanding of the broader socio-political impacts of technological policies are essential for navigating the complex dynamics of the Industry 4.0.

## 7.4. Limitations of the study

While this research has contributed significant insights into the discursive construction of New China within the context of Industry 4.0, several limitations must be acknowledged. These limitations highlight areas where the study could be expanded or refined in future research, offering opportunities for more comprehensive analysis and a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between discourse, policy, and technological transformation.

One of the primary limitations of this study is the scope of its discursive analysis. This research predominantly focused on examining official policy from Chinese government, primarily those related to the MIC25 and China's broader Industry 4.0 strategy. While this approach offers valuable insights into the official narratives and state-sponsored discourse, it does not fully capture the diversity of voices and perspectives within China. For instance, alternative or critical discourses, such as those from civil society, independent academics, or private sector stakeholders, were not extensively analysed. Including these perspectives could provide a more nuanced understanding of how the New China is constructed discursively and how it is contested or supported across different sectors of society.

Additionally, this study's reliance on textual analysis of policy documents limits its ability to capture multimodal aspects of discourse, such as visual media, digital communication, and social media platforms, which are increasingly important in shaping public understanding of technological policies. Future studies could incorporate multimodal discourse analysis to offer a more holistic view of how narratives around Industry 4.0 are constructed and disseminated.

Although the study explores China's positioning within the global technological landscape, it does not thoroughly examine how international actors perceive and respond to China's technological rise, particularly in the context of global trade wars, international competition, and geopolitical tensions. While references to China's global ambitions and the BRI were discussed, a deeper analysis of how foreign governments, multinational corporations, and global institutions engage with and react to China's Industry 4.0 discourse would offer a more comprehensive global perspective.

Moreover, the study primarily focuses on the Sino-centric narrative without fully considering comparative perspectives from other nations involved in Industry 4.0 transformations, such as Germany, the United States, or neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. Incorporating a comparative analysis could provide insights into how different countries construct their own technological identities and compete within the broader framework of global technological leadership. However, the author attempted

Another limitation lies in the temporal scope of the research. Given the rapid pace of technological advancements and policy changes in both China and the global arena, the discourse around Industry 4.0 is continuously evolving. The data used for analysis in this study, primarily drawn from the last decade, may become outdated as China's policies and strategies adapt to new technological challenges and opportunities. For example, newer initiatives and policy shifts beyond MIC25, such as China's recent AI policies or its evolving digital economy strategy, were not the focus of this study. These developments could significantly alter the discursive landscape and require ongoing analysis to stay relevant.

While this study offers a detailed analysis of China's engagement with Industry 4.0, its findings may not be entirely generalizable to other national contexts. The unique political, economic, and ideological environment in China plays a significant role in shaping its discourse around technological leadership and industrial policy. Therefore, while some lessons from China's experience may be applicable to countries like Vietnam or other developing nations (as explored in the suggestions for Vietnam), the extent to which these findings can be transferred to different political and economic systems remains uncertain. Future research should consider the contextual differences between countries when applying the insights gained from China's discourse.

While CDA was an effective tool for uncovering the power relations and ideological motivations behind China's Industry 4.0 narrative, the methodology has its limitations. CDA's focus on language and text may sometimes oversimplify the broader socio-political and economic forces at play. As Fairclough (2015) suggests, discourse is only one dimension of social practice, and while it is a powerful tool for shaping reality, it interacts with other forms of power and social structures that are not always visible through language alone. This study focused primarily on the discursive aspects, but a more integrative approach that combines CDA with political economy, technological studies, or organizational theory could provide a fuller picture of how Industry 4.0 policies are both shaped by and shape broader societal dynamics.

This research relied heavily on qualitative methods, particularly textual analysis, which, while rich in depth, limits the potential for quantitative validation. For instance, a larger-scale study incorporating survey data, interviews, or case studies of specific industries or regions within China could complement the discursive analysis and provide empirical validation of the study's findings. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach could help capture the perspectives of stakeholders who are directly impacted by Industry 4.0 policies, such as workers, industry leaders, and local governments.

Finally, one of the key challenges faced in this research was the broad scope of the thesis title, "Industry 4.0." Industry 4.0 encompasses a wide range of technological innovations, from artificial intelligence and automation to the IoT and big data, as well as their implications across numerous global industries and national contexts. Given the vastness of this field, it was necessary to narrow the focus to a specific case in order to conduct a more detailed and manageable analysis. Therefore, this thesis concentrated on the discursive construction of New China within the framework of China's MIC25. This targeted approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of how China is positioning itself as a technological leader and how its industrial ambitions are articulated within global Industry 4.0 discourse. However, this narrowing of focus inevitably introduces limitations. The decision to concentrate on China's engagement with Industry 4.0 means that broader aspects of Industry 4.0, particularly as it relates to other countries or industries, were not addressed. As a result, the findings of this study are highly specific to China's MIC25 and the associated discourses, limiting the generalizability of the conclusions drawn. The global scope of Industry 4.0, with its many dimensions, technological, social, and economic, was beyond the reach of this study.

Despite these limitations, this research provides a robust foundation for understanding the discursive construction of New China within the context of Industry 4.0. Future studies can build on this foundation by expanding the scope of analysis, incorporating comparative perspectives, and applying mixed methodologies to explore the ever-evolving relationship between discourse, technology, and power. By acknowledging these limitations, this study opens up new avenues for further research and provides a more comprehensive framework for analysing how discourse shapes the technological and industrial landscapes in China and beyond.

## 7.5. Future research directions

While this thesis has provided valuable insights into China's engagement with Industry 4.0, particularly through the lens of its MIC25, there are several avenues for future research that can expand upon the findings presented here. The complexity of Industry 4.0, its global implications, and the evolving nature of international industrial policies suggest a wealth of potential areas that merit deeper investigation. Below are three key directions for future research that could offer a broader understanding of how different nations, regions, and policies are responding to the challenges and opportunities presented by Industry 4.0.

One promising area for future research is the comparative study of how various nations, especially within Asia, are engaging with Industry 4.0 through their industrial policies and discourses. While this thesis focused on China's MIC25, many other nations in the region are similarly seeking to position themselves as leaders in technological innovation and smart manufacturing. Countries such as Japan, South Korea, and India have all adopted distinct strategies to harness the potential of Industry 4.0, which makes them excellent subjects for comparative analysis.

For instance, Japan's "Society 5.0" initiative presents a unique vision that merges technological advancement with societal well-being, which contrasts with China's more economically driven discourse. Similarly, South Korea's push toward smart factories through its "Manufacturing Innovation 3.0" policy emphasizes a different set of priorities, such as fostering small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and increasing automation in production. By conducting comparative studies of these policies alongside MIC25, future research could explore how cultural, political, and economic factors shape the way countries engage with Industry 4.0. Furthermore, such studies could uncover shared challenges, policy innovations, and distinct national narratives that contribute to the global Industry 4.0 discourse.

This comparative approach would also allow for a deeper understanding of how regional dynamics influence national policies on technological innovation. As Asia is home to some of the world's fastest-growing economies and technological hubs, examining how these countries' strategies intersect and diverge could yield valuable insights into the broader industrial transformation occurring in the region. In particular, a focus on how these nations compete, collaborate, or align their policies in response to Industry 4.0 could enhance our understanding of global economic shifts.

Another important direction for future research is to expand the scope of Critical Discourse Analysis to include a wider array of data sources, particularly digital platforms and multimodal texts. In this thesis, the analysis was limited to policy documents, and official government discourse, specifically focusing on China's MIC25. However, as digital communication becomes increasingly central to how nations promote and shape narratives around Industry 4.0, there is a need to broaden the range of data analysed in order to fully capture the complexity of these communication strategies.

Future research could apply CDA to social media platforms, official government websites, news media, and international forums where discussions on Industry 4.0 are taking place. By doing so, researchers could uncover how nations not only frame their own industrial policies but also engage with global audiences and stakeholders. For example, examining how China's MIC25 is represented on platforms such as WeChat or Twitter could provide insights into the government's efforts to craft its narrative for both domestic and international audiences. Additionally, exploring how Industry 4.0 is visualized through multimodal texts, such as infographics, videos, or advertisements, would enrich the understanding of how technology-driven industrial transformation is communicated across different mediums.

This broader application of CDA would also allow for an examination of the role of non-state actors in shaping the discourse around Industry 4.0. For example, how do technology companies, industry leaders, and think tanks contribute to or challenge the official narratives set by governments? How do they influence public perceptions and international policy discussions? By expanding the scope of discourse analysis to include these voices, future research could paint a more comprehensive picture of the communicative ecosystem surrounding Industry 4.0.

A final area for future research is the investigation into how China's discourse on Industry 4.0, as articulated through MIC25 and related policies, influences global narratives and policy frameworks, particularly in countries involved in China's BRI. This thesis explored how China's strategic use of language aims to position the country as a global leader in technological innovation. However, further research could delve into how this discourse is received, adopted, or contested by other nations, especially those with close economic ties to China.

Countries involved in the BRI may be particularly susceptible to the influence of China's technological discourse. These nations, many of which are developing or transitioning economies, may look to China as a model for integrating Industry 4.0 principles into their own industrial strategies. By analysing policy documents, from BRI-participating countries, future research could explore how China's discourse on technological leadership shapes or informs their own national policies.

Moreover, such research could assess whether China's approach to Industry 4.0 has contributed to the development of a new global technological paradigm, one that challenges Western-led narratives about innovation, competition, and global leadership. For instance, is China's emphasis on self-reliance and indigenous innovation prompting other nations to adopt similar rhetoric in their industrial policies? Or, conversely, do these nations push back against China's narrative, offering alternative visions of technological progress?

A related line of inquiry could examine how global institutions and multinational corporations respond to China's discourse on Industry 4.0. Are global standards and policies being influenced by China's strategic positioning in key technologies such as artificial intelligence, robotics, and 5G? Understanding the ripple effects of China's discourse on the global stage could provide crucial insights into the evolving dynamics of global governance in the age of Industry 4.0.

## 7.6. Final remarks

In summary, this thesis has examined the complex discourse embedded within China’s Made in China 2025 (MIC25) policy, specifically focusing on how it constructs New China's identity within the framework of Industry 4.0. Through critical discourse analysis (CDA), this study illuminated the ways in which MIC25 utilizes linguistic strategies to project an image of China as an innovative, self-reliant global leader in technology. Key themes of innovation, sovereignty, and leadership reveal a deliberate national strategy, positioning China as a competitive force in global high-tech industries while also fostering a cohesive national identity.

The findings highlight that MIC25’s discourse is not only a blueprint for technological advancement but a broader ideological narrative that emphasizes China’s strategic autonomy and resilience. This discourse aligns with China’s broader socio-political objectives, legitimizing state-led innovation and reinforcing the country’s ambitions on the global stage. As China continues to ascend in the global technology arena, the discursive strategies analyzed in this study suggest a future of continued ideological alignment between national policy and international influence.

Future research might expand upon this analysis by exploring how MIC25 and similar discourses are perceived internationally, as well as how they influence or intersect with policies in other emerging economies. Additionally, integrating digital and multimodal texts could enrich understanding of how these narratives are communicated to both domestic and international audiences. By further examining these avenues, scholars can gain deeper insights into the evolving discourse of national technological sovereignty and the shifting dynamics of global technological leadership.

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# LIST OF SCIENTIFIC WORKS DISCLOSED

# RELATED TO THE THESIS

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2. (2020). Applied Linguistics and Industry 4.0: How to capture change. *International Graduate Research Symposium & 10th East Asia Chinese Teaching Forum,* 799-810. University of Languages and International Studies, VNU: Vietnam National University Press, Hanoi.

# APPENDIX

*Appendix 1: Coding scheme for "innovation"*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Innovation | Technological Innovation | References to new or advanced technologies integrated into manufacturing and industrial processes. |
|  | R&D and Core Technologies | Mentions of research and development, particularly in foundational or critical technologies. |
|  | Digital Transformation | Innovations related to digital tools, IT integration, and software in manufacturing. |
|  | Intelligent Manufacturing | Innovations that enhance automation, smart manufacturing, and machine learning integration. |
|  | Green Innovation | References to sustainable practices and technologies aimed at reducing environmental impact. |
| Manufacturing Innovation | Process Improvement | Innovations that improve manufacturing processes, including efficiency, quality, and productivity. |
|  | Intelligent Processes | Innovations in intelligent or automated manufacturing processes and logistics. |
| Quality and Brand Innovation | Quality Enhancement | Efforts to improve the quality and reliability of products. |
|  | Brand Building | Initiatives aimed at establishing and promoting Chinese brands on a global scale. |
| Talent and Skills Development | Technical Skills Training | Innovations in workforce education, skills enhancement, and talent cultivation in manufacturing. |
|  | Leadership and R&D Talent | Efforts to attract and retain talent for leadership roles and R&D in innovation sectors. |

*Appendix 2: Coding scheme for "national sovereignty"*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| National Sovereignty | Economic Sovereignty | References to economic independence, reducing reliance on foreign resources, or protecting domestic markets. |
|  | Technological Sovereignty | Emphasis on developing domestic technologies critical for security and independence. |
|  | Industrial Self-Sufficiency | Efforts to establish complete domestic production systems, minimizing dependence on foreign industries. |
|  | Defense and Security | References to protecting sovereignty through secure defense and control over strategic industries. |
|  | Resource Independence | Initiatives aimed at securing domestic sources of energy, minerals, and other essential materials. |
| Policy and Regulatory Sovereignty | Market and Trade Control | Policies that regulate foreign market access or protect domestic markets, ensuring national interests. |
|  | Strategic Industry Protection | Policies focused on safeguarding industries deemed vital to national interests, such as defense or tech. |
|  | Intellectual Property (IP) Protection | Efforts to develop and protect domestic IP, preventing foreign control over innovations. |
| Cultural and Ideological Sovereignty | Promotion of National Values | Emphasis on promoting cultural values that reflect national identity and reduce foreign influence. |
|  | Resilience Against Foreign Influence | Language that limits or resists foreign cultural or ideological influence. |

*Appendix 3: Coding scheme for "global leader"*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Global Leadership | Technological Leadership | Emphasis on advancing and leading in critical technologies on a global scale. |
|  | Manufacturing Superiority | Positioning the nation as a leader in manufacturing quality, scale, and processes. |
|  | Standards and Regulatory Influence | Efforts to set or influence international standards, establishing authority in global regulations. |
|  | Sustainable Development Leadership | Framing global leadership in terms of environmental responsibility and sustainable growth. |
|  | Strategic Industry Leadership | Aspiration to lead in strategic, high-impact industries, such as aerospace, biotechnology, or energy. |
| Global Influence and Presence | Market Expansion and Global Trade | Efforts to expand presence in global markets, reinforcing economic influence and cultural export. |
|  | Investment and Partnerships | Promotion of international investments, partnerships, and foreign joint ventures to extend influence. |
|  | Cultural and Ideological Leadership | Promotion of national values and cultural exports as components of global influence. |
| Policy and Strategic Positioning | Long-term Vision and Planning | Strategic goals that outline long-term global leadership aspirations. |
|  | Resilience and Adaptability | Emphasis on resilience to global market fluctuations or adaptability to international competition. |
|  | Diplomatic and Soft Power | Use of diplomacy and cooperative initiatives to establish global standing and foster goodwill. |
|  |  |  |

*Appendix 4: Coding scheme for "modality"*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Certainty | High Certainty | Strong confidence or assertiveness about an outcome or statement. |
|  | Moderate Certainty | Moderate confidence, indicating reasonable expectation. |
|  | Low Certainty | Low confidence, expressing doubt or speculation. |
| Obligation | High Obligation | Strong sense of duty or necessity, often implying no choice. |
|  | Moderate Obligation | Moderate sense of recommendation or encouragement. |
|  | Low Obligation | Mild obligation or suggestion, often indicating optional action. |
| Possibility/Probability | High Probability | High likelihood of an event or outcome occurring. |
|  | Moderate Probability | Fair chance of an outcome, with a balanced likelihood. |
|  | Low Probability | Low likelihood, expressing uncertainty or a slight chance. |
| Capability | High Capability | Strong ability or confidence in achieving a goal. |
|  | Moderate Capability | Sufficient but conditional capability, depending on other factors. |
|  | Low Capability | Downplayed ability, often acknowledging limitations or challenges. |
|  |  |  |

*Appendix 5: Coding scheme for "intertextuality and interdiscursivity"*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Intertextuality | Direct Quotation | Inclusion of exact language or phrases from other texts, signaling authority or alignment with that source. |
|  | Paraphrased References | Rephrasing of content from external texts, indicating influence without strict alignment. |
|  | Implicit Allusions | References to ideas, concepts, or widely recognized terms from other texts without explicit citation. |
| Interdiscursivity | Genre Mixing | Combining features of different genres, such as policy, marketing, or academic discourse. |
|  | Blending of Social Discourses | Integrating discourses from different social fields (e.g., economic and environmental discourses). |
|  | Institutional Discourse | Incorporating institutional language (e.g., government, corporate) to establish authority and formality. |
| Ideological Alignment | Support of Dominant Ideologies | References or discourse styles that align with widely accepted societal or institutional ideologies. |
|  | Critique of Dominant Ideologies | Elements that explicitly or implicitly challenge widely accepted views. |
|  |  |  |

*Appendix 6: Coding scheme for "metaphor"*

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Metaphor of War and Conflict | Struggle and Battle | Describes challenges or goals as conflicts, implying a need for strength, resilience, or conquest. |
|  | Defense and Protection | Uses defensive language to describe actions aimed at preserving assets or resisting threats. |
| Metaphor of Growth | Organic Development | Describes progress or change as a natural growth process, suggesting inevitability and organic movement. |
|  | Harvest and Yield | Frames outcomes as the result of cultivation, implying that investment and effort lead to fruitful results. |
| Metaphor of Journey | Pathway and Direction | Describes goals as destinations and strategies as paths, implying clear direction and progress. |
|  | Exploration and Discovery | Frames innovation or learning as exploration, implying curiosity, adventure, and the search for new ideas. |
| Metaphor of Construction | Building and Foundation | Describes processes as building blocks or foundations, implying structure, stability, and permanence. |
|  | Expansion and Scaling | Frames growth as expansion or scaling, implying that success involves growth and extension. |
| Metaphor of Health | Diagnosis and Treatment | Frames challenges as illnesses and solutions as cures, implying diagnosis, intervention, and healing. |
|  | Strength and Vitality | Describes entities as needing strength or wellness, implying maintenance or enhancement of health. |

*Appendix 7: Coding scheme for "agency"*

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **Subcode** | **Description** |
| Active Agency | Decisive Action | Actors actively make decisions, showing leadership and control. |
|  | Resistance or Opposition | Actors actively oppose, challenge, or resist established norms or authority. |
|  | Innovation and Initiative | Actors are portrayed as proactive and innovative, initiating new actions or ideas. |
| Passive Agency | Subject to External Forces | Actors are acted upon, showing limited control or influence. |
|  | Compliance with Authority | Actors comply with external demands or expectations, reflecting conformity. |
|  | Reception or Impacted Role | Actors are presented as impacted by actions, often with minimal agency. |
| Collaborative Agency | Interdependence and Cooperation | Actors engage in mutual, collective actions, sharing responsibility and goals. |
|  | Negotiation and Compromise | Actors are portrayed as negotiating or compromising, indicating agency within constraints. |