CHINA in TRANSFORMATION

ILLIBERAL CHINA

THE IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

DANIEL F. VUKOVICH

China in Transformation

"*Illiberal China*, from its punning title forwards, reveals how China is the objectified "other" of the West, but is also an actually existing subject with its own intrinsic logic full of paradoxes and tensions. It examines the political-economic and cultural narratives surrounding the different representations of China, as well as their logical boundaries and interrelationships. The book intertwines external and internal, global and domestic perspectives. At the same time, Vukovich tries to reflects critically on Western liberalism by presenting "China as a problem." Vukovich deals frankly with many complex and sensitive topics, although this style is not an end in itself but serves to open up a new discursive space. He believes China challenges previous theoretical and historical narratives, especially those attached to political theory and concepts such as liberalism or democracy. This is a powerful, subtle book that challenges Chinese research from a different paradigm and theoretical system. It deserves serious attention indeed."

—Lu Xinyu, *East China Normal University*

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To Ella, Sofia, and Vicky

Preface

This book may be read as a follow-up to my previous one, *China and Orientalism*, which had the good fortune to be reviewed often and favorably, if also critically, in the good, constructive sense. I'm grateful to those reviewers and indeed to all the book's readers, and hope that the present volume will also be of interest and, moreover, of *use* in the larger effort to re-orient the analysis of China away from colonial and ill-fitting liberal anti-communist templates. *Illiberal China* no doubt resonates with the earlier book, but it is also a different animal. It is in many ways the fruit of my undergraduate government major at Lehigh University many years ago, an education that I continue to be grateful for. I have been obsessed with questions of politics and political theory ever since, albeit from outside political 'science,' and the present volume reflects this as much as my cultural studies background and my work in and on China and its representation.

Illiberal China begins after Tiananmen and in the decidedly post-1980s era of China's rise, a rise I take to be a real thing, definitive and even epochal, not something that is going to blow away as so much hype. We can love it or hate it or feel both things at once or with sentiments in-between. But the People's Republic of China has 'happened' and 'arrived' and isn't going to collapse or shut up or snap out of it. Frankly this stability—as opposed to regime-collapse or some Russian-esque abdication of the party-elite—is a good thing. I do not understand why so many people—primarily outside of China, it must be said—desire an end to the Party-state when this does not seem at all to be a major desire, let alone movement, within its own borders. Also good, in the analysis here, is the speaking back to the arrogance or presumptuousness of supposedly universal norms and political forms.

My desire here is to understand and think through China's 'illiberalism' as well as to offer a more cogent critique where needed, especially in terms of China's political economy and paradoxical commitment to liberal free-market economics, or what I will later call economism, that is the subjection of politics and society to the dictates of the market. I have never pretended to be an economist, unlike some of my academic Marxist comrades, but there is no doubt that 'the political' and politics (and ideology and so on) must be read economically as well, as a venerable and subtle base/superstructure dialectic without end.

Illiberal China does not seek to define or even adequately illustrate China, or even all of Chinese politics. At the outset allow me to signify a non-monolithic and hence pluralistic, even liberal-relativistic notion of China: that it contains multitudes and there are several, perhaps even a lot of Chinas. The ones I am focusing on here might fit under a general rubric: political China. The China of the state and of Chinese politics, not just between states, as in China versus the West, but within and against the Chinese state. So, in sum, at least these Chinas: socialist China, in the form of the new left in particular; liberal China in the form of the liberal intelligentsia as well as the state's own, liberal-Dengist commitment to free trade and markets and profit-motives; and the 'Western' or occidentalist/orientalist China from the outside, and paradoxically including Hong Kong: the China Watcher's China or the 'common sense' that China lacks liberalism (or 'democracy' if you prefer), and that if it had it, it'd become normal and free. At the same time I do think the China I am talking about here actually exists, and I trust what follows will not be taken as some type of Derridean or 'comp lit' approach to matters of representation and discourse. Thinking through politics is too important to leave to the 'scientists,' or to the humanists who would replace the political with the ethical and individual.

Illiberal China attempts instead to think through the meaning and discourses of Chinese politics since the 1990s and the rise of the new left as well as, more consequentially, the stability and even the perceived legitimacy of the Party-state. What are the consequences for politics or 'the political?' How might we think differently about Chinese politics and political discourses in particular? Can we take post-Mao politics seriously? What are Chinese (or global) politics in a bleak age of (attempted) depoliticization? What if liberalism was the problem, not the solution? In sum, how to *interpret* Chinese politics and what we think we know? This is precisely where a humanist aka textualist can make a contribution.

'Taking China seriously' has been one of my signature phrases for some years now, and the present book also follows suit to the earlier one. I owe that specific phrase—and the attitude behind it—to a bunch of other people, not least William Hinton, Edward Said, Richard Rorty (albeit writing on Habermas and Lyotard on post-modernity), Wendy Larson, Gao Mobo, and Liu Kang (who along with Tang Xiaobing and others kick-started the bringing of theory, representation, and critical comparativism into 'cultural studies' of the PRC). But of course it is also something that, for me, flows out of my encounters not just with thinking through the PRC 'after' Sinological orientalism, but with being in real as well as virtual or even imagined dialogue with mainland scholars of various stripes and locales, from Beijing and Shanghai to Wuhan and Anhui and Guangdong. Most specifically this book's unique question is this: Is China illiberal? This would seem the general popular consensus from outside of the PRC, including some 'expert' opinion on the matter, certainly from Washington or New York to Taipei and Hong Kong and back to London. But what does this mean when 'we' also know that China is radically different than, say, North Korea or Iran or Russia or whoever else is on the list of states 'we' don't like? What do 'we'—that is, foreign experts or liberals or erstwhile liberals inside China and its Special Administrative Regions (SARs)—mean by the Party-state being illiberal?

My very general, slightly tongue-in-cheek, yet hopefully clear answer to the charge of Chinese illiberalism is yes and no. In some ways China is clearly illiberal in the bad ways: repressive of dissent, for example, to the point of it being done on principle(!), and policing 'free' speech too much for its own or for anyone's good. But in other ways—for example, in its commitment to a 'strong' or effective state or state capacity (which it must now reclaim from the market and capitalists), in its refusal of political liberalism, that is of the latter's total commodification of politics by money and capital and 'interest groups,' in its 'statist' commitment to livelihood and raising living standards as opposed to profit for its own sake, and in an anti-imperialist critique or refusal of Western universalisms—this is an interesting, rational, and arguably useful and welcome refusal of liberalism.

Likewise it does not seem to me at all useful (and I am bracketing it off from analysis in any case) to make comparisons toward some global tide of illiberalism (Russia, Hungary, North Korea, Iran, Poland, etc.) that China is a part of. This would be reification. Though it is also clear that the dominant force of liberalism or neo-liberalism, the degradation of a 'good' liberalism from the immediate post-war period, is reaching its limits and

has lost whatever legitimacy it had outside of the bankers and rentiers and the rich. The blowback (Trumpism, Brexit) or pushback (protest) is real and understanding this is an urgent matter for cultural and global studies. Responses to this failure of liberalism will necessarily evolve (or devolve) on their own foundations. In this the PRC and its so-called statism have perhaps more resources of hope than, say, its former enclave Hong Kong.

As I try to argue later, 'illiberalism' means, in the end, *not-* or *anti-*liberal. Of course there is a difference between 'not-' and 'anti-,' which I must leave to others to parse in future work. The essential point here is the refusal as well as the examination of what, at an admittedly theoretical level, China does have in place of liberalism. This is all the more important when we face up to the fact that liberalism as 'we' have known it—again, we non-Chinese residents—is dead. Or rather has been degraded and 'commodified,' made utterly economistic and formalistic to the point that it simply fails to command belief (excluding perhaps certain civics lessons curricula or purveyors of same). And viewed historically, institutionally, and from beyond Euro-America, liberalism has, as Dominico Lusordo among others has reminded us, always been rooted in exclusion, hierarchy, and indeed imperialism.

To call or assume or think of China as being 'illiberal' necessarily carries with it a clear normative charge, beyond the recognition that all states have a monopoly on violence, and that all states are, or can be at will, completely authoritarian. Were China to simply be referred to as authoritarian would be, in my view, entirely different than what I am seeking to examine and refute and read against the grain here.

Orientalism and colonial discourse: these terms appear far less in the present book, but I do not take back my insistence that these things matter for the analysis of China and any representation of China. To say that China is illiberal is to speak to its unfortunate difference from a certain norm that just so happens to be 'Western' (or European or whatever other term you prefer: it lacks that). But this is also to say that China *should be* liberal. It should become like us in this—quite important, very political—sense. This to me still seems to be an important interpretive, 'politics of knowledge' issue that calls out for more recognition and debate.

Hong Kong SAR, Hong Kong — Daniel F. Vukovich

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Parts of Chap. 2 appeared as "The Battle for Chinese Discourse and the Rise of the Chinese New Left: Towards a Post-colonial Politics of Knowledge." *China and New Left Visions: Political and Cultural Interventions.* Ban Wang and Lu Jie, eds. Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012.

A few paragraphs of Chap. 2 also hail from "Postcolonialism, Globalization, and the 'Asia Question'." *Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies.* Ed. Graham Huggan. Oxford UP, 2013. 587–606.

Parts of Chap. 3 appeared first as "From Charting The Revolution to Charter 2008: Discourse, Liberalism, Imperialism" in *Culture and Social Transformation: Theoretical Frameworks and the Chinese Context*, Eds. Cao Tianyu, Ban Wang, and Zhong Xueping, Brill Press, 2014.

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

On Illiberalism and Seeing Like an Other State

The People's Republic of China (PRC), 'China' as a political entity, state, and intellectual political culture, is a problem. It infuriates and fascinates, perplexes and amazes. On that the Communist Party and its liberal critics inside and abroad (where they are far more numerous) might well agree. And yet what an odd thing to proclaim, this problem, when, as both sides might again nod—in obeisance to the hegemony of the market and profit motive—that same Party-state has lifted several hundred millions of people out of poverty. The latter is demonstrably true when one credits the Mao era foundations, let alone the life expectancies on the eve of the 1949 revolution. The PRC—which is to say the Communist Party-state, before and after Mao—has clearly returned China to the forefront of global recognition and power since the 1980s. The rise of China may be a cliché partially belied by its problems and iniquities, and by its per capita gross national product (GNP; China's ranks 80th in the world as of 2014).[1] But clichés nonetheless exist in a certain, significant relationship with truth and social reality. China has 'arrived' and is more like a bank that is too big to fail than a teetering state on the brink of collapse. Of course that same Party-state system has also plunged its people into a highly polluted and unequal modern society—a society rife with authoritarianism, excessive policing of speech, and heavy-handed, if ultimately failing, censorship. A society with little 'soft power' and approval in the Western metropoles of the former colonial world, in part due to old fashioned Cold War orientalism, and increasing disapproval in its southeast Asian periphery, thanks

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to the Party-state's own short-sighted geo-political bullying and its fear of American bases around the Pacific.

Yet the Party-state continues to enjoy an obvious, if relative, legitimacy and stability at home. Far from ushering in the end of the party and the rise of liberal democracy, as often predicted through the 1980s, 1990s, and beyond, the capitalist reforms after Mao, what some of the old left in China have indeed called a counter-revolution, have hardly ushered in the end of one-party rule. Instead media and scholarship are obsessed with the consequences, causes, and unintended side effects of a new mantra—'the rise of China.' So we have a China that, for some enthusiastic observers, seems all but ready to 'rule the world.'[2] For other, antagonistic viewers committed from afar or by profession to symbolically battle the perceived, illiberal tyranny of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), it is the same thing but different: a coming collapse of China, or at least an over-hyped 'China boom' going bust any day now.[3] Between the Sinophilic and Sinophobic poles, there is an obvious center with a closer approximation to accuracy and semantic richness. The PRC's stability—itself an official, propagandized keyword since 1989 along with 'harmonious society' and others—no doubt has to do with the oft-remarked rise of Chinese nationalisms and patriotisms (including long-distance ones) that accompany its rise. But the perceived legitimacy and stability as well as the more material achievements must also have to do with the political culture and system of the PRC itself. The thousands of protests, strikes, 'mass incidents,' and individual acts of resistance or rebellion do not belie this so much as prove, for better and for worse, its resilience and adaptability, its very reality as a type of system and political culture that is far from weak or fake. From the legacy of the Maoist 'right to rebel' to what has been termed the long tradition of 'rightful resistance' dating back to the Qing dynasty, political protest and intellectual contention are simply as much a part of the PRC as its various cuisines and transport systems.[4]

As Kerry Brown has recently argued, drawing on an essay by Wang Hui, every major clash of the last three decades has involved some (officially but poorly hidden) fundamental policy difference, or in other words a struggle over actual ideas.[5] Admittedly these are not radical ideas or ideological struggles and major differences (as in the Mao era over 'lines'); in that sense, the ideas are wonkish, relatively non-political, and set within certain limits and parameters of what is acceptable. (Maoist economics are not.) This is very similar to that in the USA and elsewhere; though the comparison may actually work in the PRC's favor, where actual national plans are worked out (albeit behind tightly closed doors). But 'our' endless and speculative focus on, say, Xi Jinping's personal struggles against enemies, or

on Bo Xilai's quest for national power (where there may have been actual ideological differences at stake), quite effectively and unfortunately hides the wonkish ideas and policies at stake. The PRC takes the power of ideas, policies, and ideologies far more seriously than other 'normal' or 'free' societies, where, for example, you can have any number of radical political magazines or websites, some of them very rich indeed in their content or symbolic significance. But that matter not at all in terms of power or influence on national politics.[6] Or at least the, say, American leftist and 'ultra-leftist' texts and ideas matter far less than those of the rightists, which can directly inform the conservative parties (to the extent that the two-system even speaks to two political sides). In the PRC, the perceived importance and influence of ideas is what leads to the problem of censorship and the policing of speech. This difference—the higher valuation, yet fear, of the ideational—is, arguably, explained by the PRC's Marxist and Leninist-Maoist roots. Though it must also be said that it was Mao who countenanced 'blooming and contending' far more than the current Party.

All told, and notwithstanding its repudiation of Maoist economics and domestic politics (i.e. class struggle), the PRC has been remarkably adaptable, *a la* the guerrilla warfare strategy of the 1930s and 1940s. This has led some scholars to aptly refer to it as being guided not by Adam Smith's but by Mao's invisible hand.[7] This includes its embrace of uncertainty, as Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth Perry well note, and a willingness to take risks, especially, but not only, economically. This may sometimes result in the empty ghost towns of recent vintage, such as Ordos on the one hand, but can also result in the booming, massive, melting pot capitalist city of Shenzhen as well as the more ancient metropole of Guangzhou, now with its own little Africa or 'chocolate city.' This experimentation applies far less to the party system itself, as such behavior is highly discouraged, especially after the 'scandal' of the murder and betrayal and the apparent corruption in Bo Xilai's Chongqing. And yet this embrace of risk also applied to the state's great openness to domestic and even foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at work in the mainland's public sphere or civil society. That too has been cut back and curtailed significantly under the more watchful, illiberal eye of Xi Jinping's rule. But even this crackdown or self-correction has to be counted as within the 'guerrilla' or experimental mode of change and adaptation.

Put another way, the power of the Chinese political system and political culture not only stems from top-down repressive measures but also operates in more productive, positive, and capillary ways, as every Foucauldian

knows. Note, for example, that the so-called Great Firewall—as real as it is—hardly succeeds in banishing anti-communist and other unflattering information about China coming into the country through the Internet or other avenues. Anti-Maoist and anti-CCP views or knowledges are a case in point, as are foreign scholarship and texts, from the works of von Hayek to Roderick MacFarquhar. And yet these same 'subversive' information flows—chiefly Western or Chinese language media from, say, Hong Kong and Taiwan—often succeed only in stoking the fires of Chinese nationalism and indignation over 'biased,' 'anti-China' perspectives. From the 'Free Tibet' camp's attempts to snuff out the world tour of the Olympic torch, circa 2008, to the creation of an 'anti-CNN' social media platform in the mainland, to Ai Wei Wei's relative unpopularity in China, to the more recent Hague court ruling against mainland claims to (vast amounts of) the South China Sea, or to protests on *American* campuses against the Dalai Lama speaking: there is no doubt that a newly, visibly assertive China is talking back. Of course this is just one, albeit strong reaction-formation to such flows of 'liberal' information and views, and there is no doubt that Hong Kong's liberal media and publications have informed and enabled other, more liberal or contrary views in the mainland. It is always worth noting that, contra a certain orientalist stereotype, the Chinese people have never spoken with just one voice or within just one identity.

The catch with many such acts of resistance and political protest in China ('mass incidents'), which can be as substantial and serious as a violent strike or a militant occupation of space, is that they rarely take the forms and paths 'we' think they should, if the goal is the end of the one-Party-state, authoritarian governance, and, in sum, the subversion of the general reality of the post-1949 system. A system that itself needs to be sharply periodized as post-Mao and post-revolutionary, since at least the ascension of Deng Xiaoping and the advent of commodification in 1979. This failure, so to speak, of the Chinese state and system to take the right, normative forms presents a major challenge for liberal or indeed other analyses.

A case in point is a recent article by Elizabeth Perry, always a useful and lucid scholar, aptly titled 'The Illiberal Challenge of Authoritarian China.'[8] It resonates with a consistent theme of her prodigious research: that the Chinese political order is neither fragile nor vacuous but has a logic of its own, and one that does not fit easily within the conventional wisdom or discourse of Western Chinese studies. (Many historians and assorted China experts would admit the latter, of course, but few would take the next step:

making the comparison in a substantial or attentive way, and taking the differences and rationalities seriously.) Perry notes a central paradox of Chinese rule: that China's undeniably vibrant civil society and active, not passive, public may actually *undergird* and perpetuate the Chinese state ('the authoritarian regime'), and not democratize it into a liberal system of political representation.[9] The supposed link between civil society and democratization on which so much cultural studies, not just political science, depend, may not be a link at all. This happens precisely because the state *is* 'attentive' to such protests and voices, and not *only* responds repressively but often incorporates such criticisms or problems, or otherwise responds pro-actively or positively, albeit only because of the civic/public actions in the first place. It can even repress *and* address the issue, as may well be the current case of Wukan, discussed in a later chapter. Perry concludes with two notable points. One, the rise of protests and public voice (to adopt A. O. Hirschman's phrase) reflects not a movement toward 'rights consciousness' and hence 'democratization,' but toward 'rules consciousness' and—in my own words here—toward making the state respond and work in its own terms. And yet it must also be said in response to this still liberal framework that the distinction between rules and rights is an unstable and arguably a practically negligible one, unless one believes in natural rights, *a la* the early modern political philosophers. At any rate, in regard to what happens on the ground in China, and leaving aside the normative liberal frame, Perry's observations about the state and protest seem characteristically accurate. They resonate with what we will later discuss as the 'righteous resistance' mode of protest in Wukan, but not in Hong Kong. Two, Perry claims that this is precisely the 'illiberal challenge of Chinese authoritarianism': that a robust civil society in this case only 'strengthens and sustains' the regime. Note that the argument is not that it gets *more* repressive but only that it responds, perhaps begrudgingly, but consistently. And yet this does not entail any movement toward a liberal democratic regime, which is to say that it does not take the normative form according to political science and other liberal discourses. Clearly this implies a problem and a challenge to such understandings of politics, change, development, 'democratization,' and so on. The problem is that the latter, conventional theories (or normative assumptions) are rather useless to explain how Chinese politics works and has developed over the years. Or, put another way, the theories can only point to what is lacking, and can only repeat that whatever the Communist Party does it does just to stay in power. If we can tease out the logic here, the further assumption to the liberal 'demonization' of the PRC seems to be that if the Party-state did *not* do all

these things just to stay in power—including acting democratically or responsively to protests and the 'general will'—then China would, more or less spontaneously, or at least quickly and inevitably, become the same as the rest of the countries in the liberal world order. Perry's article thus helps us see the limits of such logics and approaches to the PRC. And, in general, with the persistence, if not rise, of other alleged illiberal regimes, sometimes called illiberal democracies, such as Russia and others of the former Soviet empire, as well as, say, Thailand, the faith in such convergences is clearly fading. But the crucial point for the present study is that the PRC nonetheless *should* become like a 'real' or 'good' liberal democratic regime, and that its clear refusal to do so is a challenge to our received political wisdom and theories more than to China itself.

The obvious contradiction here—namely, that the Chinese political system and culture in this sense actually *work* yet still must change to fit the liberal concepts—does not go addressed. (We will return to this in regard to the Wukan Uprising later.) This raises two immediate questions: illiberal to who and according to who? One suspects that the answer to both is often 'the foreign experts.' The charge of illiberalism—more often an academic assumption than a journalist's explicit charge—tells us more about the liberal West, and globalization as cultural imperialism, than it does about the PRC as a political system and intellectual political culture.

This book picks up from where my earlier *China and Orientalism* (2012) left off—after 1989, and with the rise of a Sinological form of orientalism that mandates that China is slowly, necessarily becoming the same as 'us'; that is, it *must* become a normal and free political entity and space. This reverses the 'classic' orientalist view about the Chinese difference being *essential* to the place and people, and an allegedly insurmountable barrier to normality/modernity/freedom (or for the Sinophilic minority, the reason for its superiority to a degraded Occident). If not in the near future, then certainly in the longer one the (Western-universal) script is set. Insofar as it is abnormal and lacks freedom, this difference has not to do with race or 'essence' (as in the old orientalist view) but with the anachronistic legacy of the single Party-state and Mao, which is to say, with China's unfortunate, communist political revolution and with the PRC as such. Race and 'essence' are no bars. What China still lacks, but what it is slowly forming (or must do so), is a recognizable intellectual political culture, one essentially turning on liberalism, a 'proper' civil society and public sphere, and an attendant procedural, multi-party democracy.

The PRC—modern China as a political entity and rising power—is thus maddeningly *illiberal* from the standpoint of the Western or global intellectual political culture. The latter I take to be, in short, a form of 'general' or generic liberalism (as opposed to 'neo'). Liberalism is, of course, notoriously wide-ranging and hard to define, as befits a discourse or thing which forms the dominant ideology of all dominant ideologies since the rise of modern, global capitalism.[10] What one can do however is at least define one's own terms. I take it to be a discourse that turns upon three further points, beyond the already noted insistence on multi-party electoral democracy: the primary value of individualism and attendant negative 'freedoms from' (the state especially); a normative universalism (explicit or implicit); and, crucially, the structure of 'free' markets alongside private property. This is an ideal-type definition and does not imply that it corresponds to the actual, social reality of a particular Western nation. It is better seen as its self-image or self-understanding, as in traditional, modern, political theory since Locke. But at the same time, such imaginings (not unlike nationalism as an imagined community) or discursive constructions (like orientalism) can have an undeniable material or actual reality effect on their institutional embodiments.

'It,' an illiberal China, refuses to change. Not in the ways it ought to within the terms of Sinological-orientalist, liberal discourse and market/capitalist/modernization theory. The PRC as a strong or would-be strong state (its capacity is in question by the Chinese new left), and the related Chinese intellectual political culture, thus pose an ideological or discursive challenge. The challenge of the PRC lies in the obstinate 'refusal' as well as in its frequent, more direct responses to political, economic, and other forms of liberalism. China—its government—has insisted on developing and maintaining its 'own' system and intellectual political culture, one that stems—if in a non-linear, perhaps rhizomatic way—from Confucian and other traditions, including, of course, the socialist or Marxist-Leninist-Maoist one. Yuri Pines, for example, has recently argued at length that the Chinese political culture has long turned in part on the belief in a centralized state.[11] This is admittedly something of a truism or 'Chinese platitude' (which does not mean it is false), but Pines resurrects this theme from an older Sinology or orientalism without simply ascribing it to the Chinese mind or race. And it does not imply some monolithic invariance within the long, modern, political history of China and the PRC. Clearly such a belief has been part of statecraft for a long time, in China's transition from an empire to a nation-state.[12] It certainly may not last forever, and still more certainly it does not imply a popular, blind faith in authoritarianism or

despotism. But it, this belief in the validity if not necessity of a single, strong, centralized state, has weathered not only 1989 but subsequent waves of cultural-ideological and economic globalization. Of course the devil is in the details—criticism, even contempt for the Party is also very real in China as elsewhere—and in some ways this belief is only remarkable or exceptional in comparison with the Western neo-liberal anti-statism.

Even Maoist China—to take a key example of variance within this intellectual political social tradition—can be seen as a fascinating, perhaps failed perhaps successful, but certainly an ambiguous attempt at creating a state and political culture that placed people into new relationships with one another and the ruling government (revolutionary proletarian culture, mass participation within the state) as well as 'against' or in a struggle to overcome the self, understood by Mao et al. as akin to 'selfishness' and thus, in the sense of the word at the time, to 'liberalism.' It was, in other words, Marxist-modern, but also, in comparison to liberal democracy and individualism, far closer to a Confucian or traditional way of understanding the self and society, or self and community/other. Rather than knowing and discovering and being authentic to your true self, the point was to focus on relationships, social relations, as these—and not that of individual monad—lie at the origin of what it means to be alive, human, in-the-world.[13] Perhaps the famous/infamous rustication movement of the later Cultural Revolution, with its own roots in the Yan'an spirit of the 1930s to live among and assimilate into the peasants, is the chief example of this ethic. But it is omnipresent in the propaganda of the radical period (and is the existential core of Maoism and the relation to the masses). Even now, in a non-radical and de-politicized or degraded form, it lives on in Party-state efforts to get individuals cathected to the nation and 'Chinese civilization' as against the individualism and market freedoms offered by Chinese capitalism.

Beijing-based political theorist Daniel Bell has, in several books and many editorial pages, argued forcefully for the applicability and even desirability of neo-Confucian political and social ideas in China, such as 'meritocracy' within the Party-state versus Western-national-electoral style democracy.[14] Bell is not without his detractors (predictably many from the liberal-universalist political science field) and as a 'pure' analytical philosopher, he certainly runs the risk of too easily typifying-idealizing the workings of the Party-state through an inadequately contextualized form of logical positivism. That is a risk in the name of clarity and lucidity of his own arguments and ideas (and of the Chinese colleagues he synthesizes), and it is effective. His argument

that China's political culture and system will inevitably reflect its own powerful traditions and heritage (Confucianism, for Bell) is fairly unassailable and something that liberals and politics scholars in particular should attend to. They usually do not. Regardless, the only room for argument here can in the end be what aspects and foundations from actually existing Chinese political history *will* prevail, and which ones *should*, in some type of inevitable mix with global/Western political forms and forces? Can there be room, even in a 'becoming-capitalist' or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' PRC, for the Maoist-egalitarian or socialist residua of the 1970s or earlier? Can the state feminism and rural-centered egalitarianism of Maoism be returned to or re-recognized as the purported bases of the Party-state? Can the current class character of the Party-state shift or be reformed by disempowering private capital and capitalists? Certainly that leftist era and tradition is not without its indirect influences, let alone its creation of the one-party (Leninist) state itself. As I suggest later this can even be seen in the anti-imperialism implicit to 'illiberalism.' Liberalism as a political worldview, for its own part, is much more than a minor tradition, one highly unlikely to overtake 'socialism,' let alone neo-Confucianism or a more vague but real notion of 'Chinese tradition.' It is the communist revolution as well as 'tradition' that grants the Party-state its legitimacy at an admittedly abstract but still substantial and effective level. The revolution and the Party-state are not under threat by liberalism in the political sense, but may well be endangered by the economic market liberalism or economism of the state. Indeed political liberalism's only future in China, other than waiting for some mystical convergence or implosion of the Party-state, would have to be within the single Party-state system, *a la* notions of a liberal socialism or Confucian liberalism and so on.[15] But political liberalism as a discourse of rights and new future laws to come is still in play within China,[16] and of course globally, where it forms the general intellectual political culture despite the triumph of clearly reactionary forms of neo- or contemporary liberalism.

In sum, it is highly unlikely that China will in the foreseeable future complete some as-of-now imaginary transition to becoming a 'normal' multi-party, liberal democracy and society *a la* Taiwan, Japan, or India, let alone the USA. The historical conditions are not there; there seems no desire for such a thing. The economy and Party-state are certainly beset by problems, but neither seems remotely close to what some liberals or Marxists think of as crisis. What is more, and as Lin Chun has argued powerfully and at length, China cannot follow the model of the US-West precisely because those regimes rose to preeminence by virtue of slavery and

modern colonialism under capitalist expansion.[17] Such options are not available today. Even if one wants to see China as fully capitalist, or even as an expanding if not imperialistic power (China extracting resources from Africa, bullying the Philippines and others in the Pacific ocean), this would still not be akin to the way the UK, France, and the USA were from the eighteenth century through the twentieth century. Its imperial ambitions *a la* the old modern empires would be doomed, if it had them. That it doesn't have them—that its business in Africa is primarily *business*, that its unfortunate, bullying muscle flexing in the Pacific is really about *American* bases all over Asia—seems likely. And in any case the PRC is far too weak and the world far too much changed and de-colonized for a return to that. While the growing and thus expanding Chinese economy certainly impacts many people in some undeniably negative ways (and of course most of all its own legal subjects), such exploitation is not the same thing as imperialism, let alone slavery and colonialism. Part of 'our' problem in coming to terms with the rise of China is the prison house of liberalism: it is hard to read contemporary China politically without falling back into familiar histories and conceptual shibboleths about what freedom, individuality, human rights, and so on are. And of course there are cottage industries, popular and academic, dedicated to fear and ressentiment-mongering.

The Party-state's main economic contradiction is not to source free/super exploited labor and natural resources (though it needs the latter), but, as is by now frequently proclaimed by the CCP itself, to shift from a high growth, export-led economy to a still-growing but domestic-oriented, more sustainable economy. It will have to become more social, democratic, and Keynesian, that is it should invest internally and increase consumer demand as well as redistribute wealth. This will actually entail a *break* with its heretofore Dengist liberal economism, letting the market act as the god who sorts everything out. (We will return to this later.) China's rise through capitalism is due to many factors, not the least of which is the human capital and infrastructure, and complete *lack* of foreign debt, during the Maoist era; this base was then relentlessly plundered and capitalized in the post-Mao period. China's rise—via massive privatization and exploitation of labor—has entailed all of the predictable environmental costs, inequalities, and even anti-feminist backlashes. But it has not had to do with slavery or transfers of wealth from the colonies, nor with plundering poorer nations. It has been far better able to negotiate terms with the former empires/multinational capitals. In the end, like its failures or limits, its successes too cannot be divorced from its political state-form as if it

were an irrelevant detail to the magic of markets and global capitalism. And yet the difference of China in this respect is more or less dismissed or elided in the rush to position it as either irredeemably illiberal or stuck in the waiting room of history until the liberal zeitgeist sweeps in and produces the transition to normality/liberality/freedom.

In sum China is not a transitional *society* or totality because it cannot be one.[18] Surely it is blessed (or cursed, if you prefer) with a great, rapid deal of change, as, for example, in its urbanization and construction or its cultural shift toward consumerism, its tourism and travel, its academic expansion, and its horrifying air pollution. But there is an enormous, if unremarked, amount of baggage caught up in the very idea of transition, especially in the liberal notions of modernization and democratization. As if we know where it must end up at the end of such alleged transitions. What it is moving toward (or away from) is itself contingent. This means that its illiberalism could in the end become more or less progressive, its alleged socialism more or less substantive, its repressive authoritarianism more or less pronounced. This is why developments such as the new left or other voices critical of 'reforms' since Mao, and moreover large protests such as those in Wukan and even Hong Kong (despite their self-defeating anti-communism and anti-'mainlandization' planks), are important. Contra the waves of de-politicization and economism (let the market and 'growth' sort everything out), the political is alive, if not exactly 'well,' in the PRC. Or to put it another way, for all its rapid change and contingencies under globalization, the rhetoric of inevitable transitions and convergences—teleologies of one stripe or another, be it from liberal thought or the party echelons—is of very little use. It is the normative assumptions that must be challenged, be they directed toward liberal convergence or Chinese socialist/Confucian exceptionalism. Convergence is a sociological keyword for the present study because it is a keyword of actual or 'real' globalization and what I keep referring to as (mainstream) intellectual political culture and discourse.[19] It is meant to denote just what it says: a growing sameness or becoming sameness in cultural and political terms. Whether one thinks this is animated by global mixing and global clashes that will be won one way or another, or it is 'the good lord's work' (as some in Hong Kong political circles seem to believe) or the zeitgeist, the notion remains one of coming together and, in this case, a convergence into liberalism and 'properly' as opposed to PRC representative democracy. Convergence in the present, secular study is nothing but a powerful discourse that can and does have real effects on some people and places. In the analysis of Chinese politics (vis-à-vis its state in

particular), it operates along revised orientalist lines that I tried to suss out in a previous book as China 'becoming the-same' rather than it being stuck in the past and doomed by its essential difference from the occident.[20]

Despite or rather *because* of the oft-noted rise of China, this liberal *political* orientalism (in Engin Isin's apt phrase) and the forces, texts, and institutions behind it continue to circulate in and animate the West as well as China itself.[21] (It is not that there are multiple types of orientalism—it is a structure or discursive formation itself—but that it can take a more or less political inflection, depending on the context.) In the case of China the holy trinity of orientalism remains: Chinese women, the Chinese economy, and Chinese politics aka despotism. (Food and the language are in this account secondary.) Our focus here is on the latter. The field of politics, in the manner of most social science, usually barricades itself against post-colonial critique in the name of objectivity and empiricism. Even the academic world of the Western intellectual left (if this can be distinguished from liberalism)—for example, Verso Press and its journals—has mostly contempt for the critique of imperialism and difference stemming from post-colonial studies or non- or anti-universalist theory.[22] As if politics—including the proper, true forms of government, of citizenship, of class, and the state—were universal. Hence the usefulness of Isin's phrase. From the persistence of Chinese liberalism (e.g. the Charter 2008 movement discussed later) to official and non-official responses to 'Western' knowledge/power (soft power, free speech policing, new left and heterodox intellectual movements, 'patriotic' protests), it is clear that orientalism, liberalism, illiberalism, 'statism,' and the politics of knowledge between East and West, in large part, define the contemporary global intellectual 'scene' within China as well as abroad.

The PRC has long been engaged in a running argument with liberalism and (at least) political orientalism, as a corollary to its post-dynastic and post-colonial trajectory as a modern, unified nation-state. Liberalism and illiberalism—as with 'socialism'—are 'floating signifiers' for a type of socio-economic system as well as politics, and they are produced and contested inside and outside of the PRC as well as Hong Kong. Though the latter lacks a socialist/leftist (i.e. non-liberal) political history or culture to speak of, it is a historically and contemporarily important source of liberalism (and of capital flight) as well as of anti-communist education and propaganda.[23] Indeed the clash over pro- and anti-mainland views (and voting blocs) in Hong Kong, grafted onto questions of 'democracy' versus 'communism' despite being constituted in reality by capitalist classes and interests, is in large part what local politics in the harbor city is about, a clash

between two types of education and intellectual formations: colonial liberalism and mainland/communist/Chinese 'collectivism' or nationalism. Put another way, the current intellectual political cultures of China and the West (and with all due allowances for the striations of these spaces) are very much in contention internally and globally. Politics today, as Stuart Hall put it long ago in a classic re-interpretation of hegemony, is largely a battle over discursive terrain, for the legitimation and de-legitimation of discourse as much as money and power. It is these last two dimensions—protests (or politics) and a contentious, 'illiberal' intellectual political culture—which occupy much of the present study.

Liberalism and Its Vicissitudes

Illiberal China seeks to understand these two aspects of China in their 'own' terms or self-understanding (as seen by the author, and as opposed to merely debunking them). It moreover seeks to contrast these with their coding by contemporary liberalism, that is, by what I take to be essentially liberal political theory and scholarship. As I will explain later, this is a degraded (Western) liberalism that in a sense forms the dialectical twin of (Chinese) illiberalism, itself a somewhat degraded or de-politicized version of revolutionary anti-imperialism and Leninism-Maoism. It should be distinguished from an earlier, post-war, culturally relativistic, pre-1980s era: the American time of, say J. K. Galbraith, Lyndon Baines Johnson, and a more humane, relativistic 'belly' liberalism akin to European social democracy. By degraded I mean especially the anti-state dimension, as a key part of it now as its more widely remarked free-market principle. I take this new liberalism to be a diffuse but powerful intellectual political discourse, one incorporating not only 'straight' self-professedly liberal theory (e.g. conventional political science and area studies) but also much 'post-modern' and 'post-colonial' theory that stems from a French post-structuralism that broke with the intellectual hegemony of Marxist and 'statist' thought in post-war France.[24] This is what has deeply influenced the Western academy in the so-called linguistic, theoretical, and 'cultural studies' turns. That this has been an effect of how such a theory was marketed and institutionalized in American universities, as opposed to something arising immanently from the—selectively—translated texts and debates themselves, matters little in this case. The 'post' discourse certainly shares the anti-state orientation with 'neo' liberalism, from the initial polemics against Hegel to, say, Lyotard's influential, Cold War-esque denunciations of 'totality' as

'totalitarianism' or Foucault's or Deleuze's anarchistic/libertarian moments. At any rate the claim here is that contemporary theory, be it liberal or allegedly more radical, is often anti-state apparently on principle, as an a priori, *a la* libertarianism or anarchism. It is furthermore situated against what Timothy Brennan has usefully called the 'organizational imaginary'—an inability to pose let alone think through 'what is to be done?'—and represents a break with anything smacking of Marxist-Leninist or even full-on social democratic aka 'statist' planning, 'manipulation,' social engineering, and the like. This is also the terrain upon which Jodi Dean has intervened recently, in her welcome political theory provocations, *The Communist Horizon* and *Crowds and Party*.[25] Of course if it is a strong state and rhetoric thereof, as well as a tradition of collectivism and intensive organization that liberalism seeks to oppose, then the still nominally Leninist-Maoist PRC is seemingly the perfect target.[26]

This can be called a neo-liberalism if that 'neo' is taken to mostly signify 'new' or contemporary, as opposed to the more directly economic and ground-breaking work of David Harvey. It is not that Harvey is wrong in his diagnoses and genealogies (from the Chicago School and Chile to Beijing and Deng Xiaoping's reforms). Indeed his chapter on China under Deng is sound, cautious, and telling in showing the resonances between Pinochet and the Chicago School and Deng and, say, the smashing of the 'iron rice bowl' of Maoist welfare aka the restructuring of the planned economy. (Harvey does not claim the Chinese economy is fully neo-liberal). But *in* China as well as in (chiefly) foreign scholarship about the place, liberalism of a more classical, laissez-faire, philosophical form is also pronounced and palpable. It spends less time explicitly cheerleading for entrepreneurs and competition and individualist self-fashioning than invoking liberty and freedom as such. Though in some cases, as with the late Liu Xiaobo and the Charter 2008 'movement' discussed in a later chapter, the Enlightenment-esque rhetoric is yoked to a neo-liberal, privatization project).[27] Though it is still intimately related to the attempted Dengist commodification of everything after the Maoist attempt at a communist transition, it would be hard to argue that this 'new' and degraded liberalism is only or even primarily an outcome of economic reforms/practices in either the West or China over the last three or four decades. It simply flows from a much longer history of orientalism and liberalism, though these too have their own economic roots in the global expansion of capitalism after 'feudalism' and various ancient regimes. The question of liberalism in/and China, then, is exceedingly complex. One has to deal not only with the current anti-state neo-liberalism discourse, as well as the Party-state's own efforts

to deploy the market principle to formerly public enterprises and public goods, but also with an older universalist-humanist one that sounds more like, say, Montesquieu or Voltaire than von Hayek or Milton Friedman. Both are in play in ways that would not be the case with, say, area studies and media discourse about India. To better see how and to what extent the PRC is 'illiberal,' both types—'classic' and 'neo'—need to be accounted for analytically. Each variation is still at work in the world and in China, and both may be seen as the target, for better and worse, of the Party-state's illiberalism. Despite the rise of neo-liberalism as a catch-all category of critique, the distinction may be hard to uphold in the case of China. In what follows I will mostly just use 'liberalism' (again keeping in mind the anti-statism) except when referring more clearly to the 'market über alles' mentality.

For whom, then, is the PRC a problem? Perhaps not those millions up from poverty, even if that leaves plenty of others, not least the exploited working classes (and migrants) of China and those dying early from air pollution. And what is the root problem? Is it chiefly political (the Party-state, that bane of liberalism) or socio-economic aka political economy (the view of new and older leftists)? Much of the scholarship on China, especially but not only in the dominant language of English, is about China's problems and failures, and often about the lack of something—for example, the right type of political system or development, a *complete* modernization *a la* the West, a natural progression toward freedom and individualism interrupted by revolution, nationalism, the post-1949 state, and the state. So too the cry for reform, often alongside shouts for 'revolution,' has indeed animated, even dominated, Chinese political culture as a whole from the early twentieth century. Political change and reform is not resisted so much as insisted upon, but with the important caveat that liberal political reform—that is, a recognizably Western system of multiple parties and separation of powers—has not been on the agenda since the triumphal rise of the revolution and nationalism in the l930s. In this current period especially, change has had to come from within Chinese society as opposed to abroad, and from within the parameters of the Party-state system at that. Lest this seem too 'official' or too much the state's view on the present author's part (heaven forfend), it is also the clear conclusion to Jonathan Spence's classic history of Western advisers in China since Matteo Ricci in the sixteenth century, *To Change China*.[28]

Illiberal China offers two answers, by no means exhaustive, to these questions: that China is a problem—that is a challenge, perhaps even an opportunity—for 'our' received political wisdom, our doxa stemming from, again, chiefly liberal perspectives; and that the ultimate root problem is the intellectual political culture of contemporary (liberal) capitalism and

that global economic system that China is fully part of. Despite its antagonism (and agony) toward the West and liberalism, the contemporary, illiberal PRC is nonetheless caught up in shared problems of globalization: sustainability and legitimacy under global capitalism on the one hand, and approval or *recognition* by the imperial West on the other. De-linking may yet be the order of the day.

As I hope to have already indicated, and as heuristically useful as the phrase 'China and the West' remains, the terrain here is global. Both places—the PRC and the West—comprise overlapping territories and imagined geographies. But as Edward Said always insisted, it would be a mistake to see this 'social construction' as fake or weak, when it is powerfully institutionalized and materialized. One should recall that China Studies is something that by definition mostly excludes mainland Chinese scholars. This may sound arch, but my point is a fairly basic and obvious one. The China field is *about* them and their place and history (and traditionally, their language above all). They may now—thanks to globalization after the fall of communism and the putative end of the Cold War—be brought into the conversation about China and the PRC, a recent development of, at the most, the past two decades. But China Studies still comes or hails from the outside. It is fashionable in some quarters to dismiss the China/West split as 'history' in the pejorative, dustbin sense: we are all connected now, the East is in the West and vice versa, capital is borderless, everyone eats Chinese food, everyone knows about the Cultural Revolution, and so on. To be sure, the Party-state and right- minded liberal intellectuals the world over all condemn the late Maoist period. Flows of people and money into and out of China are massive and growing rapidly. But this does not undo the genesis of the field or institutions of China and Asian studies, but also the genesis and provenance and unspoken rules and exclusions of our discourses or intellectual political culture. Or put another way, a rural sociologist at Beijing University is not doing 'China Studies.' He or she is a rural sociologist, perhaps part of the Chinese Academy, or just a professor at, say, East China Normal University. A new leftist intellectual has to be extremely erudite and fluent in English, and diplomatic and suave, to get an audience abroad. Or put in another way, it is entirely possible to hold conferences, even in the special administrative region called Hong Kong, on the 'culture' of the PRC from 1966 through the present, without any mainland scholars attending or being invited. This is not an odd occurrence but a standard practice. The PRC is mostly still an object, not a subject.[29] While none of this may seem like a substantial

problem from a liberal universalist or even social science standpoint, it is still striking from at least the standpoint of the present book.

The PRC is a problem, then, not only for the Chinese people themselves (as all states/'systems' are, in part) but also for Western or global political theory and understandings of politics. It is a problem for 'our' intellectual political culture, how we understand politics, and thus the world. It is, put in another way, an ideological as well as analytical/academic challenge to us. Can we take the PRC as political entity seriously, as something to be learned from or at least understood in terms other than dismissal and debunking? By 'us' I mean once again our own dominant ideology since the rise of modern (global, colonial) capitalism in the West: liberalism in the general sense, its normative doxa about free markets and individuals and 'democracy' and how these are correlatives of freedom; and its form of (its insistence on) universality or what Etienne Balibar has aptly called 'Western, modern, Judeo-Christian universality.'[30]

In sum what the challenge of the PRC has to tell us is that liberalism is not only fully 'particular' as opposed to universal (thus reflecting the salience of Marxist and post-colonial critiques), but that it also appears to be in marked, if not fatal, decline as it becomes transformed into neoliberalism. It is weak in explanatory as well as in political power vis-à-vis the PRC; it understands the PRC badly and despite its occasionally obvious pretensions, it cannot change China. Chinese liberalism on the other hand, as either an intellectual tradition or an unofficial 'movement' (or in the form of Hong Kong's 'pan-democrats' who see themselves as leading the way for the mainland), lacks 'legs' and a chance of success. Thus what liberalism reveals is less the truth of China and more its own degradation. The state of politics today is a pernicious anti-'statism' among the intelligentsia as much as within, say, the US party system and abroad; it is also the utter impasse of our global conjuncture, of virtually all of us, from 'mass democratic' or equality-based form of critical thinking and politics.

The battle against liberalism has been made perfectly clear—even escalated—in the current era of President Xi Jinping. While nominal campaigns against 'bourgeois liberalization' under Deng Xiaoping (a strident pragmatist yet deep nationalist) were widely noted in the 1980s, such explicit anti- or illiberal rhetoric was more rare in the later Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao eras. Once those 'occidental' and liberal-cultural fevers were either crushed or dissipated in the wake of Tiananmen, 1989, and once further marketization or commodification disempowered intellectuals and critical ideologies more generally, there has been less perceived

need for such campaigns. With a China now greatly transformed, thanks to Deng's capitalist and anti-Maoist 'reforms,' that is by global capitalism, Xi has brought in his wake a remarkably concerted (and sorely needed) anti-corruption drive and—more importantly for our purposes—an escalated policing of acceptable speech. 'Document 9,' a CCP communiqué from late 2013, specifically targets seven 'threats' to be 'guarded against' in 'the ideological sphere,' especially universities and secondary schools.[31] It has not escaped the Western media's attention that these are clearly, consciously aimed at them and, in a word, at liberalism. Named items include 'Western constitutionalism,' 'universal values,' the 'West's idea of journalism,' 'civil society,' and economic 'neo-liberalism.'[32] So the battle for and against liberalism and Chinese communism/difference is a real thing, a struggle over discursive hegemony, and not just a matter of 'mere' rhetoric and the hopes and dreams of Western-trained or Occident-identified intellectuals. Illiberalism, that is an illiberal China, rather than the triumph of Maoist communism or egalitarianism, is one such result of this struggle. The purpose of the present study is to map out the existence and some of the substance of this illiberalism.[33]

I will eventually argue that China's 'illiberalism' should also be seen, in no small part, as a result of its long revolution and especially its Maoist or 'red' decades that, while over and in many ways over-turned, are nonetheless crucial for understanding the PRC political culture or society. In a sense the liberal China studies experts are correct that China's illiberalism stems from the Maoist past, that is the Leninist Party-state (though this avoids the dynastic/empire state connections). But their interpretation of this remains stuck at outrage or analytical impasse; once you note that it is—alas—not liberal, and even opposed to that ideology, there is not much more to say other than 'authoritarianism.' (Which is correct but banal.) But the argument here is that Chinese illiberalism has its positive and 'interesting,' complex and ambivalent, aspects, including an undeniable anti-imperialism. That anti-imperialism is not today about supporting Third World revolution or national liberations (which in any case are not in the offing or have already happened). It is instead one that seeks to not only preserve national sovereignty but also assert and preserve Chinese 'difference' or particularity as against not only Western geo-political hostilities and lingering Cold War containment desires, but also foreign *interpretations* as opposed to interventions. China is caught up in a game of hegemony or discursive struggle with the West and the Rest, and what is remarkable about this is that it *can* be and can even make inroads and exercise its voice

in a way that few, if any other, non-Western power can. Chinese illiberalism must in any case be taken seriously. Beyond the unitary Party-state, it may be, for better or worse, the last vestige of the Maoist revolution, which is also to say the struggle against opium-era imperialism and the attempt to preserve its past traditions and ways of seeing and living.[34] We have to read it in its positivity and not merely as something to be debunked or dismissed. It resists the drive to sameness in at least political terms; this is more profound than a mere attempt by the CCP to keep itself in power.

But I hasten to add that the PRC's challenge to liberalism is far from a wholly good thing. By drawing on the privatizing/neo-liberal economics while eschewing the ethics or 'philosophic' aspects of liberalism—which it was supposed to supersede and not simply reject as capitalist and iniquitous—the PRC after Mao has abandoned not only the egalitarian ideals of the revolution but even the capacity and stability of the state and arguably its very legitimacy as a result of marketization/private capital. To abandon the Maoist insistence on class equality and 'making revolution,' that is mass participation through a 'preceptorial system'[35]; to offer little in its place beyond patriotism and nationalism, or perhaps neo-Confucianism at best, and an ineffable external enemy (or 'frenemy') called liberalism or the West; to stave off redistribution and discontent with the promise of continued economic growth and 'getting rich first' consumerism; this is all to endanger the future, not just of the Party-state but of the achievements of the long Chinese revolution from the earlier period of great game imperialism and opium wars. While the illiberal state has so far 'successfully' resisted transformation or co-optation by Western/global liberalism and governance, it is also a potentially pyrrhic victory in that the Party-state not only faces major challenges in its own right but may be losing its capacity to govern (a co-optation via economic neo-liberalism).

Illiberalism: Baleful Enhancement of the Concept

Having briefly established in broad terms the meaning and function of 'liberalism'—to be fleshed out in subsequent chapters—we need to now turn to its antagonist and flip side: not just China but the phenomenon of *illiberalism*, said by some to be sweeping the world political stage in recent years. Fukuyama's wishful essay on the end of history after communism having failed to pan out, there is a return to, if not history then to the specter of illiberalism haunting Europe. After the end of the Cold War how does one refer to, for example, Putin's Russia, Iran, and so on? Let alone to

the far more obviously 'successful' example of China, already the world's second largest economy and a clear 'dictatorship'? Samuel Huntington's thesis on the clash of civilizations is likewise of little use, even if it is still, in orientalist fashion, invoked in regard to Islam. But let us start with the ever-useful, voluminous *Oxford English Dictionary* and the term's primary definition:

> Not befitting or of the nature of a free man; not pertaining to or acquainted with the liberal arts (see liberal), without liberal culture, unscholarly; ill-bred, ungentlemanly, unrefined; base, mean, vulgar, rude, sordid.[36]

Thus the real beginning of illiberalism is not, say, *regime* or authoritarianism but liberalism or *liberal*. Illiberalism is not a natural category of political 'science' but derives from its root. Liberal, as Raymond Williams notes in *Keywords*, has a more interesting, older meaning than its clear, modern political one about parties and ideologies. Liberal was from the beginning (circa sixteenth century) a social distinction, specifically in reference to labor, but also a term of cultural capital and, in sum, of class. Turning in particular upon free versus mechanical, intellectual versus manual labor, liberal first signified the above, that is a social distinction turning upon types of work and hence 'freedom.' Before we had 'liberal arts' or 'liberal generosity,' there was a distinction between types of work (intellectual vs. manual) and types of people, though the former flows naturally enough from relative class privilege. Thus in Christopher Marlowe's *Faust* (1604), we have 'This study fits a mercenary drudge. … Too servile and illiberal for me'; and in his *The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation* (1589) Richard Hakluyt will refer to 'Mechanical & illiberal crafts.' At the other end of the rise of British (liberal) capitalism, Ruskin will in 1853 object to such sentiments with 'There should not be a trenchant distinction of employment, as between men of liberal and illiberal professions.'[37] Only later, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, did liberalism take on its party-political sense and its association with the then-and-now powerful 'liberty' (itself often conflated with 'freedom') and only later still until it becomes a 'philosophy' in its own right.

As with everything else in Williams' great, radical dictionary, it is hard not to see a certain historical sweep, the transition from feudalism to capitalism, in a single keyword having first to do with non-capitalist, non-manual labor and (aristocratic?) freedoms and leisure versus the sorry conditions of

the great unwashed; these then later have to do with liberty, education, tolerance, and all the virtues associated with liberal*ism* and the freedoms of the other, new elite class, the bourgeoisie. Given a more antagonistic class content or connotation, illiberalism thence becomes not mechanical labor but vulgarity, ignobility, intolerance, and—still—servility and a lack of liberty among the new 'great unwashed' of the modern working class. Liberalism becomes moreover a political ideology or philosophy (about individuals and rights and private markets) that should be embodied in the new bourgeois states, built in the image of the ideal liberal, bourgeois self. Illiberalism can then index not just ugly people and classes but ugly, unfree, non-liberal regimes and nations.

Liberalism and illiberalism are, in sum, chauvinistic class terms, or if you prefer, terms of social distinction rooted in cultural and economic capital. In other words the possibility of the conservative and leftist critiques of liberalism as elitist or condescending is in a sense given, rhetorically, at the beginning: the distinction in favor of the free and liberal, educated and skilled labors and laborers/people, versus the servile, the ill-bred, the ignorant manual labors and laborers. Of course when that first liberal/illiberal distinction later gets articulated to political ideologies and regimes, much changes. Even with illiberal China, for example, no one thinks of the actual type of labor predominantly done in China (very mechanical indeed) but only, at the very best, the general (and presumed) unfreedom of the workers there. But the normative distinction obtains when we speak of the illiberal Chinese regime and leaders, as does—it may be felt—the condescension and chauvinism not only toward those institutions but to the demographics who happen to believe in them as legitimate things. Liberal condescension is a real thing too. And one has to further attend to the added 'bonus' of distinctions rooted in, in the case of China, histories and discourses of orientalism, of Eurocentrism (Western exceptionalism or 'leadership'), and of 'race.' These would, one assumes, also be germane to representations of, say, Iran or even Russia (always ambiguously 'Eurasian' or Other.)

Our interest here in etymology is, to summarize, the transition from a class/social distinction to the more familiar discourse of political liberalism and thus of illiberalism, not so much as a political ideology (*a la* communism) but as a type of regime defined by being not-liberal. (This in addition to 'illiberalism' merely being an insult, a pejorative applied to vulgar and intolerant people or regimes whom one simply does not like.) From unfree and 'base' men to unfree regimes that equally offend us for

their lack of liberal virtues such as multi-party electoral voting systems. In fact that passage from individual subjects to alien regimes may itself be seen as a part of what makes liberalism liberalism—how it constitutes itself by moving rhetorically and anthropomorphically from the individual at the origin of history and humanity, and thence to society or structure. It is that move itself which is problematic. That liberal/illiberal distinction then is not innocent and natural, but one that always contains a normative hierarchy and checkered history of elitism if nothing else.

But how then is illiberal understood by the purveyors of the term? One definition comes from a recent 'Illiberal Governance' conference at Central European University, dedicated to how 'authoritarian regimes exploit elections, religion, the media, business, and foreign policy in different ways to cement power and ensure their appeal to the majority.'[38] Note here that we are talking about 'regimes' that employ quite standard, non-violent means (elections, attempted media control, religion, foreign policy) to stay in power and to appeal to or rather produce *majorities*. This is fairly standard practice of *all* contemporary regimes, from Central to Western Europe to Asia and beyond. Perhaps the keyword to define illiberal is simply *regime*. One does not speak, academically, of the American *regime*, unless perhaps you are on the receiving end of it in an occupied territory. But in any case 'illiberal' is an un-interrogated 'concept' defined as not-liberal or not-me. To illustrate further, and in a moment of political theorizing that will resonate later with our analyses of Wukan and Hong Kong, here is an argument from a (ironically) state-funded, French think tank in Hong Kong and its associated China journal:

> Illiberal regimes do not endure only thanks to their capacity of repression but rather also thanks to their ability to allow some space for organized contention and citizens' participation within the framework they have chosen. Authoritarian governments set the rules of the game, which are—consciously or not—accepted by activists who are not aiming at radical regime change anymore (as was the case for example for Chinese participants in the 1989 democratic movement or Russian human rights organisations that helped bring down the USSR by supporting Boris Yeltsin against Mikhaıl Gorbachev at the end of the 1980s) but are eager to act effectively within the constraints of these regimes.[39]

Nothing fails like success. Clearly illiberal 'regimes' cannot win in such formulations: even in their moments where they allow protest or other forms of participation, they merely do so to keep themselves in power, to

preserve stability, gain legitimacy, and so on. Indeed that is one of the key suppositions of political orientalism vis-à-vis the PRC: every single step of what might otherwise be called progress, decent state practice, or simply 'normal' politics—making concessions in response to protests and rebellions, *acting* howsoever belatedly on environmental problems, tackling epidemic corruption, incrementally 'reforming' the national economy, and so on—is 'negated' or undercut by the statement that said efforts are nonetheless about the Communist Party-state keeping itself in power. Or that they nonetheless stop well short of liberal democratic transformation, which indeed they do. In a later chapter we will see that this is a theme, an interpretation, of the Wukan uprising of 2011, which ushered in fresh elections and removed corrupt officials. As in the above formulation there is an implicit but clear criticism or attribution of false consciousness to the protesters themselves—'consciously or not' they are 'eager to act within' illiberal regimes' constraints. Clearly their behavior is off, or at the very least not optimal from the liberal standpoint.

It is perfectly accurate to say that the current Party-state in China is authoritarian and repressive of liberal freedoms and whatever human rights are beyond these same liberal freedoms. One suspects they are ultimately synony-mous. But all states are by definition authoritarian (with a 'monopoly on violence' as Weber famously put it), if unevenly so; they *all* have 'rules of the game' that institutionalize politics and participation. While China is a serial abuser of rights and of the 'right' to be a dissident (which does not exist except as a free speech right),[40] it is hardly uniquely grotesque in this way. The point is that China's—and anyone's—abuses and injustices should be specified and named more clearly, and thus, one hopes, more powerfully and effectively. Religious persecution, political persecution, and so on, or if one rather—specific violations of liberal or other constitutional rights—such as the right to strike, to express free speech, and so on. What are being abused are specific rights, regardless of whether one sees rights as natural or socially constructed. The problem with human rights groups like Amnesty International, say, is that they reify what it means to be human and effectively de-politicize many such abuses; Israel and Palestine become 'equal' offenders. As will be discussed in a later chapter, liberal invocations of 'the rule of law' often function in the same way. The state itself seems to have sussed out the limits of such abstractions when they, too, accuse their enemies or opponents as violating/lacking the 'rule of law' that is, after all, on the books. Relatedly, this is also the recent tactic vis-à-vis Hong Kong and its 'Basic Law': the state has its own interpretative claim on it and can

brandish it accordingly. Liberals, in other words, do not own the last word on 'law' and 'rights' in general but just imagine that their opponents (the Party-state) have no idea what 'law' and 'rights' mean.

And yet, my point here is *not* one of moral or political equivalence. The logic of equivalence is in many ways the problem—that China has to (and can) become like us, that all commodities are exchangeable and comparable on the basis of money, and that this is the way of the world, zeitgeist or no. For example, no state represses its dissidents as systematically as the PRC. The recent case of Uighur academic Ilham Tohti would be a case in point: jailed for life under the spurious charge of 'inciting separatism,' the middle-aged Uighur economics professor appears to have been nothing but an actual academic who also wrote popularly and set up a website to discuss Han/Uighur and other ethnic issues in China.[41] Tohti has merely argued for increased autonomy and equal rights for (Muslim) Uighurs, neither of which is illegal nor properly controversial. But the tense situation in Xinjiang (where there are actual voices for separatism and anti-Han sentiment) appears to have mandated Tohti's sentence. This is obviously illiberal in the pejorative sense, and it is also bad strategy for the Party-state. It is far more likely to engender actual separatism (or the desire for it) and long-term discontent; this can be far more fateful than the short-term, fearful compliance or de-politicization that such a sentence seeks. Whatever reservations one might well have with some of the gadflies of Chinese dissidence, from wealthy artists to those using it as a type of celebrity-status abroad to the Christian missionary types, the sentencing of Tohti is appalling. For that matter, the policing of dissent in a non-revolutionary Party-state, an only residual Cold War context, is especially egregious. Once the Marxist-Leninist justifications are gone (class leveling, dictatorship of the proletariat, Cold War encirclements), what is left is plain authoritarianism and awkward legal invocations of counter-revolutionary activities conducted by fairly trivial intellectuals (the dissidents, the human rights lawyers, etc.). If anything, the state in such instances 'solves' one problem by creating two in its place: it goals the now-martyr-esque and real dissident, even producing one where one did not exist before (as in Tohti), and then has an international scandal or 'data point' for a monolithically repressive and illiberal regime. Of course some such dissidents do indeed receive various forms of funds and support from abroad (especially the USA and its own propaganda/soft power wings like the National Endowment for Democracy), but this neither justifies the means nor the ends of such imprisonment; it is still bad strategy in addition to being morally

objectionable. At the same time there is no use in denying the imperial context, past and present, underlying such liberalism. We will return to this subject later, in a discussion of the late Liu Xiaobo and Chinese liberalism.

But even here the case of the PRC, as big a polity as the EU and USA combined, is instructive in terms of how we might understand politics now. Note that the USA or France, for example, has no dissidents to speak of. As De Gaulle allegedly said of Jean Paul Sartre, one does not arrest Voltaire. That liberal commitment is part of it. But why *else* are there no dissidents in the USA, for example? Clearly *The New York Times* will not even review a book by Noam Chomsky, let alone give him editorial space; this may be understood as their indifference or even their censorship, but Chomsky is no American dissident in any case. And suffice it to mention the institutionalized racism, the politics of immigration and xenophobia in the West, to say nothing of the truly world-historical and horrifying remaking of the Middle East into a war zone and space of reactionary fundamentalism. Whatever China's crimes are (the state's), they pale in comparison to the USA's, are arguably less rife with human rights abuses than, say, democratic India, and are overwhelmingly conducted within their own borders and not abroad.

And yet to speak of an American, or French, or British dissident would be a category mistake. Edward Snowden, to take a famous example, is not hailed as a dissident by anyone, even outside the USA. He's an individual, like all of 'us.' It is not that there are no activists, even of the law-breaking kind, and certainly there is no lack of injustice or unfreedom in China. As the philosopher Ci Jiwei has argued, freedom—let us bracket its definition here—is clearly a de facto value in China, just not yet an official or explicit state one.[42] The former point should put paid to orientalist notions of an *achieved* despotism in China, where the people are somehow less than fully human or made to live that way. People are certainly free, though not all, and for this statement to be more than a platitudinous discussion of 'freedom in China,' not only would difficult terms need to be defined (as Ci indeed does) but a great deal of specific empirical research into freedom and power would need to be carried out. In what sense are 'the' Chinese unfree? The view of this book, a key assumption, is that they *are* free (aside from prisoners and victims of persecution and to an extent the working poor). They are as generally free as, for example, Americans and Hong Kongers, and this entire mode of discussion—a prominent one that turns on 'them' lacking freedom in general and therefore needing a normal liberal government and economy—is or *should* be seen as fairly ridiculous.

In the core countries of the West, power operates far more subtly, liberally as opposed to vulgarly, but operate it does. The answer to this riddle of why there are no dissidents outside of illiberal regimes, then, lies in the perfection of power within the over-developed West. Individuals pose no threat, and in fact most Western polities are spaces of great conformity and de-politicized politics. Occupy Wall Street can happen, and the entire government, including the American Democratic Party, can simply ignore it entirely. In fact much the same could and should be said of the PRC; but there is at least the *perception* or theoretical fear that dissent not only poses a risk (which it can) but also contains within it a threat to state power or an act of social not merely individual significance. In China, ironically, the written or otherwise performed word is taken far more seriously as a meaningful act, if also as a potential subversion and an alleged social/moral pathology. The CCP cannot be accused of, say, liberal indifference in regard to speech and 'culture' or ideology. This is in some ways a good thing; ideas and ideologies *should* matter. It is not irrational, from the latter standpoint that takes rebellion and ideology seriously, for the state itself to feel that its control of free speech, its censorship, and its propaganda are justifiable, even necessary in a world still perceived to be subject to a form of 'liberal imperialism.' And yet the Maoists are far removed from power, so one must always keep in mind the post-Mao break from radical equality.

Rather than positing an equivalence between regimes, in a critical analysis of illiberalism, the point then is this: the PRC both is and is not an illiberal regime and society. At the risk of sounding cliché, it is true, to begin with, that seemingly all societies have their fair share (or more) of narrow-mindedness and nastiness, or simply some measure of intolerance.[43] Though intolerance in itself is no problem. Clearly there are some things and practices, even some people, whom we should be (and often are) intolerant of. Perhaps there can be no politics—fundamentally dyadic, fundamentally about us/them, right/wrong, friends/enemies, and so on—without this. In an age of de-politicization this critique of tolerance, a crucial part of critical theory since at least Marcuse's classic essay, is in peril, as with other dyadic/antagonistic forms of politics. (Recall that this notion of the political is to be contrasted with what the Frankfurt School early on called politics as 'administration' or what Marx and Engels famously referred to as the state's role as manager of the affairs of the bourgeoisie.) As noted earlier, the PRC is indeed authoritarian, perhaps

increasingly so in the Xi Jinping era, an authoritarianism with the thinnest of justifications. It is objectionably intolerant of dissent when that dissent positions itself as either anti-regime quite explicitly ('subversive' of the state) or as in cahoots with 'Western' hostile forces and elements. Given the prevalence of US government funding of various 'global civil society' NGOs and groups in China and abroad, as well as its own checkered history of supporting 'regime-change,' the latter charge is often all too easily levied. All of this might reasonably be called 'vulgar' as well, certainly in comparison to smoother, slicker forms of social control, say, in Europe.

And yet, as I have suggested earlier, all of these qualities can be found in varying degrees in all countries and regimes—social control and power, as parts of the political, are universal. Rather than wishing power and social antagonisms and control to more or less go away (or at least to be rendered unimportant)—which seems a clear and fair assumption within liberalism, naïve understandings of the withering away of the state within 'ultra-leftism' and, according to Schmitt, with 'parliamentarism,' it would be better for our philosophical and political-analytical hygiene to focus on interpretation and contextualization (i.e. the cultural studies 'method'). What makes China illiberal can be all of this: the social control, the repression of dissent or anti-regime opposition, bureaucratic machinery unconcerned with the fates of individuals, a monopoly of power on the part of a ruling class that 'owns' the government, and so on. But again it would not be hard to tick the same boxes of illiberal regime-hood for many Western and other nations of a certain status or developmental level (e.g. South Korea and Japan). Call it the era of neo-liberalism, perhaps.

What therefore makes China truly 'illiberal' is not repression and conservatism or the like but its very positioning, its self-positioning and self-understanding, as being anti-liberal on principle; it sees liberalism as an enemy and this is what in the end makes it illiberal. In this the PRC as a political entity indeed stands out. It is of course a radically different context than, say, Maoist anti-liberalism (from Yan'an through the Cultural Revolution). But it is still there, in a fairly conscious and obvious way, even if one unremarked by most political studies of China. And in this it actually mirrors the USA and, indeed, much of area studies, political science, and various pundits and journalists; with the obvious proviso that the demonized sides are reversed. Liberalism rules the day, either as hero or as villain. What then explains this opposition, even outright hostility to liberalism within China? It is this to which we must now briefly turn.

Illiberalism and Imperialism: Difference and Revolution

The content and valence of Chinese illiberalism gets further complicated when we recall that the PRC, as a state, is also defined by an actually existing, anti-Western imperialism, which is to say by the historical experience of colonialism and imperialism. These are as constitutive of the PRC as much as its well-known, longer-standing, so-called statist political-cultural tradition (a subject central to the next chapter on the Chinese new left). It is still nominally opposed to imperialism and committed to a strong and unified state; these form part of its—and the intellectual political culture's—self-understanding. The PRC even today sees itself, sincerely if you will, as different from liberal imperialist regimes old and new. Hence its success in Africa, capitalist-exploitative as it is, is nonetheless conducted in terms of fair trade, that is, unlike the USA or the International Monetary Fund (IMF), it does not impose structural adjustments and domestic African reforms in order to do business there. It well remembers the gunboat diplomacy of the Foreign Powers, imperialism conducted under a rhetoric of free trade and markets. As Domenico Losurdo, Uday Mehta, and others have demonstrated at length in reference to other, crucial, and world-making historical contexts than China (the British Empire in South Asia, American slavery, and French radicalism), to speak of liberalism is to speak of colonialism and imperialism.[44] The strong, historical connections between liberalism—as political philosophy and social or cultural 'theory' about individuals—are by now so well established (not simply by Losurdo and Mehta but many others[45]) that the absence of this critique within the China field—within liberal analyses of China, or work on contemporary Chinese liberalism—is striking. This may be that such scholars do not think China has any meaningful or historical connection to the long history of 'liberal imperialism.' If defined as an area, as opposed to something one just 'does' or talks about within a 'normal' or traditional discipline such as sociology or literature or politics, then 'China' can become hermetically sealed. While the study of China is certainly expanding and simply becoming part of the Western or global academy in general, China studies has traditionally been cut off from the theoretical and other intellectual movements that have changed many other disciplines within the academy (e.g. post-colonial studies).

Or it may be that the possible links to China and the historical record of liberalism and imperialism in other places would simply pose too difficult questions about the universality or universal good of liberalism for China, even in today's context. For all its rhetoric of liberty and freedom, liberalism

has been defined by two rather paradoxical but historically undeniable actualities: the logic of exclusion (to exclude what we can call the illiberal or unfit) and the practice of colonialism and imperialism. Just as, to take another example, Marx argued that despite the universalization of wage labor and 'free' laborers liberated from feudalism, which is to say despite formal equality, bourgeois civil society nonetheless excluded the working class from any meaningful participation, it couldn't be its vehicle to emancipation. In other words class was a clear, exclusionary divide. This practice of exclusion within historical liberalism (also in the form of race and empire, most notoriously) makes up much of Losurdo's magisterial *Liberalism: A Counter-History*. But this type of 'logic' or structure cannot be divorced from a more material and vulgar form of liberal imperialism either. And as Erik Ringmar notes in *Liberal Barbarism*, the destruction of the emperor's palace Yuanmingyuan in 1860 was not only a 'shock and awe' moment of war but it—that is British liberal imperialism—also effected a virtually permanent shift within international relations and the inter-state system.[46] That is, it defined a principal contradiction for the victorious West: *their* contradiction between civilization and barbarism, which as in the case with the Middle East today still animates the world geo-political system. This governing contradiction illustrates a powerful, even inherent connection between barbarism and liberalism. Others have likewise shown how China and imperialism is in fact central to the making of the modern world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, despite it being only 'semi' colonial or never having lost complete sovereignty.[47]

But if the field of China studies has been insufficiently attuned to the problem of Western, modern imperialism, the same cannot be said for the mainland government and its intellectual political culture. This will be discussed at more length in subsequent chapters. Suffice it to mention that the exclusionary, structural logic of liberalism as well as the degradations of imperialism is fairly well established in the PRC (though ironically not in Hong Kong), even if a certain, affirmative, liberal, Occidentalism is also well established in other quarters. It is often taught in secondary schools, for example, and is simply part of the identity and legitimacy of the state as something that had to be nationally liberated from the Western and Japanese imperialists. While the post-Cold War context may seem and is quite different, the rivalry between the USA and the PRC as well as traditional European airs of universality, means that this anti-imperialist discourse, no matter how contradicted by the PRC's own behaviors, in, say, Tibet, Xinjiang, or the South Pacific Ocean, will simply not go away.

It even resurfaced in a rude way against what would otherwise seem to be a very calm, mild-mannered, hard-working, and politically 'neutral' group of foreign academics known as the 'New Qing Historians.' Their ambit is to do for China what many historians have done for other places of the old and new worlds—to break apart or at least complicate official, long-standing, and not very rigorous narratives about national culture and other myths. In the case at hand this is about the alleged Sinicization of the Manchus (non-Han Chinese) when they ruled China during the last dynasty. In short 'we' Han-acculturated and assimilated them (the classic Chinese melting pot idea, but with the Han on top), and not the other way around. This has always, arguably, suggested a certain *Ah Q-esque* 'victory in defeat' kind of sentiment, though it must be admitted that the Manchu people were naturally also shaped by the Han and adopted many of its ways. At any rate, the de facto assimilation of the Manchu into a greater or long-standing tradition of China (and its boundaries) is a key plank of contemporary nationalist sentiment and official or mainstream history (or myth). All of this is beyond our scope here, but there is an additional subtext related to imperialism worth noting. The New Qing writers are making the case for a strong Manchu identity in the past even while ruling China; moreover they argue that the Qing dynasty, the last real, unified government before 1949, was not 'China' in the way that everyone else, including in the mainland, has assumed over the last century. It was its own thing and saw its empire differently than how we, and official discourse in China, have framed it.[48] This is clearly an affront, a seemingly deliberate one, to Chinese nationalism, itself a historical product of a massive and violent anti-imperialist effort against Western and Japanese desires to conquer and break up China. Hence the angry responses from a group of mainland scholars denouncing the New Qing movement—and speaking in clear and angry Maoist or old leftist terms. Li Zhiting among other mainland scholars wrote of the foreign group as doing the 'new imperial history,' of posing political dangers to China's unity, and so on. My point to this long example, then, is that this not only shows that the anti-imperialist impulse (not simply nationalism) is alive and well in some quarters but that there is a point to it. There is indeed a huge discourse of political orientalism that analytically and symbolically and rhetorically seeks—in its normative views and frameworks—is to break up the P.R.C. and to re-model it along the lines of Europe or the USA, to deconstruct its myths for the natives (saving them from the communists and from propaganda), to militate against the dreaded one-party state form, and so on. Of course this is always more evident and explicit in media texts as opposed to 'disinterested' scholarship. The problem—even if we can assume that the foreign, New Qing historical

narrative is the better one (which it may be)—is that no one in China has asked them to do this. And that it has its own views and knowledges. And that until recently, historically speaking, there have been very few occasions where the 'other' could respond. Hackles will be raised, and politics invoked and made visible.[49] Inevitably this minor media event triggered borderline hysterical responses not from the mainland (or not only there) but from liberals indignant about Chinese illiberalism still banging on about 'the West.'

Like China's commitment to the strong or 'paternalistic' state principle, once upon a time a thing approved by old-fashioned social democratic liberals from the USA like J. K. Galbraith and Charles Lindblom,[50] its belief in anti-imperialism, in its *own* anti-imperialism or 'writing back to the empire,' is hard for many Western commentators to fathom. (It is also a hard thing for mainstream Chinese political intellectual culture to hear coming from Southeast Asia or its own borderlands.) A recent case in point would be from Orville Schell, the longtime China/Asia journalist and quasi-academic, writing in the *New York Review of Books* about a recent return visit to China by former President Jimmy Carter. The latter was alongside Schell and other well-connected China Hands of decades gone by ('China Strikes Back!' is the revealing title) in what was probably his last trip to the Middle Kingdom. According to Schell, Carter et al. were given a somewhat cold reception, and in this the columnist detects an anti-Western sentiment aimed at humiliating *us*. While this may be considered a peculiar if unsurprising interpretation, it is worth quoting at length as a useful insight into the limitations of liberal views of China, and how much they presume:

> As we ate amid a sea of half-empty tables, a Chinese professor whispered to me that President Xi just days earlier had met with Zimbabwean president and international pariah Robert Mugabe. … He went on to say that Xi was actually in the Great Hall of the People toasting Malaysian Supreme Head of State Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah at the very moment of our dinner. But Xi didn't stop by the Carter dinner to say a word. None of the six Chinese newspapers I thumbed through the next day ran stories about the banquet or the visit. … Fortunately, the next night there was a very pleasant dinner sponsored by *Caijing Magazine* [edit: a noted liberal media empire in China] and also Deng's daughter, Deng Rong.
>
> The overall effect of the visit—and it is an 'effect' that has been sealed at a good many other meetings between Americans and Chinese—was to make the visitors feel the impossibility of making real contact. In fact, at one point I heard from sources close to him that Carter was upset enough to consider just packing up and going home.

> What made the dinner in the Great Hall all the more unsettling was the feeling that a whiff of 'humiliation'—*chiru*—hovered over it. The Party has for many years emphasized China's history of being humiliated and exploited by foreign powers. To feel a gust of Chinese reaction now coming back the other way left me wanting to leave early that night.
>
> As I walked with another American China scholar out of the Great Hall into Tiananmen Square, all lit up as if for Christmas, we agreed that it was dismaying not just that Carter was being kept at official arm's length and had been personally offended, but that this entire episode was like so many others with which we had both recently been involved. What is more, it struck us as somehow emblematic of the suspicious, secretive, peremptory, punitive way in which official China now so often deports itself in the world, especially toward democracies, which it tends to view as especially seditious, even hostile.[51]

What is striking in this remarkable account is that it lacks evidence of an intended humiliation or even of an actual slight. Rather, it betrays the anxiety of a declining empire and the declining status of 'foreign experts'—of their leadership or privileged status—in the PRC academic or intellectual spheres. (There is less perceived need of that in China since the post-Tiananmen 1990s.) That Carter (whose presidency ended over three decades prior to this dinner) might not be nearly as important as Mugabe or Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, actual heads of state, is simply an impossible thing to think, as is the track record of 'democracies' acting hostile toward China and other 'illiberal' places. China's grievances and sense of being besieged by Cold War liberal democracies, let alone by an allegedly finished imperialism (also waged by liberal democracies) during the bad old days of opium and Boxers and so on, really can't be taken seriously. What is there is just hostility and nastiness to the liberal democracies and their innocents. What is more, even if the perceived hatred—assuming that is what it was—had a ring of truth to it, would it not be justifiable? When China's foreign minister Wang Yi rudely lashed out at Canadian reporters in Ottawa during a high-level diplomatic visit, for asking arrogant and 'irresponsible' questions about human rights abuses when China had lifted 600 million people out of poverty, he not only had a good bit of righteousness on his side but a fair point, which was no doubt lost on those China experts who find Schell's own patronizing account too soft.[52]

But what if China *were* 'striking back' at American arrogance or superiority, as the headline puts it? Would that be a bad thing, unjustifiably rude and illiberal, or would it be fair play? For Schell as for others, this would

be an unfair 'reaction' as imperialism in China is very much a thing of the nineteenth century, or maybe World War II at best, and has nothing to do with the well-intentioned USA or the post-war, neo-imperial era. One suspects the perceived slight of Carter and Schell is really more on the perception side of things. But what strikes one is the illegitimacy of anti-imperialism in the eyes of the banquet-goer. Or that Mugabe and Shah have more standing and face. Imperialism past and present, in political history and also as an intellectual 'thing' to think through and against, remains a blind spot of contemporary neo-liberalism. But it is not so for the Chinese intellectual political culture, parts of which see liberalism itself as historically part of the problem. Put another way, liberalism is challenged by the *difference* of the PRC in this respect.[53] It typically responds with paternalism or sheer contempt for the PRC as a political and historical entity, and often by speaking for some cryptic silent majority of victims and sufferers and a silent majority that lacks 'freedom.' At its best, liberal critiques of the PRC are specific in speaking for and representing clear, actual victims or sufferers of, for example, police and state repression. In this sense the outright advocates for the end of the Party-state system, *a la* the *Charter 2008* supporters abroad (or at home for that matter), and liberal scholar-critics of 'the regime' are far more honest and lucid than those who share the same essential views and historiography (the total failure of Maoism) but who want nonetheless to *say* they take the PRC seriously as an object and subject of knowledge. But the rub with the straightforward, anti-regime critics is that they thereby reveal themselves to be at clear odds with the self-understanding of many, if not most, Chinese on the one hand, and with how knowledge is produced or understood in the PRC itself on the other hand.

Illiberal China seeks to illustrate these and other challenges to—and refusals of—liberal thinking in separate chapters dedicated to the rise of the Chinese new left as an intellectual movement caught up in a post-colonial and counter-hegemonic struggle over discourse (knowledge-power) in the PRC, which is also necessarily a struggle against a global liberalism and the demonization of the revolution, socialism, and the state; the rise and fall, yet persistence of liberalism in China during the Mao era and well after Tiananmen 1989, which includes the liberal economism and market-mentality of the party as well as the post-Mao liberal intellectuals and their own discursive efforts since that watershed year; the Wukan uprising of 2011 (in Lufeng, Guangdong), a democratic if short-lived protest and electoral victory that illustrates an illiberal movement

(pro-Party-state) and the limits of 'electoral' or democratic politics without economics (i.e. without a front against the commodification of everything); and Hong Kong's liberal democratic Occupy/Umbrella Movement of 2014, as well as the 'pan-democratic' opposition more generally, both of which rigorously follow the normative, procedural liberal script and yet fail to produce any political-democratic gains. It is to these that we may now turn. A final chapter then attempts to think through some of the political consequences and implications of illiberalism and liberalism today.

Notes

1. See the International Monetary Fund report on selected countries, October 2014. http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2014/02/weodata/weorept.aspx. Accessed Dec. 6, 2017.
2. See Martin Jacques, *When China Rules the World: The End of the Western World and the Birth of a New Global Order*. New York: Penguin Books, 2012. But to be fair to Jacques—as China's self-professed enemies as well as Western leftists are *not* wont to do—the overstatement in his book lies chiefly in its unfortunate title. China has been nothing if not consistent in refusing any desire to 'rule the world' in the American or former imperial ways of old Europe. The reset of his book reflects, accessibly, the mainstream or conventional 'optimistic' or 'pro' views about China from within China itself, in addition to a fairly brave attempt to get people to think through China's economic rise as epochal and 'game-changing.' Of course, this all just represents one enthusiastic view of that rise, and it must be said that he indeed glosses over the gross amounts of exploitation, the degradation of the socialist revolution, and so on. But it is also that even Jacques sees as dangerous in some ways (e.g. Chinese racism or ethnocentrism). For the conventional Western leftist view, see Perry Anderson's review of Jacques in 'Sinomania,' in *The London Review of Books*, 32.2, 2010: https://www.lrb.co.uk/v32/n02/perry-anderson/sinomania
3. For the by now laughable 'collapse views' see Gordon Chang's *The Coming Collapse of China* (London, Cornerstone Digital: 2010) and Prof. David Shambaugh's 'The Coming Chinese Crackup,' *The Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2015: https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-coming-chinese-crack-up-1425659198.
4. See to begin with Kevin O'Brien and Li Lianjiang, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (Cambridge University Press, 2006). This has been a deservedly and profoundly influential book, but it must also be said that the study

of Chinese protest would occupy an entire library. My work on Wukan and Hong Kong that follows is meant to join in to the study of protest, albeit from a more general or theoretical and interpretive angle along cultural studies lines. This is by no means meant as a rebuke of this valuable, more sociological field. See also Cai Yongshun, *Collective Resistance in China: Why Popular Protests Succeed or Fail* (Stanford University Press, 2010), and for the working class or labor movement specifically, see Ching Kwan Lee *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (University of California Press, 2007). Elizabeth Perry's work in this field is also worth noting.

5. See Professor Kerry Brown, July 2017, 'The Curious Case of Ideas in Modern Chinese Politics.' http://thediplomat.com/2017/07/the-curious-case-of-ideas-in-modern-chinese-politics/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
6. This was also frequently said of the former Soviet Union, for those who recall that entity. My point is not to endorse the censorship, of course, and least of all in the decidedly non-revolutionary context of today, but to note one of its roots, and that it is not irrational.
7. See Sebastian Heilmann and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Mao's Invisible Hand: The Political Foundations of Adaptive Governance in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011).
8. See Elizabeth J. Perry, 'The Illiberal Challenge of Authoritarian China,' (*Taiwan Journal of Democracy*, 2012, 8.2: 3–15).
9. Perry, Ibid., 3.
10. This is at least one, traditional way of reading much of the sources of critical theory, and not just Marxism-Leninism-Maoism: by which I mean Marx, Nietzsche, even Freud, and certainly Max Weber, the Frankfurt School, and beyond (arguably including Foucault).
11. Yuri Pines, *The Everlasting Empire: The Political Culture of Ancient China and Its Imperial Legacy* (Princeton University Press, 2012).
12. On this see in particular Wang Hui's work on the concept of China as an empire state, *China from Empire to Nation-State* (Trans. Michael Gibbs Hill, Harvard University Press, 2014).
13. My remarks here are inspired by Michael Puett's work in particular. For a quick accessible introduction, see his June 5, 2016, interview with Olivia Goldhill at: https://qz.com/699741/a-harvard-philosophers-argument-for-not-loving-yourself-just-as-you-are/. And his co-authored book with Christine Gross-Loh, *The Path: What Chinese Philosophers Can Teach Us About the Good Life* (Simon and Schuster, 2016).
14. See most recently his *The China Model: Political Meritocracy and the Limits of Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2015), as well as a recent article, 'Comparing Political Values in China and the West: What Can Be Learned and Why It Matters' (*The Annual Review of Political Science*, 2017).

http://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-031821. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.

15. For more on these terms, see Chaps. 2 and 3 and especially He Li, 2015.
16. The Caixin Media Company in China is a key example of this, as would be the work of at least some human rights lawyers in China.
17. See Lin Chun's *China and Global Capitalism*: *Reflections on Marxism, History, and Contemporary Politics* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), *passim*, but Chaps. 2 and 3 especially.
18. Ibid., but especially Chaps. 5 and 6 in Lin Chun.
19. See Jan Nederveen Pieterse's work on globalization and culture and development, including his influential *Globalization and Culture: Global Mélange*, 3rd edition (New York Rowan and Littlefield, 2015).
20. Vukovich, *China and Orientalism* (Routledge, 2012).
21. See, most recently, Engin Isin, ed., *Citizenship after Orientalism: Transforming Political Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015). In my view, political orientalism can be defined as a subset of 'regular' orientalism or a Foucauldian/Saidian discourse about the Eastern or Asian Other that arguably dates back to antiquity or at least early modernity. In the case of China, the question of politics is arguably at the forefront of Western intellectual fascination/repulsion, alongside Chinese women and more culturalist obsessions like the language or food. I find Isin's term useful because it allows for some specificity and focus on the political while retaining the critique of universalism.
22. The decision to not only publish but also strongly promote and hail Vivek Chibber's polemic against the Indian Subaltern historians—wrongly conflated with post-colonial studies as a field and *historical* movement—is a case in point. See Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (London: Verso, 2013). Perry Anderson's evasive review of Martin Jacques ('Sinomania' in the 28 January 2010 *London Review of Books*) would be another case (oddly seeing Jacques' admiring synthesis of mainstream mainland views as misplaced radical desire). But what is also at stake, beyond the residual Trotskyism of Britain, is the profound universal-humanism of Western leftist as much as liberal discourse (e.g. the generic universal 'modernity' for Anderson). This is in my view at odds not only with a Fanon or Cesaire but with a Lenin or Mao and arguably Marx and social, historical reality. Universalism is discourse.
23. Of course, I am here omitting the brief period of ferment in the Cultural Revolution in Hong Kong, as well as the militant seamen's strike of 1922 or the later more corporate labor movement. While significant in their own right, I think my point—that today there is no left in the socialist or Marxist or radical sense—will nonetheless be readily admitted by Hong Kong scholars who recognize the difference between liberal and leftist (perhaps a diminishing demographic globally). As for its liberal democratic movement, I return to this subject in a later chapter on the Occupy-to-Umbrella

movement. Not for nothing was Hong Kong a crucial base of (Western) China studies during the Cold War era, and it remains a vehemently anti-communist space, perhaps more than in the colonial era. But it must also be said that Hong Kong's intellectual sphere has it pockets and bubbles of more heterodox political thought and scholarship. That this stems from colonial liberalism is undeniable and an irony not lost on the present author.

24. This was after all the key, if somewhat oblique thread running through much of Fredric Jameson's work on post-modernism through the 1990s. See, of course, his *Postmodernism* (Duke University Press, 1991) as well as David Harvey's *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1989) for the 1990s critiques. Neither much engaged the post-colonial field. For a more recent and more thorough and immanent critique of the theory and politics of post-structuralism/post-modernism (as in many ways *conservative* or merely liberal politics), see Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (Columbia University Press, 2007).
25. See Jodi Dean, *The Communist Horizon* (New York: Verso, 2012) and *Crowds and Party* (New York: Verso, 2016).
26. An unfortunate case in point is the recent book of the erstwhile heterodox scholar, James C. Scott, which includes a chapter on the Great Leap Forward, but betrays no actual attention to the debates, even in English, on the subject. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (Yale University Press, 1999). Scott's difference from an avowed neo-liberal like Hayek is negligible in this book at least.
27. 'Neo-liberalism' may usefully capture the economic forces and structures at work, but the degradation is larger still. The 'neo' prefix obscures as much as it helps, and there can be no doubt that when it comes to China, the liberalism is very much of a classical (markets vs. the regime) kind, or a simulation thereof, from the New Enlightenment of the 1980s (*qinmen*) to those symbolic warriors aiming their expertise and academic tracts at the Party-state. Accounts of a rationalist/entrepreneurial/competitive 'neo' rationality in the culture and society at large, as in the work of Pierre Dardot and Christian Laval's *The New Way of the World: On Neoliberal Society* (Trans. Gregory Elliott. London: Verso, 2014) do not adequately fit the phenomenon of liberalism in China or among its intellectual critics inside or out. For these are driven by political and identitarian passions but also by the politics of knowledge and the dynamics of orientalism and Occidentalism, that is of the modern colonial era. Neo-liberalism as a political rationality that transforms liberal democracy into an economic rationality—as in Wendy Brown's *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015)—certainly fits the bill (particularly for the party elite and liberal intellectuals) but with the important proviso that what it is transforming is socialism and Maoism or even traditional discourses of well-being and livelihood.

28. See Spence, *To Change China: Western Advisers in China* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980).
29. See also Fabio Lanza on this, in his ingratiating intellectual history of—some of—the former American Committee of Concerned Asian Scholars (he glosses over those who turned to the right as well as post-1970s area studies): *The End of Concern: Maoist China, Activism, and Asian Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017). The P.R.C. being objectified by academic and broader discourse, and being tightly bound up in the politics of knowledge, is of course a consistent theme of my own as well as others' work, including those of us who work on 'actually existing' Maoism. This is also a basic insight of post-colonial studies after Edward Said's *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978). But it is always a good and welcome time for China historians to join the 'movement.' What is striking now is that, as China becomes a clear 'subject of history' alongside other major powers, it is only with great difficulty that it can be seen as a subject in some way other than an ugly empire in the making (or merely a gross capitalist space) whose government will or *should* collapse. Thinking differently about the P.R.C. is not an easy task, of course, and one that probably belongs more to non-historians (or non-archivist versions of that discipline).
30. Etienne Balibar, 'Difference, Otherness, Exclusion.' *Parallax* 11.1 (2005): 19–34.
31. For an English translation of the leaked document from 2013, see 'Document 9,' at http://www.chinafile.com/document-9-chinafile-translation.TranslationandcommentarybyChinaFile/AsiaSocietyFoundation. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
32. Ibid.
33. I essay contemporary Chinese politics, then, as a way into better apprehending the global political conjuncture, a complex mixture of neo-liberalism and illiberalism where the stakes are nothing less than the legitimacy of the state—any state, the state as such in intellectual political discourse. The degradation of liberalism into a neo-liberalism, and yet its persistence in regard to an increasingly assertive and successful, if authoritarian, mainland politics are the cases in point.
34. I leave to one side here the question of whether or not the state will, or needs to, radically redistribute wealth to be 'socialist,' as well as the important if small percentage of party intellectuals and others who think the Maoist revolution is and was important and should not be forgotten.
35. I take this formulation from noted liberal political scientist Charles E. Lindblom, who, in the late 1970s and before the dominance of *neo*-liberalism, memorably pointed to the PRC and Cuba not as totalitarianisms or Soviet-like regimes but as preceptorial systems rooted in propaganda, of course, but also trying to govern culturally or ideologically by creating the new man/new woman.

36. (OED, illiberalism). Online version.
37. All quotations here are form the online version of the complete Oxford English Dictionary at http://www.oed.com/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
38. https://www.ceu.edu/article/2016-02-23/illiberal-regimes-employ-range-anti-democratic-tactics-cement-power-panelists-say.
39. See Chloe Froissart's 2014 article, 'The Ambiguities between Contention and Political Participation: A Study of Civil Society Development in Authoritarian Regimes' (*Journal of Civil Society*, 10:3, 219–222), 220. This assumes that the students of 1989 were in search of radical regime-change, as opposed to greater free speech and inclusion for them. For more on Tiananmen and ways to read it, see Vukovich, *China and Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2012).
40. One may note that I do not use the phrase 'serial abuser of *human* rights.' This is because, with Gilles Delueze, I find the concept of human rights to be a reification and which do not exist—laws and power and life do. See extracts from Deleuze's *L'Abécédaire de Gilles Deleuze, avec Claire Parnet* (Vidéo Éd. Montparnasse, 1996) at http://www.generation-online.org/p/fpdeleuze10.htm. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017. Of course this is a historical argument but readers may demand an authorial sanction.
41. See Jonathan Kaiman in *The Guardian* in 2014: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/23/xinjiang-china-court-ilham-tohti-muslim-uighur-life-in-prison. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
42. Ci Jiwei, *Moral China in the Age of Reform* (Cambridge University Press, 2014).
43. I leave to one side the other sense of illiberal, vulgar, crude, stingy, 'peasanty,' and so on, as this is simply and clearly old-fashioned orientalism and elitism when applied cart blanche to 'the Chinese,' or as some say in Hong Kong, to the 'mainlanders.'
44. Domenic Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History* (Trans. Gregory Elliott. New York: Verso, 2011). Uday Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago University Press, 1999). See also Charles W. Mills, 'Racial liberalism' (*PMLA*. 123.5 (2008): 1380–1397).
45. To take just two recent examples, see Theodore Koditschek, *Liberalism, Imperialism, and the Historical Imagination: Nineteenth-century Visions of a Greater Britain* (Cambridge University Press, 2011). Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire* (Princeton University Press, 2016). Matthew P Fitzpatrick, *Liberal Imperialism in Germany: Expansionism and Nationalism, 1848–1884* (Princeton University Press, 2008).
46. Eric Ringmar, *Liberal Barbarism* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

47. I have written on this at length elsewhere in terms of post-colonial theory. See for example Vukovich, 'Postcolonialism, Globalization, and the "Asia Question",' in Graham Huggan, ed., *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies* (Oxford University Press, 2013) or more recently, 'Re-orienting All the Fields' (*Inter-Disciplines: Journal of History and Sociology*, 8.1, 2017, 145–164). But for more 'proper' historical studies, see also the work of James Hevia, English Lessons: *The Pedagogy of Imperialism in Nineteenth-Century China* (Duke University Press, 2003) and *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-building in Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2012). See also Lin Chun, (2017) 'Discipline and power: knowledge of China in political science' (*Critical Asian Studies*, 49.4, 2017, 501–522).
48. In this section I am drawing on a 2017 interview with the prolific historian Richard J. Smith, by Professor Jeffrey Wasserstrom, 'New and Old Histories of the Qing Dynasty' at the *Los Angeles Review of Books*: http://blog.lareviewofbooks.org/chinablog/new-old-histories-qing-dynasty-interview-richard-j-smith/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
49. For characteristically snide commentary on the mainland 'outburst,' see a 'China Media Project blog' here, 'New Qing History targeted,' https://u.osu.edu/mclc/2015/04/25/new-qing-history-targeted/. (Accessed Nov. 1, 2017). And also 'Chinese Academy of Social Sciences throwing shade at The New Qing History' here: http://granitestudio.org/2015/04/23/chinese-academy-of-social-sciences-throwing-shade-at-the-new-qing-history/. (Accessed Nov. 1, 2017). It is precisely the arrogance of such foreign-based comments and responses to Chinese anger and politics that reproduces the problem of 'rudeness' and keeps the China/West divergence going. Which in the end, or in itself, is perhaps not a bad thing at all. As is obvious I am not taking sides on Manchu versus Han but, while an outsider, I am more interested in the PRC versus its enemies, real and imagined.
50. See J. K. Galbraith's brief but charming travel memoir, *A China Passage* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), and Charles E. Lindblom's *Politics and Markets: The World's Political-Economic Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1977) for the discussion of the 'preceptorial system.'
51. Orville Schell, 'China Strikes Back!,' Oct. 23, 2014, *New York Review of Books*. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/10/23/china-strikes-back/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.
52. See the *Guardian* report by Ashifa Kassam and Tom Phillips for details of the Wang explosion. https://www.theguardian.com/law/2016/jun/02/chinese-foreign-minister-canada-angry-human-rights-question. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017. For a self-revealing comment that Schell is too soft on China's fear and political insecurity, see Perry Link's response, '"China

Strikes Back": An Exchange,' in the Nov. 20, 2014, issue. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2014/11/20/china-strikes-back-exchange/. Accessed Nov. 1, 2017.

53. For more on liberalism's inability to handle/understand difference well, see Charles Larmore, himself a distinguished liberal political theorist but fully appreciative of this issue: 'Political Liberalism: Its Motivations and Goals' in *Oxford Studies in Political Philosophy*, vol. 1, Eds. David Sobel, Peter Vallentyne, and Steven Wall, pp. 63–88 (Oxford University Press, 2015). His final lines are worth quoting at length: 'I suspect that similarly conceptions of global justice, whatever their moral merits, have a chance of being implemented only if states, liberal states, find themselves moved to put them into practice. Yet, how likely is that in the present age? The distinctive problems of our world are not among the problems for which liberalism was devised, and they threaten its very viability. Its prospects, I am sad to say, are accordingly uncertain.'

CHAPTER 2

The New Left and the Old Politics of Knowledge: A Battle for Chinese Political Discourse

In the world of China after Tiananmen, 1989, after that violent and, what is more, that *un-necessary* crackdown in response to a large, mostly peaceful and 'loyal' if disorganized protest and shutdown of Beijing, most Western observers still expected—perhaps still expect—an eventual return of mass protests and demands for 'freedom' or 'democracy' or political and ideological 'liberalization.'[1] What was called the 'cultural fever' of the 1980s before that event was precisely such a ferment, the wide-ranging embrace of 'liberalism' and 'democracy' (as signifiers, as translated texts, in various fora) of seemingly all things 'Western' (from global capitalism to popular culture).[2] This was perhaps best represented, before the student protesters themselves (as opposed to the striking workers), by the controversial yet state-funded and thus state-sanctioned documentary series *He Shang*, a paean to 'the rise of the West' and the decline of ancient, 'yellow,' Confucian, 'feudal' China (also represented by Mao in the film). If it pathologized peasants for lacking entrepreneurial and modern spirit, and idealized the rise of the modern, capitalist West, it nonetheless expressed genuine, widely felt enthusiasm for the new era; in its concluding minutes *He Shang* even trumpeted political reform (which led to its still-current ban after 1989). With the image of the murky Yellow River emptying into the Pacific, it offered a vision and 'China dream' of endless development, progress, and possibility, a new order of bright sunny days stemming from globalization and capitalist expansion. As if it were sublimating and not simply (not only) rejecting political, equalitarian, Maoist

D. F. Vukovich, *Illiberal China*, China in Transformation,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0541-2_2

revolution. Clearly the China of the 1980s and the Western 'end of history' sentiment (Fukuyama) *must* have indexed something big happening. After the awful interruption of progress on the morning of June 4, 1989, surely the zeitgeist, China's *convergence* with political normalcy and 'modern' democratic forms would return, alongside its burgeoning and increasingly privatized economy and all those millions lifted out of poverty. The velvet, or jasmine, or Tahir Square moment awaits.

And yet, it never arrives. Nothing of the sort has happened, even if liberalism still exists as a real, if not terribly influential type of political intellectual formation in (state) universities and elsewhere, such as the corporate media group, *Caixin*.[3] The classic philosophical and methodological problem of the 'is/ought distinction' plagues conventional expertise, Chinese language proficiencies notwithstanding. What *has* happened has been the rise of a Chinese new left after 1989, as an intellectual or discursive 'movement' also in universities and other fora, aligned with yet separate from the remnants and new adherents of what we might call the 'old left' (some remaining party elders and other, less academic voices; not neo- but 'full-on' Maoists that in fact run a greater risk of repression). This is a movement—even if its participants often eschew the left label, since 'Leftist' was such an accusatory, demonized term in the 1980s, and since the state itself wishes to control politicization—that turns upon three or four things: a defense of the revolutionary, socialist past as meaningful and not fake or merely propaganda; a qualified but definite critique of the effects of capitalist marketization and, in a word, of the commodification of Chinese society and workers and peasants in particular; and—in traditional leftist fashion—a root concern with social equality, which is to say with systemic inequality and exploitation as well (arguably, the meaning of 'class' as the fundament of Marxist theory).[4]

Gan Yang, an influential intellectual who—admirably, it may be felt—runs the gamut from liberal to leftist to neo-Confucian or traditionalist, defines the Maoist legacy as 'a striving for equality and justice' that flows out of thousands of years of Chinese civilization. It is an ethic of equality and also a praxis of political participation, and it forms one of China's three pillars or traditions that can, and must, be integrated into one holistic one. Maoism would thus work alongside Confucianism and May 4th-era inspired liberalism or rights-based political reasoning.[5] Gan's (and others') turn toward Confucianism is not without controversy and paradox, given that it was precisely that tradition and keyword that was attacked from the 1920s through the late Mao era. But it must also be said that the object of critique in these instances was less the writings of the sage himself or his

pre-modern acolytes and more the institutionalized educational, political, and ideological apparatuses summed up by his proper name (or 'feudalism'); even the famous/infamous 'Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius' campaign and texts were as much about Mao's thought (trying to extend his style of thinking to ancient periods) and contemporary power struggles between the 'Gang of Four' and their enemies as about the ins and outs of Confucian thought.[6] So too one must note that at a very general yet important level, Maoism and Chinese communism share some concerns or values with Confucian and other forms of traditional thought (e.g. Legalism in particular), namely, in this case, the value of the 'common wealth' or people's livelihood. So too it musQuery solved t be said that Mao, for example, may have been anti-Confucius yet was famously steeped in the classics, just as the communist movement itself embraced other traditional, often local folk cultures. In this the Chinese leftism or socialism finds a more natural or ready-made ally in its own traditions than in liberalism. This—once again—came to China and to much of Asia via gunboat, artillery shells, and forcibly opened 'free markets.'

But the proper context here is the post-Tiananmen one, the time of full-on globalization and hence a greater threat to 'difference' through homogenization and cultural imperialism and to all things traditional and stable. This is very much a properly leftist or 'democratic' concern, especially in the former colonized or Third World. So the opposition between tradition and communism, as with tradition versus modernity, is indeed a false one, and this is one lesson from the Chinese left, new and old. Maoist communism, developmentalist yet radically egalitarian and anti-market, an anti-modern modernism as Wang Hui puts it, was one attempt to synthesize or Sinify Marxism and the inherited civilization.[7] How can one understand Chinese civilization (ranging from imperial history to everyday life practices) alongside but analytically separate from historical Western concepts and discourses? And beyond this, and assuming one wants to explore it, how would this lead us to rethink or re-envision the limits and possibilities of Western 'civilization' and liberalism in particular? This is a massive, perhaps even—given the hegemony of Western liberal intellectual political culture in the academy and in mainstream media—an ultimately impossible task. But it is one being taken up by the new left and other intellectuals in China, and it is remarkably ambitious and post-colonial if nothing else.

At any rate what is to be emphasized here with Gan Yang is precisely the socialist or equalitarian basis to the re-appropriation of Confucianism. If the liberal 'reform era' represents some type of market freedom or rights,

and Mao justice and equality and participation, Confucius stands in for something like traditional daily life and 'heritage.'[8] Thus this is clearly not a call for a restoration of feudalism but a concern for cultural preservation and even simply an insistence on Chinese difference and specificity in terms of the categories we use to understand the place in all its variety and complexity and people. This type of more critical and political neo-Confucianism or traditionalism should be distinguished from the apolitical or baldly essentialist forms, including the 'national learning' or *guoxue* phenomenon.[9] As for Gan's liberalism—articulated through the example of Deng Xiaoping—this seems largely a nod to the importance of markets (liberal economics) and to the 'immovable object' of the ideological and institutional shift after Mao (the Party's de-Maoification) than to any political liberalism or rootedness in liberty or rights as the basis of the political.[10] Gan Yang seeks to integrate these three streams into some type of consensus for the new, post-Deng or post-Tiananmen era of reforms or progress. (He like others on the left has therefore been accused by liberal critics of wanting the crown's ear.) This resonates with a certain traditional or Confucian role of intellectuals in relation to the state, and also with the Maoist or Marxist one: to serve the people in this way, and to try and change the world as opposed to merely interpret it. 'Serve the people' may be the single most effective and popular of all the Maoist slogans, precisely because it overlaps with traditional values and upbringings. But there is also no denying its specifically leftist or political connotations in the Chinese context. Of course it must also be said that the Maoist vision of intellectual work (also articulated by Qu Qiubai most famously) was to first produce new organic intellectuals from inside the working class and peasantry, and Mao had no love for 'independent' intellectuals.[11]

To be certain, not all new left texts articulate all of these concerns (i.e. the red past, the baleful effects of marketization and globalization, social or substantive equality), and not simultaneously in any given essay or instance. But the general direction is clear and by now widely noted: equality (and this criticism of 'reform' and globalization), the revolutionary problem or history, the role and necessity of the state. Any list of names of representative thinkers will be incomplete and open to dispute, and would have to include a few foreign and expatriate, but actively involved, writers and scholars.[12] More generally, the new left is unthinkable except as a response to the iniquities and social problems of capitalist or neo-liberal reform in China, which is also to say as a response to globalization. So too it is worth recalling the traditional Marxist and socialist designation of left

versus right: it was about one's position on capitalism and the market, particularly in terms of production, and on the comparative importance of the economic and social class. In a word, it was about socialism or equality within the 'base' as opposed to the superstructure. This too has strong resonance within the new left of China, even if that may not be at all obvious in a discussion of, say, modernity. (Just as the writings of, say, the liberal dissident Liu Xiaobo do not all index his advocacy of privatization and colonization.) This is contrary to the classical, liberal, and conservative thought that either ignored the economic and social class issues altogether or focused merely on consumption/distribution (the market) and not production. In China, the liberal side of the spectrum is by comparison concerned primarily with rights-based or formal and legal equality as individuals, as well as with privatization of the state-based economy. For all the frequent invocations of how left and right have little, or only confused, or perhaps opposite meanings in China as compared to the rest of the world—and this has become a knee-jerk reaction in expert commentary—the new left is clearly on a conventional leftist side as defined earlier, whereas the liberals are on the right (fiscal conservatives, as the Americans say). Indeed that confusion (far more prevalent among foreigners, it must be said) has more to do with the resolute anti-statism of contemporary post-1970s Western intellectual political culture, especially under the American influence and the rise of neo-liberalism. It has also to do with the Western identification of the 'oriental' Chinese state as exceptionally despotic, and so represents a perfect storm: orientalism, Cold War educational legacies and scholarship in addition to general ignorance of all things mainland, neo-liberal as well as 'radical' anti-state theories and sentiments, and then obvious propaganda and repressive apparatuses on the mainland side. Given this, it is not hard to see how and why mainland Chinese leftism has such a tough row to hoe in the global intellectual scene.

The latter is not only liberal but more and more specifically neo-liberal or gung-ho marketization, especially in the case of China; mix this with good old-fashioned anti-communism and orientalist notions about Chinese despotism and domination, passivity, and lack of freedom, and you have a perfect storm of either hostility or, more fatefully, incomprehension. There could be no better example than journalist Jonathan Fenby's response, in a letter to the *London Review of Books*, to Wang Hui's article on the fate of the populist Chongqing experiment after the fall of Bo Xilai (about which more later). Fenby misreads Wang Hui as simply being in denial that what China needs is exactly those neo-liberal reforms that Bo and the left are

against.[13] This also assumes Bo was genuinely leftist himself, which is not Wang's point. His point rather is that when Bo and his populist policies were under attack it was immediately in the form of denouncing—by no less than former Premier Wen Jiabao—his Cultural Revolution-like tendencies and behaviors; this is nothing but an attempt to de-politicize that populism and Bo's undeniably charismatic authority.

Of course just as you can have liberal and/or heterodox Confucians in China but not in France, the new left has its own characteristics as well, and it would be a mistake to simply map the Chinese positions onto modular Western ones. Even allowing for a traditional if not universal left standard of substantive equality and 'pro' state thinking, not all lefts are the same or exist in the same hemisphere. (We will attend to the question of 'Chinese revolutionary discourse' later.) Indeed if there is such a thing as a 'Western left,' it seems far closer to Chinese liberalism than to the new or old Chinese left. With roots, however distant, in a classical Marxist (and Leninist-Maoist) tradition, the new left deliberately de-emphasizes or even drops standard categories like 'the individual' and typical liberal focuses on the formal, institutional-legal dimensions of society. Or more simply: the liberal voices in China—*a la* conventional China studies and political science—see the Party-state as the clear, simple, overwhelming 'main enemy,' to a degree that recalls American libertarianism more than, say, European liberalism. The new left, closer to Marxist and traditional Chinese political culture (in its mainstream), simply does not see the state this way. For them, this strongly Cold War–inflected view is too simple and, as Wang Hui among others has argued, it is probably more accurate to see the Party-state as having been *captured* by neo-liberalism and global capital (and a corrupt bureaucracy) than as either Nietzsche's State (the 'coldest of all cold monsters') or a version of oriental despotism.[14] If liberals see the left as 'complicit' with the state and therefore bad, the new left sees the state as being complicit with capital and capitalists and at risk of being wholly incorporated into national and global capitalism via the logic of liberal marketization. This view of economic power is indexed by Han Yuhai.

A prolific literature professor and public intellectual, author of recent 'young reader' books on Karl Marx and Mao Zedong, Han has been referred to by Geremie Barmé as 'splenetic' and 'extremist' for expressing sharp criticisms of liberalism and market fetishism within China; he argues forcefully that Chinese history, including the party purges of the 1950s, be rewritten from a leftist perspective.[15] Here is Han in one such instance, writing less than ten years after Tiananmen: 'liberalism has enjoyed ascen-

dancy because it proffers a theoretical framework that allows right-wing politics to overcome its legitimacy crisis' (cited in Barmé 304). 'Liberalism' in this usage may seem like a straw man to outside observers, or perhaps a mere cover for pro-regime apologetics. Isn't liberalism lacking there, or is at least very marginal? But Han is objecting to 'liberal' commitments to the market and social stability in the name of continued economic growth, which is to say to the waves of economistic de-politicization that characterize the post-Mao or, if you want to be kind to Deng Xiaoping, to at least the post-Tiananmen Party-state. In one type of liberal, modernizationist argument—shared by the discourse of Sinological orientalism, as noted earlier—this slowly gathering tidal wave will eventually lead to societal transformation and democratization. In fact this is about the only way you can legitimize accumulation by dispossession: the taking away of resources and benefits in a promise of what is to come (riches, presumably). This is standard capitalist apologetics, but it takes on a liberal political conceit in the case of illiberal regimes with a strong or more public, non-private capacity. Free the market and the polity will follow. Han Yuhai sees *this* type of liberalism, far and away the dominant if unspoken type in China and abroad, as an apologia for the status quo and, as Barmé notes, Han further argues that this only entrenches the elite and *discourages* political participation. Of course Han is not claiming to be objective or 'balanced' here. But it is hard to say what is 'extreme' about this, as Barmé also suggests, unless it is the very idea of such a staunch, if standard, leftist (Marxist) view. Recall Rousseau on the origins of civil society in property (i.e. theft), or Marx on the universalization of labor supplanting slavery but dooming civil society to the bourgeoisie.

In another instance of alleged 'virulence,' Han writes: 'On the path to slavery, the liberalisation of capital reinforces the privileges of the class that is already privileged, allowing slavery to grow and not democracy.'[16] Virulent for whom, or from what standpoint? I would submit that the *liberal* reaction to such a critique of markets and class domination in China—for Han, in the name of mass- and economic democracy—is the most telling here. Han's political position is Maoist in some basic sense, which is also to say Marxist, which is also to say the 'common sense' of Chinese leftism,[17] including in the passion expressed in diction like 'slavery' and in equating liberalism to selfishness and the 'right wing.' Put another way, Han is also speaking from within Maoist discourse, which we will attend to later in a separate section. Part of that entails a dyadic way of thinking—and intensely, affectively *living*—politics, what Carl Schmitt

famously/infamously framed as friend/enemy schemes, but what in the Marxist tradition was framed as class struggle (e.g. bourgeois/proletarian) and, with Mao, as the first thing for communists to ask: 'Who are our enemies? Who are our friends? This is a question of the first importance for the revolution.'[18] Liberalism can thus appear as an enemy, not a friend. This may sound extreme, and perhaps it is, and is certainly *illiberal*. But this perspective could also be placed on a continuum that includes Lu Xun (arguably *not* a liberal individualist but a deep nationalist concerned with the collective Chinese character), the Frankfurt School, Rousseau, and so on, in addition to various revolutionary 'isms' of the twentieth century. What has shifted, in other words, is the liberal/Western/global political spectrum and intellectual culture, certainly to the right (in favor of, unbothered by class/social inequality) but also toward de-politicization. The new left has resisted this by holding on to a loosely Marxist or Maoist politics of commitment and to core socialist values like socio-economic equality and class analysis, as well as to an intense, dyadic understanding of politics and geopolitics. Although 'merely' academics or intellectuals and sometimes disparaged as nationalists, dupes of the Party-state, and so on, they are in fact far more political than most of their critics and far more involved in the politics of discourse.[19] I will return to this latter, political-theoretical point momentarily when we discuss Maoist discourse.

But to speak as Han does of a right-wing legitimacy crisis *after* Tiananmen—itself more a liberal than left-wing type of 'democracy movement,' as many have argued—also shows us something of the complexity of new left positioning. It implies—and alas must *only* imply—that, first of all, the deadly violence of 1989 was, indeed, an unjustified crackdown and not something to be defended. They thus part ground from bad 'patriotic' responses to 1989 in the mainland, whether from 'netizens' (sometimes paid to be such) or from younger generations who have 'learned' it was nothing important or was rightfully stopped in the name of 'progress.'[20] The year 1989 indeed represented a serious crisis, at least in its denouement. The problem of legitimacy—the state's difficulty in securing this, after saying 'farewell' to revolution and equality and after the iniquities of 'reform'—is in fact ongoing, even if it is also clearly winning that battle in so far as maintaining one-party rule is concerned. But Han suggests as well that liberalism is part of the problem (the status quo) and not the answer, thus departing from the Tiananmen generation, and also implicitly frames the state in class terms as right wing, or at least in danger of being entirely so. Han assumes that link between liberalism and capital, that individual freedom and power and rights

are free for everyone with enough money and capital to exercise them. This may be 'polemical'—to use a much disparaged word—but it is also a valid and long-standing perspective on liberalism as seen from the left perspective. Han's Marxism/Maoism is worth quoting at length here, to illustrate it and also to show that the new left critique of neo-liberalism and neo-authoritarianism is meant to go hand in hand:

> Democracy … does not require abolishing the state, but rather expanding its democratic functioning. This is because economic activity is always embedded within social conditions, because independent economic forms divorced from social relations and conditions do not actually exist. So even if one strives for economic freedom, this cannot be simplistically understood as the casting off of a political structure or other constraints. It is a question, rather, of how these structures are transformed, limited, or expanded. … It was precisely by failing to recognise or apply this knowledge [of embeddedness] that the Chinese state, in its 1989 price reforms [which escalated runaway inflation], lost its chance to unite with the masses, lost its opportunity to bypass many of the reform's social costs, and instead gave the green light to neoauthoritarian and neoliberal elements, leading in the end to a serious social crisis.[21]

This lays out the so-called statist view very clearly, and in addition suggests an economic basis—spiraling inflation in the 1980s before and after the specific price reform/deregulation of 1989—that helped lead to the authoritarian crackdown on those protests. Han then goes on to argue that 'the neo-authoritarian equation of people's democracy with mob politics and the neoliberal call for a "retreat of the state" are inseparable from the ideology of "getting on track" with the world capitalist market.'[22] It would be hard to find a more concise and properly classical Marxist account of state, economy, power, and politics than this.

Feeling Global, Feeling China: Outflanking Political Orientalism

But there is yet another dimension to the rise of the new left that we must attend to, and that is its relation to global discourse about China. With due allowance for all representation being misrepresentation, we can nonetheless say that the new left knows this Western territory well, either through study abroad (especially the USA) or through learning and experience at home. More to the point, they are cognizant of the long history of others reading China, as well as the shorter history of the ways that the Mao and post-

Mao eras have been framed abroad. For obvious technological and historical reasons, it also knows this particular intellectual and ideological terrain of the West far better than previous generations of Chinese leftists, including the iconoclasts of the May 4 era, or the earliest communists. This is to say that we must examine the new left's relation to Sinological-orientalist codings of the PRC, and by extension its relation to the imperial/capitalist past and present not only within China but also from outside. There is, in short, an anti- or counter-colonial dimension to the rise of the new left when it is seen in the context of the long-standing problem of orientalism or colonial discourse, as well as the context of the (past?) revolution against capitalist imperialism. As a concomitant part of its implied or explicit critiques of 'reform and opening up' to global capitalism since Mao, the new left is also unthinkable except as a response to the threat posed to China's relative autonomy and 'difference' posed by globalization, including the production and circulation of knowledge or discourse. In what follows I analyze the movement as a specifically post-colonial or anti-orientalist intellectual movement engaged in a discursive, hegemonic battle with both indigenous and foreign (chiefly American) neo-liberalism for the meaning of Chinese politics. In a nominally Leninist Party-state that takes ideology very seriously indeed, this otherwise merely 'academic' phenomenon has a significance, beyond the usual, sequestered, small-circle polemics and discussions of most national academies. To be sure it is also the specter of repression and censorship, the illiberal terrain, which adds to the drama but hopefully also to the importance of the struggle.

It is in this discursive sense—the politics of knowledge—that the new left is a significant moment in Chinese intellectual (and perhaps political) history. It is a clear rupture with the Western/global/liberal fevers of the 1980s when critiques of the reforms—as reforms, as a new socio-politico-economic order—came only through workers themselves in their protests. It will generally be admitted that other political responses to the new reform era by intellectuals, chiefly stemming from campuses and in select magazines and journals, were largely liberal and loyal to a fault, calling primarily for further reform along the same lines of 'liberalization'; even the students of 1989 were keen to distinguish their protests from those of the Cultural Revolution and to have them acknowledged as non-subversive. But the new left is not only a reaction against the occidentalism and the perceived naiveté of the late 1970s and 1980s. To this negation it also adds a positive, proactive move in the development of a leftist discourse after this became unspeakable in the later 1970s and 1980s. Additionally, the new left is apparently also read and used by the state itself in various, small but actual ways; to an extent it may even influence government policy. Much of their work is empirical and in the

social sciences, so lends itself to that. Two notable examples would be Tsinghua-based professors Cui Zhiyuan, who worked briefly for the Chongqing municipal government, and Hu Angang, an influential political economist based in Beijing. Hu has for years argued for the successes and necessity of state-owned enterprises, for the importance of a strong state, and for better redistribution of the wealth of the reform era toward the rural poor and working class. He has more recently argued against population control (which has indeed been relaxed) and for the PRC to become a global leader in energy efficiency.[23] But it is Hu's writings on the successes of the PRC political system that attract the most attention abroad.

New left intellectuals—to the chagrin of some outside observers—have no qualms in being useful to their government, and no desire to be dissidents. This despite the fact that they too, like their liberal and neo-Confucian counterparts, must navigate the never-absent specter of censorship. In this they depart as well from the anti-statism (and anti-communism) of, say, much of the Western or specifically American leftist intellectuals, as well as much of China studies that tend instead to either latch on to liberal intellectuals (ironically, also employed by public universities) or to the so-called civil society figures like the artist Ai Wei Wei, emigre novelists, bloggers, and so on. Its so-called statism or commitment to the state as the main vehicle with which to effect social change, its 'loyal opposition' mode of address to the Party on behalf of the revolution's ideals of equality, its often perceptible patriotism and nationalism suggest that the Chinese new left is in fact much closer to the American/Chinese/global 'old' left, that is the radical, socialist left between the world wars, or to European social democrats and 'Eurocommunists,' than to the hippy, anarchist, or 'counter-culture' scenes of the American 1960s (with their fantasies of total opposition to the USA and global systems) or, say, Occupy Wall Street, let alone to the dissident movements of the former Eastern bloc in Europe. They are also closer to the post-1949 Mao or the Yan'an era Mao than to the more pure, blameless Mao who had not done anything bad or all that complicated yet, other than of course rescuing and preserving the communist movement against great odds. It is the Maoism that achieved power and then had to build a state and govern, rather than the one of, say, Third Worldism and national liberation.

The recent collection of essays by Wang Hui, the most well known of new left figures and a powerful and remarkably erudite if also subtle thinker, makes the social democratic vision—with 'Chinese characteristics,' as the saying goes—explicit:

> A young social democrat told me that after the Cold War, the idea of socialism can no longer be mentioned. But if not toward socialism, then in what direction is social democracy aimed? [There are] two problematic tendencies: The first is to equate socialism and communism with the practices of state socialism in the past; the second is to treat the socialist practices of the past as a single entity and refuse to engage in a real political and historical analysis of these practices. In the European context [note: not the Chinese mainland context], socialism is immediately equated with despotism and violent totalitarian rule. The whole tenor is negative. But socialism's legacy is rich and complex, and we must carry out a critical summation of it. The legacy of Mao Zedong's thought is both the object of our thinking and also a method we can use to reflect on his own political practices. It ought to be from this perspective that we revive his legacy.[24]

The point of social democracy, then, is the socialism. What else could be its basis, or where else could it be going? There is also, of course, the question of where socialism is going, if not to communism. But in the current conjuncture this remains a very theoretical, though not unimportant, consideration. (The horizon has to be equality, even full equality and the fate of the commons or common wealth; the only real word for this is 'communism.') The point of rethinking the past—the actual Chinese past in its variety and complexities, not the Orwellian one envisioned for them by well-meaning 'comrades' abroad—is to learn from it, the failures as well as the achievements in, for example, human welfare and empowerment. Wang goes on to argue that social democracy institutionalized some of socialism's goals, and thus can be seen as 'a type of capitalism beyond capitalism'—one moving toward socialism. This is no doubt what he and others have in mind for the Chinese state, *if* it can be articulated in such a direction and *if* it has the capacity to do so after so much 'reform' and commodification. This also assumes, with no less than Mao, that the PRC was never communist—though this was clearly the distant horizon—but on a trajectory or attempted transition toward not just modernity but socialism (and more grandly toward 'futurity' and 'continuing the revolution'). Here the goal has to be social democracy first, or even *as* socialism in the contemporary Chinese and global context. Why does one need to 'defend the revolution' and still read and respect Mao if one is a 'new leftist social democrat'? Because the reference is China and not the USA or Europe. Wang is, again, pointedly ambiguous here; what he is not saying must also be heard—those loud silences, unmistakable to the trained ear, are telling for his and others' 'politics of knowledge' in regard to Sinological

orientalism. Note that the call is not for an end to the one Party-state system, and there is no trace of a denunciation of the Cultural Revolution, for example. Elsewhere, Wang Hui—implicitly drawing on the work of people like Gao Mobo and Wang Shaoguang as well as his own experiences and observations about 1966–1976—has said that while no one can defend the entire Cultural Revolution period as good, so too no one can dismiss or condemn the entire period as bad either; those that do, speak to it from a decidedly elite point of view that ignore, for example, the broadening of social experience that happened when students and other youth lived and worked among the workers and peasants.[25] In regard to the current state, the new left emphasis is on better governance and social equality, which means taking on—yet not overthrowing—capital and the effects and realities of the first 30 years of 'reform.'

In this sense the new left is not a return to Mao—which will give their Western liberal readers some relief, though perhaps for different reasons. Mao and the PRC already happened, and the point is to take it forward under new conditions rather than, say, overthrowing the Party-state and starting from scratch or with multi-party liberal-capitalist democracy. Put another way, even if the new left is attached to the revolutionary past and the vision of class equality, public land rights, anti-capitalism and anti-imperialism, and so on, it must also be said that this is a *reformist* rather than revolutionary or *purely* oppositional movement. Indeed, this is one of the standard criticisms coming from predictable, and sectarian 'leftist' websites and screeds online in the US-West. And yet something of the new left's significance is also given by the fact that it too, despite this allegedly 'quietist' nature, must tread carefully. Leftist websites are routinely shut down (including the once famous *Utopia* and *Redflag* ones), emails watched, conference funding denied, writings censored, and so on. They occupy the same illiberal terrain and must negotiate accordingly.

But the real significance of the new left must be understood globally and even academically or intellectually; it lies in a challenge to knowledge production about China, a discursive battle for a critical, political Chinese discourse that runs counter to state de-politicization and liberal knowledges of the PRC as lacking political normalcy and development. This is to say that it represents a post-colonial or post-orientalist approach to understanding modern Chinese politics, one that takes the past revolution and Chinese Marxism (or Maoism) seriously and that therefore challenges, more or less directly, Cold War, Sinological orientalism. It challenges, howsoever symbolically or discursively, the de-politicized, conservative, pro-market, and

thorough economism of the Chinese Party-state (what Wang Hui prefers to call the state-Party in contrast to the radical era of Mao); arguably, more importantly, it challenges conventional, liberal discourse about the PRC and its formation and future. It represents as well a battle to claim a specifically Chinese or PRC political discourse, in contestation with liberal as well as official, de-politicized or 'conservative' views. In all of this what the new left movement does, differently than, say, the neo-Confucians or traditionalists, is to preserve and think through China's difference from an assumed liberal universality. Liberal universalism is the default mode of modern higher education and the market principle, or in other words is a massive a priori of intellectual political culture and not alien to even the CCP elite who certainly believe in the market. Hence we may also see the new left as an anti- or even *illiberal* intellectual movement in the best possible sense. It sees liberalism as either an explicit problem, or at the very least as a non-solution to the inequalities and inequities brought on by over three decades of commodifying 'reform' since the death of Mao. At the risk of cliché, this is where the empire (of China studies, of China knowledge, of global academe in the former Third World) writes back, where its knowledge finally gets contested by the natives themselves, where PRC intellectuals actualize their permission to narrate. Gone are the times when foreign academics and intellectuals could so easily find their own preconceptions about political China and the revolution mirrored in their mainland counterparts, that is, the liberal intellectuals and universities of the de-Maoification 1980s. Such folks certainly still exist, and remain as popular as ever among foreign journalists, but they are far from the majority now. As previously noted the failure of Tiananmen, the obvious ill effects of hyper-marketization, and a receding tide of 'Western cultural fevers' are widely recognized preconditions for the rise of the Chinese new left. But one must note as well the long-standing knowledge politics between China and the West as well as, crucially, the expansion of higher education and academic scholarship in China. Moreover, the terms of engagement between foreign scholars (and indeed foreign intellectuals and politicians of whatever type) and China (as with foreign politicians and media) have radically changed. This is what, as noted in the Introduction, seems to trouble analyses of the new, illiberal China by Orville Schell and David Shambaugh.[26] Paradoxically, then, the criticism of the new left as merely an academic and intellectual phenomenon leads us to its global significance.

In an indispensable essay on academic collaboration with the mainland, Gregory Mahoney, professor of politics at the prestigious East China Normal

University in Shanghai, surveys the changes in Sino-foreign academic cooperation, the decline of liberalism, and the heretofore assumed Western superiority/leadership, as well as the rise of a Sinified Chinese academy with its own styles of discourse. His essay is worth quoting at some length:

> Some Chinese researchers have become increasingly critical of what might be described as 'Orientalist' tendencies among foreign researchers studying China, and therefore less likely to cooperate with them now; or at least less likely to be involved in research projects in which such problems are perceived to exist. This is also true of projects that might be seen as self-orientalising. Until the early 2000s, Chinese academic discourse was being driven substantially by its attempts to assimilate and debate Western liberal and leftist positions, and struggling to do so under the Party's gaze. In other words, Chinese scholars on the left and right were convinced that a better form of government was possible, and many looked overseas for models and inspiration. Liberals were dissatisfied with lagging political reforms, while leftists were unhappy with decreased political activism among the masses and growing inequality. Today there is a growing belief that such alternatives are perhaps more distant, if not difficult to find. After 1999, 9/11, Iraq, the Global Financial Crisis and the US's pivot towards China, Western—particularly American—liberalism no longer enjoys the same cachet it once had, even among Chinese liberals.[27]

Since the 1980s and early 1990s there has been a massive expansion and transformation of the Chinese academy (with the state still acting as overseer and funder). While there has been a small expansion of private institutions, the great majority of these have been public, and it of course compares favorably to the decline of public higher education elsewhere in the world. While the rise of the Chinese Internet has been given scholarly attention, the rise of Chinese academe has received less, even though it is indispensable for the rise of the new left as well as of other voices, and indeed for the politics of knowledge generally. It also enabled a search among intellectuals—and perhaps officials—for alternative ways of thinking of and writing about China academically, substantively, a root-seeking mission to debate, for example, the existence or not of an alternative (non-Western, non neoliberal) 'China model' for development and modernization. Does China have one, and shouldn't it find out? 'Model'—as opposed to historical experience or something far more policy-specific—may not be an effective word here. But at any rate the model is not actually meant for export, as some type of blueprint or architectural miniature. Which is also *not* to say

that the Chinese experience or methods of development, or some more specific policy or technique of governance cannot be learned from or adopted and adapted. Clearly such lessons and copyings and borrowings are what drive globalization as well as culture, and always have for better and worse. But the point of emphasis here is simply the search or reflections in themselves, and the distancing from not just some abstract 'West' but from a couple-three decades of 'reform.' (This again shows the break with the 1980s era.)[28] There may or may not be such a model for China, and in reality 'the' model—as in Daniel Bell's analysis of 'political meritocracy'—would always have to be an ideal-type, at best. But again what is perhaps most significant is the very idea of a China model, which at least speaks to some sense of self-examination, and can, in theory, lend itself to constructive criticism as much as to celebration or patriotic gore. Such debates are less specific to the new left in any case, though it is worth mentioning here that many new left figures argue that Maoism was an alternative, non-capitalist modernity, even if it reached its own end in time, and that this too needs remembered as the P.R.C. goes forward. Other initiatives speaking to the new terrain of knowledge production would simply be new cultural and intellectual histories of the modern (or earlier) periods, but not told from the liberal and arguably Western viewpoint.

Wang Hui's work on the problem of Tibet as well as his volumes on Chinese modernity is particularly salient here. Wang argues that Western fascination with Tibet and freeing Tibet from China is powerfully rooted in orientalism, a claim that is surprisingly controversial or hard to fathom from within the field of Sinology.[29] Moreover, the resolution of the crisis—and it is one, for Tibetans and China alike—would be better approached not through independence and modern (and Western) nation-state borders for Tibet, which in the illusory ideal of autonomy and logic of purity creates as many problems as it solves, but through the Mao-Zhou Enlai formulations (form the 1950s) of relative autonomy under a more traditional, empire-era form of suzerainty. Wang's views here are not uncommon within China, though they are sure to enrage others who would, in turn, speak for Tibetans in Tibet and also want to gift them a sovereign, modern nation-state of their own. But Wang's focus on empire and suzerainty is nonetheless a challenge to what is undeniably a modern and Eurocentric view of the necessity of discrete borders and nation-states; what if the latter, in this case at any rate, creates more problems than solve? As for modernity, or perhaps proto-modernity, Wang locates it in the Song dynasty (960–1279).[30] But more to our purposes here, he also posits Maoism as 'an anti-modern modernity'—part of the global or world-historical movement away from

ancient regimes but also against a universalizing capitalism and against the erasure of China's own specificities and differences; this was the Maoist break with Stalinism after all, even if Stalin had to remain a proper name of the pantheon.

Another recent example is Cai Xiang's recently translated volume, *Revolution and its Narratives*, a weighty, influential volume after its Chinese publication in 2010.[31] Cai focuses on numerous socialist novels and other Red texts (e.g. classics about land reform and collectivization like Liu Qing's *The Builders*, Zhao Shuli's 'The Marriage of Young Blacky'), but his aims are multiple. In addition to redeeming these writings (their aesthetic value and complexity) and their authors from the liberal backlash against them in the 1980s and beyond (what I have elsewhere called the 'liberal revenge' of the 1980s in China and abroad), Cai's real object is what he frames as a '*productive* crisis of socialism.' This crisis is precisely what Mao thought of as the necessity or mandate to 'continue the revolution' after the 1949 victory (not least by attempting to bring it down to the all-important level of everyday life); and of course this is also what all of these socialist intellectuals and artists were themselves concerned with. Among the many, and genuinely massive challenges within this that Cai explores are developing a 'new' language for and of the masses while also attending to tradition and local dialects; the value of labor (and laborers) but also the power of collective labor (the 'true' liberation of the working class); how to have mass participation yet also an inevitably large bureaucracy; alienation; class struggle; and so on. Thus, while 'admitting' that socialism was immediately in crisis after 1949, Cai illuminates the *productivity* of this same crisis: the profound nature of the problems and issues and challenges that constituted it and that were fully recognized and wrestled with and imaginatively worked out by various writers and intellectuals and not just by the chairman at the top. Rather than dismiss Mao-era literature as merely propaganda or simply insignificant as 'real' art, his work grants it and the revolution itself a legitimacy it largely does not have outside of China. Cai goes further in attempting to theorize an organic or substantive connection, albeit a fraught, conflicted one, between the first 30 radical years and the subsequent three decades of capitalist/Dengist transformation. (This, as opposed to seeing them as a complete and decisive break for all time.) The point here is that the deliberate refusal in the 1980s of a return to traditional socialism (i.e. socialism before the cultural revolution, which for Cai also contains valuable insights and texts like those of Li Yizhe in the early 1970s) has not negated or resolved the crises of socialism but only exacerbated some of them, such as

the dispossession of the working class and the production not of alienation so much as a great apathy in public affairs in place of mass participation's contradiction with bureaucracy,[32] in other words, Dengist or post-Mao style de-politicization.

At any rate what one has to deal with in Cai's work is an argument for the modern Chinese, socialist revolution—an independent or heterodox socialism as opposed to a mimicking of the West—as still being the chief problem of China's intellectual, political, and artistic culture and, indeed, its overall development and trajectory. Cai's departure from conventional Chinese or comparative literature studies in the West, currently fixated on the diaspora and a somehow inherently subversive, anti-mainland 'Sinophone' literature, could not be more clear. Other new left literary and film scholars, such as Dai Jinhua or Mao Jian, focus on contemporary or post-Mao China, writing criticism that engages the politics of representation in high and mass culture, from representations of migrant workers to gender backlashes and anti-feminism to the ideological effects of consumerism and globalization.

Mahoney further notes that 'Chinese scholars today demand greater mutual respect and understanding than before.' And that 'many people are abandoning Western styles of writing and are employing a new type of academic [written vernacular] (白话), partly in an effort to attract a broader readership and secure their positions as public intellectuals while shucking off the old associations that left them feeling like the academic equivalent of second-class colonial subjects.' From the various neo-Confucianisms to neo-Maoism to outright believers in 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' still being on the CCP agenda, these can only appear as illiberal within the discourse of Sinological orientalism. As noted elsewhere in his essay, while Sino-foreign academic cooperation is clearly growing in quantitative terms, it is now on more Chinese—which is to say equal or fair—terms. The expansion of Chinese higher education is immense, and with it naturally comes 'indigenous' viewpoints and concerns that now part ground with the Western fever decade of the 1980 and that—with continued US efforts at 'containing' China, wars in the Middle East, and so on—also include anti-American or anti-imperialist views. The 'blue' or foreign luster of the *He Shang* days is gone. There is also simply less need, from the Chinese side, for scholar-to-scholar cooperation and for imitating Western models of scholarship. China can claim its own style and type of academy, warts and all, just as foreign universities, which do set up shop in the mainland, have to follow 'indigenous' rules. This cer-

tainly entails some censorship or boundaries, among other problems with the curious capitalist idea of 'the global university.' But it is also about China being powerful enough, and rich enough, to 'write back' against would-be universalist or missionary-style approaches from the West. Foreign governments and companies, and now foreign intellectuals, are now answerable to the Chinese system and its interlocutors. While China has never quite been powerless, even at its lowest, it is now at the head of its own, rosewood negotiating table.

The upshot of Mahoney's powerful diagnostic essay is this: it reveals the post-1989 conditions of possibility for the new left and other thought to challenge Sino-orientalism on the one hand, and for liberalism to be dispensed with, or at least politely ignored on the other hand. The illiberal—the anti- or at least *non*-liberal—genie is out of the bottle and unlikely to want to go back in on its own volition. For China to become the same—liberal politically, and intellectually or 'discursively'—is increasingly less likely, but for very specific reasons: liberalism is not universal to begin with; the conditions for its triumph in intellectual political culture, seemingly 'in the air' after Mao and through the 1980s, have largely disappeared; 'new left' conditions have instead arisen, materially and otherwise, including not just the painfully obvious effects of rampant, unregulated capitalism and environmental destruction, but also a certain 'cultural awakening' against Occidentalism. Naturally enough for a state and intellectual political culture founded upon socialist principles, that is founded upon Marxism—howsoever nominally in the current phase—there is as well a desire to rethink or re-envision Chinese socialism. In a sense that never disappeared, as the saccharine 'Marxist humanism' that flourished briefly in the 1980s' Western cultural fevers gave way to its critique by the new left. From the 1990s standpoint, after Deng Xiaoping's famous 'Southern tour' wherein he initiated a second wave of pro-market/capitalist reforms after the debacle of Tiananmen, the rapidly developing commodification of society, including the corrosion of any special, quasi-sacred status of intellectuals, independent or otherwise, necessitated a critical response to the new era.

There is in other words a new global theater. The Chinese new left project (like all such movements, liberal and otherwise) engages not some universal zeitgeist and 'end of history' (as per the liberal-humanist discourse of convergence) but a protracted politics of knowledge in China *and* abroad. It cannot be otherwise. In short, what is going on in China with the new left and its confrontations with liberalism and Party-state

efforts at de-politicization is nothing less than what Stuart Hall argued has been the fundamental mode of politics since at least the 1980s Thatcher-Reagan era, and the rise of what we now call neo-liberalism: the hegemonic struggle over the legitimation or de-legitimation of discourse.[33] This includes not only the content of discourse or what gets said (its statements and beliefs) but also certain 'rules': who gets to speak and who does not; in what acceptable forms; what topics, attitudes, valuations, affects get to count; and so on. This discursive struggle, in other words, *is* politics (hegemony) and not a mere supplement to it. In this case the meaning of the new left means a battle of sorts for China's past, present, and future at the level of discourse or knowledge. It therefore behooves us to understand the 'post-colonial' and other political implications of the new left phenomenon in itself at the level of discourse. Taken as a whole, the new left returns us to, and in part reactivates not Maoism per se (as an insurrectionary, guerilla politics) but Maoist or revolutionary, Chinese Marxist discourse. What this 'return' to taking the Chinese revolution seriously further entails, as a necessary part of this discursive battle, is simultaneously a 'writing back' on the part of some Chinese intellectuals against decades of a Cold War, colonial discourse that framed China as lacking normal, 'free' liberal politics.

Maoist Discourse: The Past in the Present

To better understand new left discourse we need first to understand Maoist discourse, or the received inheritance from a past era that then gets modified and re-articulated after 1989. The 'thought' or dominant, governing discourse of that long era (from the mid-1930s through the late 1970s) is not typically seen as a discourse in the complex, productive Foucauldian sense. For the latter, discourse does not stand in an antagonistic relation to the truth, whereby it distorts or alienates something natural or essential to 'normal' freedom and political life, individuality, and so on. Rather it constitutes what counts as the truth, and sets limits on as well as enables what people are able to see and think and do—how they use knowledge (or knowledge-power).This includes the self-understanding as individual subjects—how they see themselves and their world, a factor that must be incorporated into any historical or philosophical anthropology. In short, if you write from a Foucauldian or structuralist/post-structuralist perspective, you cannot have Orwell's *1984* transposed onto Maoist China ('totalitarianism' or brainwashing). That essentially Cold War, liberal-humanist theory of repression and a ruined autonomous subject is at odds not only

with Foucault but with the complexities of that Chinese history, with the agency of hundreds of millions of people, and with, for example, the nostalgia and fondness so many feel for a long past era. To see the Chinese Revolution not as an assault upon liberalism and human rights, we need to put it back into context as a powerfully affective and rational way of thinking, a framework and a 'common sense' for acting and being-in-the-world. This existence of rationality is also one of the early, signal achievements of Wang Shaoguang's studies of the ultra-left and of the Cultural Revolution in Wuhan.[34] Despite the obvious contradictions of the era, such as the violence and excessive factionalism despite Mao's clear proclamations against these, Wang shows the rational self-interested behavior of the participants, not despite but contra Max Weber, because of the charismatic authority of the chairman. Given the ambiguity—perhaps deliberate, perhaps stylistic, perhaps unintentional—of his sayings and directives and quotations, as well as the relative freedom and autonomy of the local as opposed to the national or party centers, red guards and rebels and activists could and did act both fervently in belief of revolution and yet according to their own interests. The bottom line here for our purposes is that Maoist discourse (and the era) was—and today is—indeed rational and not the madness or stupidity that it is often taken to be.

On the other side of Maoist discourse there is not reality or the truth of an era, but yet more discourse and knowledge-power relations as well as the realm of the non-discursive. Liberal notions of human rights and the sacrosanct individual were simply not in circulation during the highly politicized and revolutionary context of the recent Chinese past. Hence, it is at best an anachronism to deploy them to sum up the entire era (Maoism) or even to apply them cart blanche to contemporary China (which indeed did see a return to liberal notions from the late 1970s onward). So too the limits and non-universality of liberal individualism have long been exposed by the emphases on collective or communal belonging and responsibilities in traditional Chinese culture (or 'Confucianism') and by the collectivist politics of the long Chinese Revolution (i.e. even before the rise of Mao and the Party).

Perhaps the best general description of the perspective I am driving at here is to be found at the end of Wang Zheng's essay on growing up as a proto-feminist, Maoist youth in the late Cultural Revolution. After discussing how her own memories are entirely at odds with elite accounts of victimization (and it must be said that there was a great deal of elite persecution and counter-violence and chaos), Wang characterizes that period as an attempt:

> to situate citizens in new kinds of social relationships, to pull both women and men out of the web of Confucian kinship obligations and to redirect their ethical duties from their kin to the party and the nation. Scholars may call this statist scheme manipulation or domination, but few have noticed that the enforcement of this scheme disrupted conventional gender norms and created new discursive spaces that allowed a cohort of young women to grow up without being always conscious of their gender.[35]

Rather than have us dismiss the allegedly 'heavy-handed' promulgation and enforcement of gender and other egalitarianisms as an assault on liberalism and individuality, Wang asks us to see the achievement and complexity of such state-feminist schemes. Her chief example here is 'gender neutrality,' or the simple but profound Enlightenment notion that men and women are not just formally equal in political terms but can do the same things and have the same type of lives and powers and roles. It is not about being 'gender-blind' but neutral, a subtly but significantly different thing that departs, it may be argued, from simplistic liberal rhetorics of 'blindness' and individual perceptions. Of course, in the current intellectual political climate a positive or nuanced understanding of the state is alien indeed. This is the case in liberal intellectual circles within China, as it is in the aftermath of the 'French' post-structuralist theory explosion. But it is just such an understanding of the state—as something that any social justice democrat cannot *not* want—that is at stake in Wang Zheng's work as well as within the new left more broadly. At stake too is the understanding of the radical heritage. With Wang and others, the radical past and Maoist discourse become something that is at the very least rational and positive—positive in some of their effects (e.g. the promulgation of gender-neutrality) and in the sense of having a certain weight and seriousness and reality, as something to be taken seriously and re-examined anew, not merely 'debunked' or dismissed as a nightmare or fake.[36]

Maoist discourse was more than the writings of Mao and other revolutionaries and the apparatuses (propaganda, educational, governmental, economic) of power and subject formation. It was a rational-practical framework that people used to make sense of their lives and the world around them, in an extreme age of revolution, nationalism, and war, certainly, but also one of massive, socialist construction of the new China (the embrace of 'futurity') and of new individual lives after the traditional or feudal order in the inchoate Republican period. As Gao has put it, Maoist discourse at its peak was the 'common-sense knowledge and socially

shared values, beliefs, practices, administrative measures, disciplinary technology, education, and so on' that 'provided a framework and standard for the Chinese to relate to in their thinking and behaviour and to make sense of their lives.' It spoke to everyday life, from food and clothing supply to your meetings with the neighborhood committee, your new jobs in the fields or factories, your school, your leisure activities, and so on.

Of course Maoist rhetoric about class struggle, making revolution, serving the people, and so on were involved (what Li Tuo famously called 'Mao speak' and that impacted the language considerably). But what we must emphasize is that Maoism was also a powerfully affective way of being-in-the-world. Wang Ban, for example, has usefully framed Maoist discourse as akin to the experience of the sublime. Once one sheds its conservative Burkean or anti-Jacobin connotations, the word 'sublime' can replace 'totalitarianism' as a less insulting and more ambiguous notion that nonetheless captures the collective and/or transcendent experience of, say, attending a mass rally or carrying out a massive irrigation project. The T-word, if you will, is at this point the hoariest of Cold War terms for assaulting political cultures of belief in Maoist or contemporary China and denying agency, rationality, and basic dignity to the millions of 'victimized' citizens of the PRC. It speaks to an essentially liberal notion of power as being solely repressive and negative, never productive and diffuse and inciting. To see power as akin to the sublime, or, more generally, to take Maoist discourse, the revolution, and their weight in the world seriously, is precisely our challenge today when we look back on that relatively brief (by Chinese standards) but crucial period. This is what Alain Badiou does when he characterizes the twentieth century as being in part determined by passion of and for the real.[37] Incorporating this insightful, contextual point from Badiou helps us to understand the Mao period as more than collectivist, selfless, and utopian. Badiou indexes a conviction, palpable in the PRC and even residually so today, that it is possible to intervene and change history and society (reality). This idea was part of the ruling discourse or regime of truth, just as much as the emphasis on 'two-line struggle' and the dyadic form of politics: friends and enemies, revolution and revisionism, feudalism and the future, communism and capitalism, radicals and capitalist roaders, and so on. Dyadic and intense, dangerous but inciting and meaningful, Maoist discourse positions commitment politics and revolution as a whole way of life and a whole way of struggle. If Marx, Lenin, Mao, and—it must be admitted—Carl Schmitt were correct about the definition or essence of politics (dyadic, reductive, antagonistic) as well

as the realities of class (excluding Schmitt here of course), then Maoist, revolutionary China was the most political and the most Marxist space on earth. (This can be for better and for worse.) To describe all of this as totalitarian is to de-politicize it and to ignore the self-understanding of the actual people involved. From this theoretical standpoint, then, the Chinese revolution under Mao has a certain positivity and seriousness. How else can one explain the mass mobilizations and legitimacy of the new regime in China (notwithstanding the setbacks and violence)?

It is this legitimacy and positivity to the era, embedded in and produced by Maoist discourse, that also helps explain the new left and old left as well as other voices and intellectuals in China today that—against the wishes of virtually every foreign expert and 'progressive' Western analogue—seek to redeem or reactivate the Chinese revolution not as the PRC nightmare or problem but as its fundamental social reality—or as what Louis Althusser referred to as a *problematic*. (Not the only one, but an inescapable one.) The long, socialist or radical (as opposed to merely modern or bourgeois-democratic) revolution is the discursive and institutional 'thing' that must be thought through and dealt with practically as much as intellectually. The revolution exerts pressures and sets limits upon what can be done.

My understanding of discourse—and of politics, the state, and so on— that I am presenting here stands in contrast with recent work, otherwise very welcome, that describes Maoist discourse in its heyday. While this latter work does turn to 'theoretical' diction like discourse and 'power,' its actual method is one of debunking and exposing manipulation and domination. The 'real reality' beneath such things as mobilization campaigns, speaking bitterness, criticism and self-criticism sessions, the production of sublime, 'transcendent' experiences, and so on is one of terror and violations of individual freedom. Which—again—categorically misses the point from Foucault et al., that there is no non-discursive or 'real' space beneath the discourse and its actualizations or practices, just as it also violates or elides Mao-era subject's own self-understandings. The earlier work of Tony Saich and David Apter, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic*, was the first of such studies and remains the only book-length treatment.[38] There the thick descriptions and interviews with former Yan'an participants (of course, done many years after the actual events) are undercut by the liberal notion of power, that is by a top-down model or what Foucault famously called the repressive hypothesis. Ironically the authors cite Foucault too, but the Nietzchean epistemological challenge he lays down—that there are only 'regimes of truth' and discourse not

Truth, no 'outside' of knowledge-power—is elided. That is, discourse here still amounts to *manipulation* of what should be an autonomous subject/individual and to fairly direct, top-down control. In this study, as well as in a more recent article by Yu Liu that dabbles in the projected psyches of the 1930s, the point of detailing Maoist discourse is to all the better condemn and other it as brainwashing and totalitarian, that is, as psychologically distorting and controlling; this is still orientalism in the form of 'social science.'[39] The Cold War notion of totalitarianism, as poor as that concept was, remains un-interrogated.[40] In the end everything is yoked back to that liberal notion of power, thought-control, and individual freedom being violated (the utter lack of freedom *from* or negative liberty). It is, I would argue, precisely this notion of power that is being challenged by the rise of the Chinese new left, broadly defined. On the contrary this 'movement' sees not only the single Party-state form and its radical history as legitimate and complex but also power likewise, as productive and not merely repressive.

Maoist Discourse: Afterlives and Re-articulation in Chongqing, Nanjiecun, and the Famine Debates

Revolutionary discourse still lives on in fragmented or partial ways and forms a reservoir of potential meanings, values, rhetoric, and symbols of current Chinese political cultures. This can be readily seen in various protests in China, be they economic or otherwise—the Maoist iconography, the slogans, arguably the class-consciousness, and demand for social justice if not equality. Much of this was present in 1989, alongside more 'liberal' denunciations of the Cultural Revolution, calls for 'democracy' (vaguely defined but essentially proceduralist), and even the famous/infamous defacing of the Mao portrait in the Square. Since then it is the Maoist red signifiers that live on to a greater degree, particularly in labor or livelihood protests, as well as in the online world and other writings or voices from what one recent text refers to as China's new Maoists.[41] But there is more to the afterlife of Maoism, and hence Maoist discourse, than this.

Take for example the scandalous yet ongoing 'Chongqing experiment,' also known as the Chongqing Model, which has apparently weathered the rise and fall of the now disgraced leader Bo Xilai. Chongqing is a province-like municipality in Sichuan, with a population of 30 million, of which 18 million are rural; as one of four such 'cities,' it has a certain national importance akin to Beijing and Shanghai. What happens there matters in

terms of national planning and governance strategies, as it may serve as a model or rough guide for other parts of the country and looming national crises. Even before the global media event that was Bo's fall, involving a disloyal deputy fleeing to the US embassy (only to be turned away), the murder and botched cover-up of a British businessman by Bo's wife Gu Kailai, and Bo's later televised trial for corruption, he was already a famous, celebrity-like official in China. He clearly stood out as charismatic, in a CP culture of business suit merito-technocratic flatness. Yet Bo was deeply unpopular among foreign China Watchers as well as liberals inside the PRC because of his putative Maoism. For some reason his detractors seemed particularly fixated on his 'Red Songs' campaigns, which amounted to organized, public music and dance gatherings for the older generations and whomever else wished to attend. This was also part of a larger 'propaganda' campaign drawing on red rhetoric and iconography from the Mao era. Bo's father, Bo Yibo, was a part of Mao's generation, though he was 'persecuted' during the Cultural Revolution. The latter was less about class struggle than signifying the revolution (the actual one, not Bo's own), serving and joining the people, the Party, the revolution, the nation/imagined community, and so on. This might seem trivial: who cares what music people sing and dance to? Isn't 'Mao speak' still a real part of vernacular Chinese? But ideology and culture, or culture as ideology, is a hallmark of Chinese political culture as much as Maoist discourse, at least on the left and more traditional sides of it.

Thus, this bit of culturalist 'Maoism' rankled liberals and the elite, as must have Bo's charismatic authority and ability to mobilize affect. To be sure Bo's 'Striking Black' campaign against corruption and white collar crime, some of this involving allegedly extra judicial and other heavy-handed means, also won him no friends in the foreign media and liberal elite circles, not to mention among the wealthy. (Since his own imprisonment via a show trial, on charges unrelated to this, some of the confiscated 'black' money has been returned though no one has been freed from prison or forced labor.[42]) Bo may or may not have been a sincere Maoist (whatever this means after Mao), but there is little doubt that his 'Striking Black' and his populism make him an illiberal, as does his 'statist' and populist economics. This is why, for example, liberal human rights lawyers and middlebrow venues like *The Atlantic* magazine found him so dangerous, even celebrating his own, pre-ordained show trial months after his fall (irony, but not hypocrisy, apparently being in short supply).[43]

If all this seems superficially Maoist (which it might if you understand that to be only insurrection) or superficial whining, the real substance to Chongqing—vis-à-vis leftist and social democratic concerns—has been its alternative urban, and rural-to-urban development schemes, as well as its attempts to redress the bad relationship between the Party and its people, that is between officials and the working class, laobaixing, or ordinary masses. Part of the latter involved sending (forcing?) cadres to work, live, and even eat with peasants, *a la* the Mao years. Bo also moderated a televised meeting between striking taxi drivers and their company. The culture front also included huge investments in public media, removing advertising from the Chongqing satellite network. Still more substantially in livelihood terms, the experiment involved massive expenditures on public housing and—crucially—re-registering peasants and migrant workers as urban residents. The latter was an attempt to relieve the de facto caste system in China whereby urban residents get far better benefits than rural ones (schooling, health access, etc.). The later problem of household registration (the hukou problem) and caste is an unfortunate, complicated hangover from the Mao era, where there were not the massive amounts of exploited migrant workers or a caste-like, Third World process of urbanization. Resident status would help this in an obvious way, but so would using that 'freed' land for farming or industrial development, as opposed to Hong Kong/Guangdong style free-market speculation (which is what seems to have resulted in the Wukan Uprising).

The Chongqing model has by now generated a fairly extensive body of research and reporting, but the basic economic strategy is in a sense not new—using (selling and buying) land to produce growth, as in Wukan and many other places where agriculture is in decline compared to the decades, not to mention centuries beforehand. (China is in fact dependent on the global food market now, outside of grain.) This may well not be sustainable in the long run, given land scarcity, if it were to be relied upon as a sole means of growth. But Chongqing quite consciously ran large deficits through infrastructure spending, investing in rural industries, focusing on domestic consumption rather than export (something the entire country is trying to do now), and so on. FDI was still encouraged, and corporate income taxes were cut. Deficits notwithstanding, Chongqing posted tremendous growth rates and seems to have just assumed that some state investments would fail but would be worth doing anyway as an experiment, and could later be sold if the Party-state has the will to do so[44]; capitalist efficiency was to take a backseat to 'Red GDP' and what used to

be called 'market socialism' or a combination of private and public capital. But what was and remains remarkable about Chongqing was the pursuit of what Philip Huang calls 'equitable development' in which public benefit and state-owned enterprises still take precedence. Again it is the commitment to equality—relative equality to be sure, rather than the strict Maoist, zero tolerance of inequality—that stands out here. It stands out in comparison to, again, Guangdong or Hong Kong, but resonates with what used to be called social democracy. It is illiberal, to be sure, and calls out for analysis and reflection, even appreciation, for this very reason. If Bo and his ilk abused power and even profited from it financially, for which he was convicted of, then this certainly deserves condemnation and even imprisonment within China's own terms. But his 'illiberal' grass roots authoritarianism, *a la* Mao's, may also be justified by its ends. It also stands in favorable contrast to the elite as well as the ecumenical, non-denominational, 'de-politicized' authoritarianism of normal, everyday Party-state business which has only graspingly tried to tackle the problems of inequality and 'caste.' Tellingly, many of Bo's social and economic programs—popular—have remained in place or have been developed.[45] The Red culture front (the songs and the rhetoric), however, seems by all accounts to have been dropped, again showing the Party-state's appreciation, if not fear, of the power of ideas and culture-as-ideology. Much remains to be seen. But for our purposes here what stands out is the re-articulation of Maoist discourse, how it lives on despite liberal and foreign media/expertise's antipathy, how it produces political and ideological solutions and innovations. It is no accident that populist and social democratic politics and programs and Party-efforts necessarily take a Maoist, illiberal form.

The rationality and positivity of the revolutionary past, a loosely Maoist way of seeing what modern China *is*, is a fundamental theme of various new left writings. From this standpoint, the radical past, its massive social experiments and mobilizations, its protracted struggles for revolution and progress in equality—which equally indisputably ended tragically or in failure (the Great Leap, the Cultural Revolution)—can appear quite different than the madness or bizarre oriental aberrations so often assumed today. We noted earlier Wang Hui's views on the socialist past and the Maoist 'anti-modern modernity' (which he extends back in time much further). That latter phrase clarifies when we recall some of Maoism's governing dualities: Chinese yet Marxist; communist yet rural; anti-capitalist yet developmental; anti-Russian (after 1957) yet equally anti-American; Sinified yet proletarian and laobaixing; vanguardist yet populist; liberatory yet anti-individualist, statist yet anti-statist (the 'right to rebel').

A large part of that Maoist legacy is of course the critique of markets and capitalism, and the development of cooperative economics and national self-reliance, in part through state-owned enterprises. The political economist Han Deqiang often signifies this past in his critiques of globalization and neo-liberalism within China and the dominance of neo-classical theory within the field. A co-founder of the left-wing bookstore and salon *Utopia*, and perhaps as much an 'old' as a 'new' leftist, Han first came to prominence internationally as a bold critic of China's entry to the World Trade Organization (WTO), against globalization from the standpoint of left nationalism and equality, and speaking to the precarious status of new Chinese industries on the one hand and growing inequality and environmental hazards on the other. An economics professor in Beijing, Han has also helped launch a small organic farm in Hebei ('Righteous Path Farm'), run along Maoist communal lines. This includes communal dining (on their own grown food), self-study sessions, and 'practicing Mao Zedong Thought' less in the directly political sense than in the form of serving one another ('the people') and exercising the freedom to drop out of the consumer/careerist rat race of the dominant culture and society.[46] While derided by liberals for being an ardent nationalist (which also fits Chinese political discourse in general since the 1920s at least), the more notable characteristic of Han is his work as a socialist economist, *a la* Hu Angang and others, arguing for the successes and necessities of the planned economy and public/state ownership.[47]Technical and ideological debates over state-owned enterprises are at the heart of the new left versus liberal camps, and indeed at the heart of the Party-state. Since multi-party democracy itself is off the table—and not especially desired—this state-owned versus private capital debate is arguably the most important terrain of all political debates in China, since it directly addresses peoples' livelihood and better as opposed to worse jobs for workers.[48] Similarly, following the SARS crisis, Wang Shaoguang argued for China's past, salutary legacy of people's health (one of the Mao era's most-noted achievements) to be returned to. He argues further that this is already under way in a national, on-the-ground *countermovement* away from 30 years of an allegedly self-regulating free market in medical care.[49] This too is a Marxian/Polanyian argument that is of a piece with past leftist discourse in China against liberal/neo-classical economics and the myth of the self-regulating market. As Wang argues, the aim of the state in this and other matters is—or should be—a return to the ethics or mode of the planned economy. Economics after all is supposed to be submitted to a 'moral economy,'

which is to say to a national or collective interest and not merely individual interest (as in liberalism).[50]

A still stronger economic example of returns to Maoist economic practice and discourse can be found in the dogged existence and success of Nanjiecun village in southern Henan. Nanjiecun is famous/infamous for being the most 'Maoist,' or more accurately, neo-Maoist collective and space left in China, with a strong 'iron rice bowl' of welfare benefits, free housing, free food coupons, and so on in addition to use of avowedly revolutionary and 'serve-the-people' slogans, statues, and public culture. Its center square contains large paintings not just of Marx, Engels, and Mao but even of Lenin and Stalin. Although it does employ migrant workers, the wage and benefit differences between them and regular worker-residents are small, and quite unheard of for the other millions of migrant (and regular) laborers in the country. There are about twice as many migrant workers as resident workers. The migrant workers are eligible to apply to become official residents and to change their hukou/residency permit, but this can take years. (On a research trip in 2007 I was told it took five.) It is easy to tear down or to romanticize Nanjiecun, but its significance will always lie in the middle. True, its dominant Maoist message in propaganda and so forth is 'serve the people.' This may be insufficiently radical for some observers, just as most mainstream reporting of the place is decidedly condescending and mocking. But Nanjiecun the place is composed of 12,000 or more 'actually existing' residents who are much better off than most of their working-class compatriots across the country.

The village re-collectivized of its own accord after it was forced to disband in the mid-1980s, and by the mid-1990s it became an object of national attention, including an academic study published by Cui Zhiyuan, Deng Yingtao, and Miao Zhuang.[51] Cui is perhaps best known for his initial theorizations of 'liberal socialism'—Roberto Mangabeira Unger was a formative influence—and his call for a second, socialistic 'liberation of thought' following the high tide of free-market liberalism and Occidentalism in the 1980s. The book on Nanjiecun is less about political theory than hardcore economic and empirical analysis. Nanjiecun had resisted privatization under Deng, and it took a great deal of struggle for it to reform as a cooperative. Clearly the idea is that if a communal co-op were successful in one place, perhaps it could be replicated elsewhere, albeit in new contexts. This has not happened, though there are other cooperatives in China, ranging from for-profit to more left/communitar-

ian to the non-ideological. A history of the village is offered, including its propaganda efforts and ideological struggles aimed at 'destroying the private and constructing the public'—a concerted effort launched against the reform dogma from above but also directly in line with Cultural Revolution-era politics and ideology. 'Fight self, combat revisionism' would be a comparable older slogan.

But the heart of the study is an analysis of how Nanjiecun has overcome one of the great obstacles of a cooperative economy—the free-rider problem, or how in a collective economy 'loafers' get the same benefits as hard workers. This is also the famous incentive problem supposedly endemic to state socialism (as opposed to the profit motive/greed/self-interest problem of a liberal market system). Not surprisingly, the antidote turns out to be the cultivation of non-profit/immaterial incentives: instilling an ethic of teamwork, common will, and cooperation (including team 'punishments' for failing to complete a task). Collective success also depends on having very capable team leaders and cadres within the village who can create and sustain the appropriate culture and adapt and innovate it while also working with capital and FDI from Japan and elsewhere.

Of course this FDI already suggests just how much Nanjiecun departs from the Maoism of the Mao era itself; it is still a for-profit collective competing within a capitalist world—if not national—system, albeit one with far, far better distribution and benefits within; it actually relies in part on migrant workers who do not have the same legal, residential status as regular villagers (though they may become official residents eventually); it has also relied heavily on loans for decades, opening Nanjiecun up to the charge of being faked and propped up from above (though it keeps repaying and getting more, it must be said); it relies as well on 'Red tourism' for people who want a glimpse of Maoism in practice or patriotic education; and while there are indeed political education classes offered at night (including Marxist political economy), Nanjiecun is not engaged in class struggle actions within the village, let alone across China. None of this makes Nanjiecun fake, as some of its critics allege, but it does make it a contemporary phenomenon of *this* China.[52]

What the collective must deal with, nonetheless, are a lot of overlapping problems from the collective era: work incentives and productivity as well as leadership and culture problems that Maoism was always and appropriately obsessed with. Indeed, it is the lack of such leadership, and the lack of continuity with and experience of Mao-era production within the party and populace, that makes the Nanjiecun experiment so difficult to repro-

duce across China. Students of Maoism will recognize these problems of incentive and leadership and can see them discussed in numerous texts from the Mao years, such as the famous 'Shanghai textbook' dating from the late Cultural Revolution, originally entitled *Fundamentals of Political Economy*.[53] What should interest us here beyond Nanjiecun itself is precisely this continuity with the past at the level of knowledge production, this serious concern for at least the idea of a socialist, egalitarian, state-based, or planned economy with (or without) Maoist characteristics such as work points, free supply of necessities, moral-political education ('propaganda'), and so on. China is clearly one of the few places on earth that has such debates over state ownership, and even if that discussion may seem wonkish and technical there isare clear issues of social justice and sovereignty in play. Whatever the 'China Dream' is now for Xi Jinping et al.—and from outside it seems like another, modern, consumer society dream, plus national pride—there is no question that there was and to an extent still is a dream of equality and even socialistic economy among at least some intellectuals and workers.[54] Nanjiecun's significance—in addition to its material existence and good working conditions—lies here, rather than it being something that, in its specifics of organization and production, could easily be expanded to other parts of rural China.

The tone of Cui et al.'s *Nanjie Village* of course departs from the late Cultural Revolution *Shanghai* textbook: the Maoist text being radically impassioned and polemical about capitalist roaders and new eras of human history, fully a part of classical Maoist, friend/enemy discourse; the latter volume by Cui et al. was more properly academic. But these economic problems (incentives, free riders) are classic, perennial problems of theoretical and real-world, empirical analysis in China. The rationality and—indeed—the actual existence of a planned, cooperative economy, or a debate about a greater or lesser role for one, is on the table as a matter of debate and investigation. The recent 19th National Party Congress staged this clearly, if indirectly, enough by Xi Jinping's call for enhancing and developing both state and private sectors. It can all be, and in these cases is, taken seriously. Nanjiecun is thus *not* a throwback or nostalgic hangover, but an actually existing part of China. Impure, not utopia but a real place, yet fair and just compared to so much else. The older discourse of cooperative agriculture, people's welfare and health, the selfishness of the private, and so on are still parts of the political culture. Residual perhaps, but miraculously still present. Even the red tourism of Nanjiecun, of secondary importance to its agricultural businesses (chiefly food products

and beer), is worth taking seriously as a mode not just of economy but as a form of political education, of at least keeping the memory of revolution alive and the ideals it tried to embody.

Maoist economic strategy, as well as its historical record prior to the last 30 years of reform, is thus seen very differently within the PRC and among the new left in particular (as in the work of Hu Angang noted earlier). Their generally positive perspective is increasingly shared by a range of economics scholars outside of China, from Chris Bramall's work on Maoist planning to more conservative/conventional economics scholars like Y. Y. Kueh.[55] This counters the dominant, highly negative, Western and liberal knowledge of the Chinese economy during the Mao period.[56] Far from being a failure, and with due allowance for a more mixed, poorer rural record, the Mao-era economy was remarkably successful in industrial, developmental, and 'human capital' terms; much of the post-Mao 'miracle' is unthinkable without it, a point made by Cui Zhiyuan among many others within the left movement and without. It advanced remarkably in comparison to India, for example, as Amartya Sen has always argued, and it did so in egalitarian terms. China had the lowest Gini coefficient (i.e. the lowest inequality) on earth in 1976, and the countryside was finally experiencing faster industrialization and better growth at that point. It was still poor overall, and unevenly developed, but that equality also made it rich in a profound way. It is no wonder, then, that Maoist economics remains an intellectually and discursively viable 'thing' in China, even if—or rather because of—its glaringly unequal and accumulation-intensive mode of development now.

What explains this afterlife are not only certain 'actually existing' facts and events from the socialist past, open to re-interpretation and contestation, but again the afterlives of the revolutionary discourse itself. Another example of how it enables ('produces') one to see and frame certain problems differently is the current debate around the famine demography attached to the Great Leap Forward from 1959 to 1961.[57] Sun Jingxian, a retired mathematics professor but active scholar, revisits the by-now common understanding of 30 million famine victims by re-examining key, official statistical surveys from 1983 (retrospective population estimates) as well as household registration data prior to and during the Leap and its aftermath. His argument is highly empirical and marked by equations that we need not rehearse here. The gist for our purposes is that the household registration or early hukou system offers, in Sun's analysis, a more reliable and complete set of data for population totals than much later censuses

and statistical yearbooks.[58] The data show three striking anomalies before, during, and after the Leap period, including a large increase prior to the Leap, a large decrease during that re-collectivization, and a large increase again afterward (the years 1956–1959, 1960–1964, and 1968–1979). What explains these anomalies, according to Sun, is internal migration within China (for labor mobilization and rural industrialization), from country to city, and later, after the Leap, back from city to country. Many (millions) of these rural migrants simply registered in both places and kept these registrations even after they moved back (or even if they did not move back). This in effect produces more people in later records and censuses. There was a huge, but false, increase in population before the actual famine hit in 1960 and 1961. As Sun argues, the registration or hukou system was in its infancy then, especially in the villages where they were not needed as much anyway; as is not hard to believe, the new registration system was messy. (And still must be.) What this means, according to Sun, is double-counting people, or in other words people being counted as missing and therefore prematurely, suddenly dead from famine in later retrospective censuses and projected population totals.

It is these movements and statistics that plausibly explain why so many people went missing during the Leap campaign of labor mobilizations, yet also suddenly reappeared—that is dramatic overall population increases again—in the immediate years afterward. (They were not dead from famine but simply elsewhere.) Similarly, researchers looking into China's 30 million 'missing girls' under the Dengist one-child policy—long thought to be missing due to infanticide or selective abortions of girls—have perhaps found them by simply revealing that local officials, in cooperation with fellow villagers, simply did not register the girls' births. While technically illegal or 'corrupt,' this is also a very likely common practice, the researchers argue.[59] This is known colloquially as a 'black hukou' (as in 'black market' or 'black taxi') system, and it should surprise no one that it exists and has likely always existed to some degree since 1949 (or since 1979 specifically for so-called 'black children' under the now-defunct One Child Policy).

Sun still clearly claims that there was a sizable famine resulting in about four million deaths due to hunger and famine-induced illnesses. This is no small number—others have used Sun's work to argue more along the lines of 17 million. But it gives the lie to charges in *The New York Times* and elsewhere that Sun et al. are denying there was a famine at all.[60] It does just as obviously depart from other figures of anywhere from 10 to over 30 million, let alone the figure of 45 or more proffered by journalists for not

very good reasons. My point here is not that Sun is definitive, and he himself claims that 'this figure [of 4 million] cannot be treated as exact and conclusive, but is nonetheless a logical conclusion from examining anomalous population change data for the three periods.'[61] His argument is plausible, and certainly original; whether it is ultimately persuasive or not there is no question that it is fully academic and professional social science and hardly a superficial hack job carried out under orders from Beijing.[62] It also assumes the basic rationality of the Leap and of collective agriculture, as well as the socialist and humane political and economic intent of the Leap and period as a whole. This last—along with his and others' work on rural China during and after collectivization—is what makes it part of the new left movement. If the Leap were simply a disaster and an orgy of state violence and sadism, and an instance of great idiocy that insults the economic truth as prophesied by Friedrich von Hayek (collectivism as the road to serfdom), then work such as Sun's would be pointless at best. Rather what is at stake is the historical record of China's socialism and of the PRC's foundations. The Leap is indeed the biggest failure of the Mao era and a matter of historical import, so the knowledge about it matters to China—how many died, and why, what went wrong, and even what worked eventually when communes and rural industrialization did take off in the later 1960s, 1970s, and beyond. Clearly the fewer that died the better the case for collective or socialist agriculture, and vice versa. This may seem callous, in either direction, but it can also be seen as realpolitik at the level of knowledge. We also have to attend to the contemporary context and debates that form the subtext of such work on the rural Mao period, that is that lie beneath all of this hardcore social science and claims about the real history under Mao: once again the conflict between liberalism and the left in China today, which is also to say over the role and place of private property and the state and the value of capitalism and the profit motive.[63]

Within not Maoist but Sinological-orientalist discourse this context and debate is either ignored or just speaks of such leftists as dupes and agents of the state. Two cases in point, one from an Australian demographic historian and one from a French literary critic, both of whom reduce Sun's work to state propaganda (and him to 'stooge' or 'dupe' status) since it allegedly resonates with official, President Xi Jinping's, proclamations to pursue a 'Mass Line Education and Practice Movement' in the Party-state's ideological work (dating from a 2013 convention). Of course such proclamations are common in China—as in the 'Document 9' about liberalism mentioned in our introductory chapter. But Sun has been researching rural China and the

Leap since well before this, as have many others such as Yong Songlin. Powerful critiques of the 30-million figure were made by Utsa Patnaik in the 1990s. If Sun et al. disagree and depart from, say, orientalist screeds about mass death or from journalistic 'exposes' based in allegedly secret archival documents that no one can see, are these by definition signs of state co-optation? Or is it the other way around, that it is the journalists and academics who are in cahoots with right-wing ideology and discourse, more concerned with scoring points against 'the regime' than with having something substantial or accurate to say? The latter claim is at least as valid as the former. But the real point here is the struggle over discourse or knowledge-power, and the incommensurability of some political discourses, like Maoism or communism versus liberalism. This is all cerainly a political and discursive event. But not in the simple liberal way of pitting 'truth-telling' against 'the state,' and in a way that elides geographic or geo-political difference. Anthony Garnaut's reaction to Sun—and his clear, seemingly personal preference for the journalist Yang Jisheng's work—is especially telling in this regard. He refers to Yang having been attacked repeatedly by Sun and others at a conference in Wuhan. The present author also participated, so will speak to it. Some exchanges were heated, as is often the case at important conferences and workshops, but there were—in my own view and those other attendees I spoke with—no 'attacks' in the sense of ad hominem criticisms, denouncements, overt condescension or hectoring, or even shouting. Yang's and Sun's presentations were clear and reasonable, and if the exchanges in discussion were direct and sharp and apparently deeply felt, the stakes of the debate warrant this. One can see far worse in American academe over far less.

In fact the only real heat came from audience members responding harshly to Garnaut's ad hominem depiction of Sun as a complicit stooge of the Party-state—something he was free to say in his paper, but also free to be criticized for, Chinese academia being relatively liberated territory these days. As one participant observed, what if 'we' accused you of working for M1 or the CIA? At both this Wuhan conference and an earlier incarnation the previous year (on rural development since 1949), Yang Jisheng as well as other liberal critics such as the liberal historian Cao Shuji were invited and in dialogue with those from more left or 'statist' orientations. Which is to say there was an actual conference composed of those against collective agriculture and state planning or control of the economy, and those for these things including a split along these lines of how one evaluates the Maoist/socialist period in general. One might note an actual intellectual event in the making in such lineups, with actual and important, even emotional and intense, differences being staged. If there is a scandal here, it is *not* that there

is revisionist scholarship on the famine and collective agriculture and historical Maoism. It is that that the existence of such so-called statist views, and the existence of a Maoist or Chinese leftist intellectual discourse—which is what new and old left knowledges and statements amount to—would be so easily dismissed by foreign Sinologists eager to combat signs of 'statism' and Chinese intellectuals' complicity (their lack of independence), like Cold War Don Quixotes. Garnaut accuses Sun and others as being supported by the state (the Chinese Academy of Sciences) and doing the bidding of President Xi. He counterposes this with the retired journalist Yang Jisheng—presented as a simple hero speaking Truth to Power—whose mass market book on the famine (*Mubei* aka *Tombstone*), full of anecdotes of death and banned in China (yet widely known), in some ways triggered the recent famine debates. Yang's book is important enough and not fake, pointing to actual and horrifying instances of famine and hardship. Of these there is no doubt, for Sun as for the present author. But it is plainly not scholarly (nor does it claim to be), nor capable of arguing strongly for a death total, or explaining the causes of the famine. Yang guesses it is about 36 million based on his conversations with academics in China (in particular Cao Shuji). It must also be said that the former Xinhua news agency reporter is a much beloved figure of the Western media in China, has won right-wing book prizes for his one and only publication (e.g. the Hayek prize in 2013), and fits the profile of an anti-communist dissident. (As imagined from outside China at any rate.) While he is certainly anti-Mao and pro-Hayek by his own admission, he's not as vulnerable or as impoverished as one might assume but an established and respected individual, far from a beleaguered dissident. Yang is in fact better known, especially abroad, than Sun or the leftist/revisionist scholars. Yet the latter are the senior scholars and in fact have personal expe-rience with growing up in rural China. They spoke in Wuhan, for example, about how there is certainly a better, richer diet in general since the Mao era (and autarky). But for Garnaut or one liberal anti-communist literary critic, the mathematician Sun can only be a stooge, and one of the organizers (Cao Tianyu, professor of philosophy in the USA) can for Garnaut only be a 'Marxist lay preacher.'

My point here, other than pointing to typically liberal ways of seeing Chinese politics, history, and intellectuals, is to show what it means to be inside or outside Maoist/revolutionary discourse. Garnaut or those who repeat his account verbatim (*a la* Sebastian Veg) simply speak as political liberals opposed to the—for them, as foreign nationals—illegitimate Party-state. Perhaps they are also opposed to collective agriculture and 'statism'

on principle, and they are certainly still fighting Mao and communism. Like Yang Jisheng, they may be adherents of the free market and Friedrich Von Hayek. They speak up for the Chinese dead without knowing how many there are (or were), and why. And without being asked to. They are, in sum, empowered by a certain liberal discourse with 'Chinese characteristics,' as will be discussed in the following chapter. It is rather different for the actual mainland Chinese intellectuals, especially those on the left or heterodox. The logic of complicity around the state—the state approves workshops like these, publishes journals, and funds professors—is also rather striking coming from similarly state-funded university-based intellectuals in France (via allegedly *post*-colonial Hong Kong) and Australia. But for the new left, there is no contradiction here between being state-funded (if one is in fact lucky enough to get such jobs or funds) and being an intellectual. If that is illiberal in the current conjuncture, the problem must be with the liberal discourse which cannot abide the other side's speech. This incident also tells us about the afterlife of the Maoist discourse—Sun's work, for example, is quite dry and 'scientific' in form, a far cry from impassioned political discourse. But to take the Leap and even the famine seriously, rather than relying on liberal orientalist shibboleths or very partial scholarship, one has to speak from within it, close to it. Then you can see even the famine in another way, and go on to still contemplate a more collective and egalitarian agricultural and national economy.

Or put another way, the discourses produce or help determine the analyses. What is intelligible in one is not necessarily so in the other, which is the charitable way of describing the reaction to Sun et al. by the liberal partisans. Sun Jingxian, as much as Wang Hui on Tibet, Han Yuhai on market slavery, and so on, can only appear as illiberal *to them*. In this sense new left discourse is a challenge to their universalist and anti-Maoist politics and thought. It may not actually be taken up by liberal intellectuals, least of all outside of China, where there are major obstacles ranging from Cold War and orientalist discourses signifying anti-communism, a too strong state, and Maoism-as-despotism, to a lack of translations and—it must be said—a lack of free speech and mobility (i.e. to speak abroad) for mainland intellectuals. This is unfortunate since debate, in whatever form, always animates discourse and moves it along. There is also a concerted effort, especially under the current CCP system, to suppress or make people forget about the political. But at the same time, the 'illiberal' revolutionary legacy gives the state not only a certain legitimacy but also a critique of liberalism and (Western) universality.

And yet the new left in the broad sense I am presenting it here has already happened and already occupies institutional and discursive space; it is unlikely to go or be repressed away, and in any case it and other heterodox yet grounded Chinese knowledge production are bound to develop in the future.

Put another way, there are two sides, at least in 'illiberal' China. The 'outside' of liberal scholarship or intellectual politics in the USA, for example, is if anything smaller. Conservatism is always a bad fit for the academy, at least in its overt form. But also more marginal in the lands of freedom and individuality are the left-wing or Marxian variants of illiberalism, that is actual and radical critics of liberalism speaking from a clearly, if general, socialist or communistic standpoint.

It is too soon to tell if such a reactivation of leftist critique and scholarship in China will change the uneven production and distribution of knowledge in the world, or even in China. The left is still marginalized much more than it should be in a People's Republic, and in this sense it is still Deng's China. But it is already clear that China is producing and sending abroad more than commodities and wealthy migrants and students. A new yet nonetheless 'red connected' left discourse and an older, persistent refusal of liberalism are also at work in the world.

Notes

1. While I (2012) and many others have written at length on 1989, the best place to begin is with some of the collections of documents from the era, for example: Mok Chiu Yu et al., Eds., *Voices from Tiananmen Square* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990); Suzanne Ogden et al., Eds., *China's Search for Democracy: The Student and Mass Movement of 1989* (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 1992); and Lu, Ping et al., Eds., *A Moment of Truth: Workers' Participation in China's 1989 Democracy Movement, and the Emergence of Independent Unions.* (Trans. Gus Mok et al. Hong Kong: HK Trade Union Education Centre, 1990). By 'loyal' here I mean that the sentiments of the student demands were largely patriotic and a demand for inclusion of—it must be said—their own class fraction. By unnecessary I simply mean that the students and most protesters—even the striking workers who represented the greatest potential power and 'threat' were fully in retreat by June 3. The use of violence—death—was simply terror; even in its own terms of stability and so forth, the state could well have resolved the 'crisis' by means other than that, and the later neo-liberalization of the economy. But it was Deng's Party at this point, and his politics.

2. Three notable studies of the 1980s era and culture fever remain: Jing Wang, *High Culture Fever: Politics, Aesthetics, and Ideology in Deng's China*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), Zhang Xudong, *Chinese Modernism in the Era of Reforms: Cultural Fever, Avant-Garde Fiction, and the New Chinese Cinema* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997), and Kalpana Mishra, *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism: The Erosion of Official Ideology in Deng's China* (New York: Routledge, 1998). See also Chen Xiaomei, *Occidentalism: A Theory of Counter-discourse in Post-Mao China*. 2nd ed. Foreword by Dai Jinhua. (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).
3. This expectation of the PRC eventually becoming the same as the rest of the world—or that it *should* at any rate—is the essence of the 'new' if quint-essentially 'modernizationist' orientalism, as I have argued elsewhere. (This is also a missionary logic.) But this assumption and discourse has also been noted by others of a decidedly different political and intellectual pur-view than my own, often to the tune of an argument for a harder line against China since it obstinately refuses to change. See, for instance, the journalist James Mann's *The China Fantasy: How Our Leaders Explain Away Chinese Repression* (New York: Penguin Books, 2007).
4. See as well on the new left—and indeed the entire landscape of intellectual politics—He Li's excellent *Political Thought and China's Transformation: Ideas Shaping Reform in Post-Mao China* (New York: Palgrave, 2015). See also Ban Wang and Lu Jie, Eds., *China and New Left Visions* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012).
5. Gan's influential essay has been republished in various forms but can be found partly translated into English as 'The Grand Three Traditions in the New Era' in Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* (London: Fourth Estate, 2008). See as well the brief discussions of Gan's position in Timothy Cheek, ed., *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010) and by Daniel Bell in *China's New Confucianism: Politics and Everyday Life in a Changing Society* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008). Gan's original version was published in *Dushu* (2007): 1–6.
6. The most striking Mao-era example would of course have to be the later 'Criticize Lin Biao, Criticize Confucius' campaign after the former's death by shot-down airplane. These veritably academic debates and propaganda screeds from the ultra-left were always aimed at their actual enemies and the struggle for control even as they attempted a Maoist analysis of ancient Chinese history.
7. This is a common theme or phrasing in much of Wang Hui's work from the 1990s onward, and the first part of this sentence gives my own gloss on it. See his most recent work *China from Empire to Nation State* (Trans. Michael Gibbs Hill. Harvard University Press, 2014).
8. See the discussion of Gan and neo-Confucianism in He Li, op cit.

9. On this phenomenon see especially the article by Xie Shaobo, 'Guoxue Re and the Ambiguity of Chinese Modernity' (*China Perspectives* 2011.1 39–45), as well as other pieces in that special issue on the topic. Of course not all 'national learning' projects are politically regressive or essentialist, as they depend on the contexts of the work and who reads them where.
10. On Gan's work, and this influential essay in particular, see the chapter by Zhou Lian, 'The Debates in Contemporary Chinese Political Thought,' in Fred Dallmayr and Zhao Tingyang, eds., *Contemporary Chinese Political Thought: Debates and Perspectives* (University Press of Kentucky, 2012).
11. For discussion of Qiu Qiubai see Liu Kang, *Aesthetics and Chinese Marxism* (Durham: Duke UP, 2000). Classic pieces from Qiu are available at http://criticalasianstudies.org/assets/files/bcas/v08n01.pdf. Accessed Nov. 8, 2017.
12. Wang Hui, Cui Zhiyuan, Dai Jinhua, and Wang Shaoguang (in Hong Kong) may be the most well-known abroad, in addition to outside scholars with deep roots in the mainland (often due to having been born and raised there), such as Lin Chun, Cao Tianyu, Li Minqi, and Gao Mobo. Other notable and widely read scholars include Gan Yang, Cai Xiang, Han Deqiang, Lu Xinyu, Han Yuhai, Luo Gang, Xi-Shu, Mao Jian, Hu Angang, and many more. In this chapter I cannot do justice to them all, since their range is co-extensive with that of the Chinese academy and intellectual sphere itself. The new left does not dominate, far from it, but it is ensconced; many of its scholars are also leading scholars in their disciplines and subfields. The next chapter will attend to liberalism. My intent is to characterize the movements as a whole, indicating their general logic and significances, rather than explicating or doing justice to individual thinkers.
13. For the Wang Hui article in question as well as Fenby's response, see 'The Rumour Machine: Wang Hui on the dismissal of Bo Xilai' (*London Review of Books* 34. May 9, 2012). https://www.lrb.co.uk/v34/n09/-wanghui/the-rumour-machine. Accessed Nov. 3, 2017. Fenby is an investment consultant, journalist, author, former editor in colonial Hong Kong, and recipient of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire. This is indeed quite a resume and arguably only possible in the China field. But that field is defined by anti-communism and as such has certain limits on what can be thought or said while remaining in the fold. The reception of the new left is the case in point.
14. See Wang Hui, *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, trans. Theodore Huters and Rebecca Karl (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).
15. Barmé, 'The Revolution of Resistance,' *in Chinese Society: Change, Conflict and Resistance*, ed. Mark Selden and Elizabeth Perry, 3rd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2010), 304–305. The Han Yuhai piece in question was published as 'Zai "Ziyouzhuyi" zitaide beihou,' Tianya (1998).

16. As cited in Chen Lichuan, para. 15, in the online edition, 'The Debate Between Liberalism and Neo-Leftism at the Turn of the Century,' *China Perspectives* 55 (2004), http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/417. (accessed Aug. 21, 2010). Han's piece, 'Ziben dengyu ziyouhua ma?' (Does capital equal liberalization?), was published in Kexue shibao, January 3, 1999.
17. I leave to one side here the anarchist, neo-Trotskyist or otherwise statistically irrelevant left self-positioning in China. It would be a mistake to imagine there will be some renaissance of such a 'left' in China. The Marxist humanism of the 1980s will be discussed in passing later, though it too seems to have been largely displaced by new left, liberal and neo-traditional ways of thinking.
18. *The Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 1, 'Analysis of the Classes in Chinese Society' (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1965). Michael Dutton notes that this line expresses the 'quintessence of politics': 'If you want to understand the concept of the political, turn to the first line of the first page of the first volume of Mao Zedong's *Selected Works*,' *Policing Chinese Politics: A History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 3.
19. I refer here to sectarian Western leftist screeds, chiefly Internet and social media epiphenomena and familiar enough yet slight enough to obviate the need for full citations. The charge of nationalism is perhaps best answered generally by the work of the late, great Benedict Anderson, who once said that he had only ever met two or three non-nationalist cosmopolitans in his entire life.
20. I must say that I have heard such views many times in teaching in Hong Kong, from mainland and even 'local' students. I would not say this is the dominant view, however. Perhaps the main point is simply that 1989 has not been forgotten or erased—it could not be—but a new 'regime of truth' surrounds it, or rather two regimes, very much reflecting an inside/outside dichotomy.
21. See Han Yuhai, 'Assessing China's Reforms,' in the June 3, 2006, *Economic and Political Weekly* of India (pp. 2206–2212) (Translated by Matthew Allen Hale.). http://www.epw.in/journal/2006/22/perspectives/assessing-chinas-reforms.html. Accessed Dec. 4, 2017. One should note that this point about the economic basis of 1989 (often elided by analysts and the students and liberal intellectuals themselves), and the clear if implicit defense of the right to protest, is also a theme in Wang Hui's work.
22. Han, Ibid., 2212.
23. See the useful articles on Hu and others at The China Story website of Australia (various authors, not always signed). https://www.thechinastory.org/key-intellectual/hu-angang. Accessed Nov. 6, 2011.
24. This interview with the mainland *Foreign Theoretical Trends* journal is included within Wang's recent volume of essays *China's Twentieth Century: Revolution, Retreat and the Road to Equality* (Saul Thomas, ed., Verso,

2016). Online at https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2555-contradiction-systemic-crisis-and-the-direction-for-change-an-interview-with-wang-hui. Accessed Nov. 6, 2011.

25. See the interview with Wang done by En Liang Khong, 'After the party: an interview with Wang Hui.' January 13, 2014. https://www.opendemocracy.net/wang-hui-en-liang-khong/after-party-interview-with-wang-hui. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017. Wang is worth quoting at length to avoid confusion: 'Nobody can defend the Cultural Revolution as a whole, and also you cannot simply say that any period in history was just completely wrong,' Wang continues. 'We talk about the Cultural Revolution mainly from the point of view of elites. But very few talk about it from the perspective of workers, peasants, and their different generations.'
26. See the notes and discussion in Chap. 1.
27. Josef Gregory Mahoney, 'Changes in International Research Cooperation in China: Positive Perspectives' (*Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 43, 2, 47–64), 61.
28. The China model has been argued for most forcibly by Pan Wei, a Beijing University professor and trenchant critic of liberalism though ambiguously situated in relation to new leftists and certainly not an old leftist in the Maoist sense. See his 2007 article 'The Chinese Model of Development' at http://www.ids-uva.nl/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/10_Pan.pdf. Accessed Nov. 6, 2017.
29. See, for example, Sebastian Veg's review essay in France's think-tank journal based in Hong Kong, 'Tibet, Nationalism, and the 'West': Questioning Economic and Political Modernity.' (*China Perspectives* 2009.3) http://chinaperspectives.revues.org/4859. Accessed Nov. 7, 2017.
30. For an excellent overview of Wang Hui's work on this, see Zhang Yongle's 'The Future of the Past: On Wang Hui's *Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*' (*New Left Review* 62 March–April 2010). Wang's case for China being modern so early has to do with 'signs' such as capitalist commodity exchange, a sense of ruptured time, and so on. I remain agnostic on this question, though it is clearly better than notions of oriental stagnation and despotism, stages of history, and so on. The twentieth-century context is the key one at any rate.
31. Cai Xiang, *Revolution and Its Narratives: China's Socialist Literary and Cultural Imaginaries, 1949–1966* (Duke University Press, 2016). Translated by Zhong Xueping and Rebecca Karl.
32. For the Li Yizhe writings on socialist democracy, including law, see the anthology, *Wild Lily, Prairie Fire: China's Road to Democracy, Yan'an to Tian'anmen, 1942–1989*, edited by Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (Princeton University Press, 1995).
33. See Hall at his most Gramscian: 'The Toad in the Garden: Thatcherism Among the Theorists,' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed.

Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

34. See Wang Shaoguang, *Failure of Charisma: The Cultural Revolution in Wuhan* (Oxford University Press, 1995).
35. Wang, Zheng. 'Call Me Qingnian but Not Funu: A Maoist Youth in Retrospect' (*Some of Us: Chinese Women Growing Up in the Mao Era*. Eds. Zhong Xueping, Wang Zheng, and Bai Di. 27–52).
36. Wang Zheng, like many other participants or fellow travelers of the new left and intellectual politics in China (e.g. Gao Mobo), resides and works outside of China but also publishes and works in the mainland. The new left has to be understood as mainland-based but it—like other mainland Chinese intellectual 'circles'—is also part of a global conversation, just an indirect one. My specific point in using Wang and Gao Mobo is that they provide excellent, clear, provocative descriptions of Maoist discourse.
37. See Alain Badiou, *The Century* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007).
38. Tony Saich and David Apter, *Revolutionary Discourse in Mao's Republic* (Harvard University Press, 1998).
39. See Yu Liu, Maoist Discourse and the Mobilization of Emotions in Revolutionary China (*Modern China* 36.3 2010: 329–362).
40. As I have written at length elsewhere on Maoist discourse as well as the critique of the Cold War notion of totalitarianism, I will not re-rehearse these arguments here. Again the essential point is that one does not see serious intellectual historians or cultural critics, let alone someone like Foucault or, say, Isaac Deutscher, assume and write about what is a Cold War-inspired notion of 'brainwashing' by any other name. Discourse does not stand outside of something called Truth. Maoist discourse, whether we like it or not, is by any definition opposed to and seeks to exclude liberalism, and even humanism. For more, see *China and Orientalism*. The pioneering essay on Maoist discourse is Gao Mobo's 'Maoist Discourse and a Critique of the Present Assessments of the Cultural Revolution' *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, July (1994): 13–31.
41. Kerry Brown and Simone Van Nieuwenhuizen, *China and the New Maoists* (London: Zed Books, 2016).
42. See the November 18, 2013, report by Malcolm Moore in *The Telegraph*. Moore was the preeminent and most reliable reporter during the entire Bo/Chongqing affair. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10457357/China-pays-back-millions-of-pounds-to-Bo-Xilais-victims-but-keeps-them-in-jail.html. Accessed Nov. 8, 2017.
43. See Rebecca Liao's 2013 report in *The Atlantic* at http://www.theatlantic.com/china/archive/2013/08/why-bo-xilais-trial-is-a-victory-for-the-rule-of-law-in-china/278448/ and lawyer Ben Self's analysis in *Global Studies Law Review*, 'The Bo Xilai Trial and China's Struggle With the Rule of Law' (14.1 2015) http://openscholarship.wustl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1520&context=law_globalstudies. Accessed Nov. 7, 2017.

44. This seems to be the case as of 2016, according to no less an 'anti-statist' journal than *Foreign Policy*. See Dinny McMahon, 'The Terrible Amusement Park That Explains Chongqing's Economic Miracle.' See also the praise for Mayor Huang for helping prevent any property bubble despite all the subsidized housing and development of farmland. http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/08/29/chongqing-economic-miracle-locajoy-debt-sales-state-owned-enterprises/. Accessed Nov. 8, 2017.
45. See for example a 2013 report by Zachary Keck, 'With Bo Xilai on Trial, China Adopts Chongqing Model' at *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2013/08/with-bo-xilai-on-trial-china-adopts-chongqing-model/?allpages=yes. Accessed Nov. 8, 2017. See also two (anonymous) reports more recently 'Chongqing blazes economic trail as Bo scandal recedes' (http://www.businesstimes.com.sg/government-economy/chongqing-blazes-economic-trail-as-bo-scandal-recedes) and 'As Beijing investigates his successor, support for jailed Bo Xilai endures in Chongqing' (https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2017/07/31/asia-pacific/politics-diplomacy-asia-pacific/beijing-investigates-successor-support-jailed-bo-xilai-endures-chongqing/). Accessed Nov. 8, 2011.
46. See the report by Malcolm Moore: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/10785505/Young-Chinese-Maoists-set-up-hippy-commune.html
47. See Han, 'The Social Costs of Neoliberalism in China: Interview with Stephen Philion,' *Dollars and Sense* (July/August 2007): 22–34.
48. As a general rule of thumb, it has long been the companies run by foreign capital—for example Taiwan's infamous Foxconn—that abuse and exploit workers the most. Obviously this isn't to say exploitation is rare in state-owned enterprises.
49. See his 'China's Double-Movement in Health Care,' *Morbid Symptoms: Health Under Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009).
50. This is a Polanyian argument that runs throughout several of Wang's essays. See, for example, 'The Changing Role of Government in China.' In Xudong Zhang, ed., *Whither China?* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).
51. Zhiyuan Cui, Deng Yingtao, and Miao Zhuang, *Nanjie Village* (Beijing: Modern China Press, 1996). See also Cui's 'Liberal Socialism and the Future of China: A Petty Bourgeoisie Manifesto,' in *The Chinese Model of Modern Development*, ed. Tian Yu Cao (New York: Routledge, 2005).
52. See Shizheng Feng and Yang Su, 'The making of Maoist model in post-Mao era: The myth of Nanjie village' (*Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 46.1 2013: 39–51).
53. This has been published in English as *Maoist Economics and the Revolutionary Road to Communism*, ed. Raymond Lotta (Chicago: Banner Press, 1994).

54. There is a large literature on such organizations and the countermovement, small as it may be nationally speaking, toward a more social economy. See, for starters, *Social Economy in China and the World*, eds. Ngai Pun, Ben Hok-bun Ku, Hairong Yan, and Anita Koo (Oxon: Routledge, 2016).
55. See Bramall, *In Praise of Maoist Economic Planning: Living Standards and Economic Development in Sichuan Since 1931* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). and Kueh, *China's New Industrialization Strategy: Was Chairman Mao Really Necessary?* (Northampton, Mass.: Edward Elgar, 2008).
56. On the Chinese economy, see also Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After: A History of the People's Republic*, rev. and expanded ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1986); Jack Gray, *Rebellions and Revolutions: China from the 1880s to 2000* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); and the sources discussed in Gao, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008). Current economic work on this period is closer to what was said by the US government and World Bank toward the end of the Mao period. See US Congress, *The Chinese Economy Post-Mao: A Compendium of Papers*, Joint Economic Committee, 95th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1978).
57. The more popular or Internet debates around the famine can be found here, albeit from the leftist side: http://www.wyzxwk.com/s/sqwhy/. Accessed Aug. 21, 2010. See also the discussion in Gao Mobo, *The Battle for China's Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 2008).
58. See Sun Jingxian, 'Population Change during China's "Three Years of Hardship" (1959–1961)' (*Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* 2.1 2016: 453–500).
59. See Simon Denyer, 'Researchers may have 'found' many of China's 30 million missing girls' (November 30, 2016, *The Washington Post*). https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/11/30/researchers-may-have-found-many-of-chinas-30-million-missing-girls/?utm_term=.e002864366c2. Accessed Nov. 11, 2017.
60. See the discussion of Sun and others in Gao Mobo's forthcoming book, *Constructing China: Clashing Views of the People's Republic* (London: Pluto Books, 2018).
61. Sun Jingxian, Ibid., 495.
62. Readers can judge for themselves since the journal is open access, though clearly background information about the PRC in the Mao era and about Chinese demography or the lack thereof would be helpful for the entire debate. http://icaps.nsysu.edu.tw/ezfiles/122/1122/img/2375/CCPS2(1)-Sun.pdf. Accessed Dec. 4, 2017.
63. I have attempted to address these issues in a chapter of my previous monograph. See Vukovich, *China and Orientalism*, Ibid.

CHAPTER 3

From Making Revolution to Making Charters: Liberalism and Economism in the Late Cold War

This chapter offers an intellectual political account of the rise and fall, yet persistence and transformation, of Chinese liberalism during and after the Maoist era. The 'case' of China helps illustrate a global point: the weakening and degradation of liberalism, the rise of economism and de-politicized politics in place of an actual or socialistic left. But this global condition is also in itself co-produced, determined by the fate of Chinese politics during and after the revolution. In short what we ultimately have to attend to is not just a 'Chinese' problem or failure (as if de-politicization and economism were not global ills) but the state of the political right now. More specifically I will eventually argue that a certain 'liberalism'—defined with the Maoists as an economism that seeks de-politicization and 'stability' or peace—informs the developmentalist Party-state today, and forms an evil twin alongside Chinese liberalism proper. The latter shares the official concern with economic and even political reform with many in the Party establishment, but it is also an anti-state intellectual movement that should be familiar to observers of libertarianism and neo-liberalism elsewhere. Taken together, both sides—sometimes in direct conflict, as with the dissidents, and sometimes in a more or less happy marriage, as in the ardently pro-market establishment liberals—speak to the global conjuncture as one dominated by forces and discourses that would like to put an end to politics altogether in favor of rule by markets (and by the ruling class of those markets).

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There are multiple contexts to navigate here, but as suggested earlier the key moments are post-Mao and *post*-Tiananmen China (the displacement of the 1980s 'Western' cultural fevers), the rise of a global neo-liberalism since the 1970s, and an ongoing clash or 'unhappy marriage' (to invoke a usefully normative metaphor) between liberalism/the West and communism/the PRC. In short, the 'classic' and iconoclastic liberalism of the May 4th movement, despite it being crucial to the liberal imaginary in China and especially within much China studies, is in my view of minor importance to the meaning and politics of contemporary liberalism (which is powerfully shaped by neo-liberal, Austrian 'theorist' F. A. von Hayek, e.g.) or even less to Chinese politics proper. It is not that either pole, the West and the PRC, is genuinely or authentically liberal or communist, but that these terms and this opposition mark a certain, discursive yet crucial terrain of political conflict and struggle. As with the new left then, the question of liberalism—the battle for that within China, and for that as doxa or the consensus 'interpretation' of the PRC—immediately calls forth the politics of knowledge, East and West. One has to begin with the phenomenon of political orientalism, or how what counts as the West, in all its authority to speak and write China, sees the question of China and its missing or unfulfilled liberalism. We have to start there, in this case, because of its influence in knowledge production and its influence, or confluence, with 'native' Chinese voices, either in sympathy or in disagreement. The Western view is a long one, situated in the modern but pre-communist past and dreaming of a non-communist, liberal future where there is no Party-state.

A recent *Economist* article on the assassination of nationalist politician Song Jiaoren in 1913 illustrates the degraded historicism involved. Founder of the Nationalist Party and a brilliantly successful young politician, Song helped organized his party's victories in the 1912 elections of the early fledgling Republic of China and he stood a good chance of becoming the prime minister. Though given the small circle of actual voters and the state of the 'Republic,' this begs the question of what he would have been the ruler of. Song also—and this is the heart of the matter—held classic liberal views on electoral democracy and even on limiting the powers of the president. He was shot dead in 1913 by the dictator Yuan Shikai's gangsters; the alleged movement toward electoral multi-party democracy soon followed suit, as a 'luxury' that a civil-war-torn and invaded China could hardly afford, and that neither of the leading movements, the communists and nationalists, seemed to want. Song became a footnote, but this hasn't

stopped historians from pointing to him (and a putatively 'liberal' Guomindang before the Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek) as the 'road not taken' by China, and that having made all the difference.[1] But the great thing about Robert Frost's poem is that it is *not* about the importance of individuality and liberal, autonomous selves; it is instead a testament to the human capacity for self-deception. In that sense it may be the ideal poem for the dream of 'liberalism in China' after all. The roads in that poem, it may be recalled, are explicitly depicted as 'the same' and 'as just as fair' as one another. In other words, the Economists' type of 'what if?' history experiment about paths not taken is best left to salons, bars, and quirky grandparents holding forth to children, and is inevitably a deceit. History moves according to a logic of material and social necessity that we may—at best—only perceive in its aftermath.

The taking of simple-minded moral positions on something so vast and complex, or treating it as something fungible and arbitrary as opposed to path-setting and empowered (world-making), is of little use in understanding the present. All the more so with a remarkably long and tortuous path to revolution and modernity that resulted in 1949, an epochal event and victory won at great costs and through remarkable concerted effort by generations of participants from the communists and nationalists to others in between—but not by liberal intellectuals or economists or lawyers. It is rich, then, that *The Economist* magazine—to this day a great simulation of the type of liberal, free-market ideology that came to China in the form of colonialism, gunboats, and opium wars—should present Song to the PRC (or to its Western readers) as that proverbial road: had Song lived then the revolution could well have been avoided. China could have followed Taiwan's path to liberalization and democratization (presumably without the R.O.C.'s de facto Marshall Plan, which *The Economist* should certainly reject as 'statist').[2]

While liberalism was very much part of the elite intellectual environment through the May 4th movement and the 1920s, it was sidelined by the rise of nationalism and communism, genuinely massive, mass movements, which is also to say by civil war and foreign imperialism. After 1949, and for all due allowances for individuals and even individuality existing after the revolution (of course!), *political* liberalism or Western liberalism as a discourse of individual rights and freedom, multi-party elections, the sacrosanct individual who exists 'before' society disappeared. Despite its influence as an interpretive frame for the PRC as seen from outside (liberal humanism being the default mode of discourse for the

modern academy in general), *that* liberalism's rise and fall before its re-articulation in the 1980s is one of the shortest stories about the revolution that we can, or should, tell. Never deeply rooted outside of urban metropoles like Beijing and Shanghai, it was mostly irrelevant as an indigenous intellectual and political movement, much like, say, an even smaller Chinese Trotskyism. Given the fact that Maoism, as a Sinified Marxism-Leninism and like most actually existing revolutionary movements, was defined *against* liberalism quite specifically, then this absence should come as no surprise. Recall that during the Maoist era, from Yan'an onwards, liberalism, like humanism, was a demonized term equated with being a rightist or at least a non- or bad revolutionary in need of rectification. In the cultural revolution in particular it came to signify selfishness and self-interest. Even today in a comparatively capitalist and certainly very consumerist, globalizing China, one must not overstate the case for the relevance and return (or necessity) of liberalism. Leaving aside—for the moment only, as we will discuss this later—the specifically economic or free trade, 'market' liberalism of many in the Party-state itself (arguably including former Premier Wen Jiabao) and the intelligentsia, political liberalism as some type of oppositional or counter-cultural, iconoclastic force, like the charming screeds of a young Chen Duxiu writing in the first decades of the twentieth century, is weak tea. It is in fact only called for and demanded by dissidents like Liu Xiaobo (and to an extent lawyers and legal activists). Other, mainstream liberals are far more muted in regard to political reform, and tend to call for *economic reform (privatization) as the political reform*, with very specific, politically liberal criticisms (e.g. rights violations) coming more piecemeal and not only by liberal intellectuals (new left and others do this as well). This relative absence of a 'fiery' or, say, Voltaire-eque style of classic Enlightenment liberalism was the case even before the rise of Xi Jinping, though it has increased since the latter's rise. It really began with the repression—and also the failure—of the Tiananmen protests, thence to lead to the new left and other more Sinified voices and discourses. Prominent dissidents like Ai Wei Wei (arguably an arch liberal individualist and not a mere narcissist) and Liu Xiaobo (about whom, more later) are much less representative and popular than readers of *The New York Times* might reasonably infer. And it would seem faintly ridiculous to expect the liberals in the Party to either legislate the Party system out of existence or inadvertently foment a middle-class transformation in the manner of our received wisdom about Europe's transition from feudalism.[3]

And yet with the end of Maoism, liberalism has returned anew— transformed and re-articulated—as a relatively minor, yet real and complex part of Chinese intellectual political culture. It awkwardly and doggedly persists. Awkwardly when President Xi Jinping extolls the virtues of globalization and free trade at Davos among the world's (chiefly Western) economic-political elite, in a speech hot on the heels of such illiberal Western developments as Brexit and Trumpism. The CCP's belief in 'free and fair, rule-bound trade'—abroad—is unmistakable, even as it tries to control or mediate the flows of ideas and ideologies to its own people and retain a role for state planning and state ownership. It is very much in its own interests to do both things, given its comparative advantage in labor productivity and human capital and manufacture infrastructure (all of this in part due to Mao era socialism) and its 'illiberal' or Party-state mode of governance. But the Party-state or system, including its elite and other classes, believes genuinely in such economic ideas. (And in wealth and development as almost wholly good things in themselves.) These beliefs and 'memes' are as central as 'making revolution' and the communist horizon were to the revolutionary era. Notwithstanding the concomitant commitment to state-owned enterprises and property (which also exist in, e.g., Europe), the CCP and hence the PRC are genuinely liberal, even Smithian in economics (Arrighi). Today this is abundantly clear in their trade with Africa, and as compared to the International Monetary Fund's and the West's past practice of 'structural adjustment' and colonization.

But this Smithian or liberal-capitalist China sits awkwardly, to the foreign observer at any rate, with the PRC's nominally socialist/communist forms, from the single-party state itself to the media and propaganda enterprises. The PRC is equally committed to *policing* some types of politically liberal or 'oppositional' forms of thought and speech. Vanilla bloggers or 'public intellectuals' like Han Han (a race car driver and popular writer, but very much a Chinese Internet celebrity more than anything else) are somehow 'liberal' and 'rebellious' but are not considered worth policing. Far less popular and significant anti-Maoist critics such as the prominent liberal economist Mao Yushi are, however, a different story. Mao is an ardent pro-business neo-liberal who came up the hard way during the Mao era (branded as a rightist repeatedly) but went on to a successful career as an economist. Very much part of the establishment now, he nonetheless ran afoul of the authorities and, first, neo-Maoist readers for writing a long screed in the business magazine *Caixin* about the evil rule of Chairman Mao ('the backstage boss who wrecked the country and

ruined the people'[4]) and clearly implying that his portrait in Tiananmen Square should be taken down (and presumably his corpse buried). Similar things have happened within the media sphere, including to state TV hosts. Mao Yushi's case is notable because of his pedigree and elite status, his claims to intellectual stature as an economist, and the fact that some in the Party, and many more outside of it in the upper classes, no doubt share his economic views and seek further privatization and free markets in the name of 'wealth creation.'[5] The issue is not just one of the state needing Mao as heroic founding father. Indeed the discourse on Mao's biography has been so poisoned as a tale of evil or gross misrule, not least by his biographers in English academe and journalism (cultural imperialism again), that Mao Yushi's views are far from unknown.[6] They are more like a liberal common sense or doxa, just as they are in America and Hong Kong (though such mainland liberals are a smaller demographic to be sure). No, the scandal here is that the Party-state (some of it at least) and others in society have a different view and different discourse on Mao and the revolution—that he was indeed the inevitably flawed but great, if now underappreciated, and greatly principled communist revolutionary and egalitarian. His image in rural China, where he is squarely represented and popularly understood as one of 'them' (despite the Leap famine), has been oft remarked, and Maoist or revolutionary discourse still exists in China from the new left to 'neo-Maoists' to older generations (who lived it), and so on. The point here is that, willy-nilly, Mao and the revolution represent an anti- or even illiberal communist or 'other' vision of China than that constructed by Dengist or 'rightist' or liberal-capitalist China. The harassment of Mao Yushi and others when they 'slander' Mao Zedong is there to remind us that not only does the CCP polices speech, it also has different discourse on the subject than what one typically hears in English or, for that matter, in foreign Chinese newspapers. (See as well the earlier discussion of 'Document 9.')

But as the case of octogenarian Mao Yushi or the post-1980s liberals is there to show as well, Chinese liberalism, born in the New Culture and May Fourth moments of early twentieth-century China, is nonetheless back, if it ever really went away. But back in different, arguably degraded or re- articulated form, specifically to an anti-state and free-market ideology that for all its seeming resonance with, say, a Voltaire or classic Enlightenment liberal pleading against tyranny is far closer to an economically and politi-cally reactionary position, and a strident economism, that we usually call neo-liberalism. And given the inordinate influence of American or Western

intellectual flows and discourses in the world (which underpin 'modernity' as much as 'globalization'), liberalism in China is unlikely to go away for good. But this does not amount to the re-emergence of a road not taken in the zeitgeist, convergent sense invoked by *The Economist* or as waited upon by the Hong Kong 'democrats.' The rise and fall, yet re-articulated return, must be further analyzed. It has much to tell us about globalization and the nature of the political today, after the eras of colonialism and revolution in their twentieth century forms.

Liberalism and De-politicization: The Presence of the Past

Beyond the influence of Western discourse, we must ask why this persistence obtains, despite its lack of popularity among the masses, among protesters and strikers (by and large single-issue), and even, *contra* the standard Western narrative/expectation, lacking appeal among the bourgeoning middle class and the rich.[7] A crucial reason is that it never quite went away, or in other words, liberalism of a sort persists because 'it' was always an absent presence if not an explicit enemy of or threat to the Maoists or leftists within the revolution. It reflects as well the desire, among some, for 'normalcy' and the status quo, of stability, under the onslaught of global modernity. Or in the Chinese case, a certain revolution or massive transformation away from a 'feudal' or non-Western, 'traditional' society. It may seem odd to say in the context of a communist movement or a single-party state, but liberalism—*what counted as liberalism*, and was frequently called that name (often pejoratively)—was at the heart of the discursive struggle for hegemony. As the 'enemy' or de facto opposition to Maoism, and in a sense ranging from the Liu-Deng types to the 'subversive' non-political or anti-political art existing at the margins of the late cultural revolution, this liberalism was always implicit to the struggles over the practical direction as well as the 'soul' of the revolution, within the red decades of the PRC.[8] Thus, rather than seeing contemporary neo-liberalism and conservatism as a return to the 1920s (whereby the 1980s stand as the second 'Chinese enlightenment,' as their partisans put it), our reference should be instead to the radical years, starting with the rise of Maoism after 1927 and including the struggles over 'revisionism' and the 'capitalist road' after 1949 and up to the Dengist hegemony in the 1980s.

Take the 1937 polemical essay by Mao, later to be part of the Little Red Book, on one of the main tasks on the 'ideological front': 'Combat Liberalism.' In the midst of war and imperialism, Mao stops to talk about no less than 11 types of liberalism (saying there could be more), all of them turning upon behavior and attitude more than the liberalism found in the works of, say, J. S. Mill or Alfred Marshall or even a Hu Shi on the Chinese 1920s. But liberalism it was. To be 'within the true' of Maoist discourse—especially in its definitive, seemingly 'extreme' moments like Yan'an and the Cultural Revolution—meant seeing liberalism as equivalent to 'petty-bourgeois selfishness' and opportunism, as well as 'smallness of mind.'[9] 'A Communist should have largeness of mind.' What emerges from Mao's article, an exhortation to revolutionary passion and unity as against liberal narcissism and complacency, is the sheer, stark opposition (revolutionary/liberal) in the Chinese context. It is as if liberalism *had* at some point been hegemonic or potentially so, even after the early 1920s and the rise of revolution and nationalism, or the Party and the Guomindang (it had not actually been). It is striking to see it first framed as essentially a behavioral 'attitude problem.' It may seem like a simple polemic against wavering or non-committed liberals who only reluctantly joined the CCP, or perhaps against those from elite backgrounds. But the essay is deeper than it appears because it is aimed at the meaning of the revolution and not just fealty to the Party and proper, strict discipline (which slavishness is precisely the message of Liu Shaoqi's famous *How to Be A Good Communist*): the point is to politicize that everyday life is a spirit of empathic selflessness, that politics (revolution) is permanent, and that this is a good thing, not a bad thing.[10] This is the essence of Maoism, born out of its guerilla tactics and wartime forms, its mass line ethos and practice of rustication, and the long and tortuous struggle for land reform documented by William Hinton among others.[11] Politics and the revolution were to be part of everyday life and continuous. As if revolution or *fanshen* were an end in itself. It is also in this sense that liberalism is indeed connected to the economic: Mao does not talk about markets and the profit motive or private household farming in this piece, but what he does mean is in large part class struggle and continuing the revolution, which is to say his referent is also economic power or socio-economic politics. Mao's concerns, as always, were class struggle and 'fanshen' or social transformation as opposed to others' emphases on the primacy of the productive forces, that is, on development as a 'scientific' or objective and ultimately non-political affair, a la the Soviet Union or, indeed, capitalist economics. As historian Rebecca Karl has recently argued, 'the economic' re-emerged in the 1980s as 'a

magical concept,' a reified, transhistorical construct that glosses over or explains away the great variety of social realities and practices in the name of a settled truth about the economic as such.[12] It is my argument here that such a 'magical' notion of the economic was very much in play during the Mao period, or in other words that the Maoists were able to suppress or at least disrupt this de-politicizing magical thinking in favor of 'putting politics in command' and being 'red and expert' (to invoke two famous statements from within Maoist discourse). The 'liberal' idea of the economy being autonomous from class struggle and revolutionary politics, even after the victory of 1949 and land reform, was the terrain of the line split or in other words the friend-enemy, dyadic form of politics.

It is from this standpoint that Mao will say: 'Liberalism rejects ideological struggle and stands for unprincipled peace.'[13] Liberalism—what *counts as* liberalism for Mao and thus for the PRC under him—is against the *fanshen*-spirit of revolution and/as full politicization. It does not always 'admit' this. Some cadres 'approve of Marxism, but are not prepared to practice it or to practice it in full; they are not prepared to replace their liberalism by Marxism. … They apply Marxism to others but liberalism to themselves. They keep both kinds of goods in stock and find a use for each.' One may well note the market or business language used briefly here—keeping goods and stocks in order. Two decades before the Cultural Revolution, then, the question of politicization—keeping the revolution alive, continuous—and the questions of splits or 'line struggles' *within* the Party are very much at the forefront of the communist movement. I am arguing then that this is precisely what 'liberalism'—or a later cognate term like 'revisionism' or the ubiquitous 'Rightist'—signified after 1949: from the perspective of the Maoist or left-wing line, a complacency or 'unprincipled peace' that was, *ipso facto*, also committed to economism (the emphasis on 'private' markets or the profit motive and household agriculture) and to the end of the class struggle by the 1950s. And even within an entirely communist movement, filled only by avowed Marxists and communists and patriots, and note as well the clearly *illiberal* Guomindang, liberalism is specifically named as an enemy or problem on the ideological front. An 'absent' presence indeed!

The notion of line struggle or a fundamental ideological split within the Party has gone in and out of favor within China studies, where there is a tendency to dismiss it as unscholarly since it reflects the demonized Cultural Revolution's rhetoric, and Mao's own views, who remains anathema to the left and right alike, outside of China. But the argument here is

that the notion of just such a 'line struggle' that only occasionally but always massively erupted when it did, is nonetheless indispensable for several reasons. Chief among these is that—notwithstanding the perceived chaos and contradictions of the revolutions and mobilizations after 1949—the line struggle or problem was and is (for the old left and some of the new) a crucial plank of the *self-understanding* of the participants at the time, and not simply of Mao and his warriors. When one does not engage in the self-understanding of political actors—how they understood their actions, the meanings or affect they attached to things and events—then one risks a positivism or historicism that views the past from very contemporary, unmediated frames and faux-universal theories and concepts.

There is indeed a difference between discourse and self-understanding on the one hand, and action or practice or 'material' realities on the other. Both dimensions of social reality would need to be brought on board in any mediated, properly complex analysis of the era as a whole. But even here we must note that the belief in and discourse about a political line struggle had undeniable material and institutional effects within Maoist history, just as the discourse of growth and globalization, and of China's rise 'back' to global prominence have today. Two key areas here are the existence or non-existence of 'class struggle' after the revolution, and the proper place, or non-place, of markets and profit motives in the mutually agreed upon mandate to develop China and its national economy. While people could and did overlap or change (and Mao himself occupied the middle, later in life, between the 'Gang of Four' and the 'rightists'), on the opposite side of Mao and his ilk could be found Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping (most of the time), and others. More to the point here, it may be said that the right/liberals/revisionists—as the left would call them—were in favor of what was called an 'unprincipled peace' or 'complacency' in 'Combat Liberalism': class struggle was finished and the sacrosanct Party-state should get on with development and the pragmatics of socialist or modern construction, chiefly in the urban centers and key national industries.

The latter is an economism, as opposed to a politicization, which becomes all the more clear when we recall that it is the Liu-Deng line, not the Maoists, who were out front in the quashing of dissent, seeing it as mere sabotage or bad, disloyal behavior and not properly political, let alone justified. It is always worth recalling that it was Deng Xiaoping who carried out the anti-rightist movement and turned it into a genuine, quota-based purge, though admittedly with Mao's eventual acquiescence.[14] Debates and struggles over household farming (before and after

the Great Leap) were also conducted according to two lines (for and against). The late Cultural Revolution film *Breaking With Old Ideas* (决裂) stages this two-line struggle and split over for-profit enterprise and private markets memorably and in 'Gang of Four' or model opera style, but criticisms of the same type of economic behavior can be found in numerous Red Guard documents, for example.[15] In the relatively less important world of art and aesthetics, there were related, two-line struggles or debates over socialist realism, humanism, and in film the two camps of 'Yan'an versus Shanghai.'

Again what is at stake here is not just policy and beliefs about markets and economics versus politics—though in a state-planning system these are, or were hugely consequential topics—but the heart and soul of the revolution, the direction, vision, and meaning of socialism or communism. Is the point to make revolution and strive toward a real equality or to have peace? Is unbridled growth and inequality (in financial or symbolic capital) acceptable if not good, or must equality and politics be in command? What is a fake or unprincipled peace, and can revolution be an end in itself as the Maoists certainly seemed to believe? Does the state and thus the socio-economic plan favor the forces or the relations of production? If 'who are our friends and who are our enemies?' was the first question of the revolutionary movement for Mao in the 1920s, then these other, more difficult questions became the key ones for the PRC itself, immediately following October 1, 1949. They were also constituent parts of the line struggles. The Maoists were the winners more often than not in Mao's own time, and so bequeath to us the clearly loaded language of capitalist roaders, the mass line, and so on. But this should not prevent us from understanding the political and ideological stakes involved, including the relative value of, say, 'peace' or a 'normal, everyday life' versus that of making revolution to the end. There were, and are, real debates and real different understandings of socialism and politics involved. Or in other words a rational basis to the lines and the struggles and a fight over ideas and values and not simply 'power' in the liberal, personal, and top-down repressive sense.

In the event, however, it was not the Maoist side but the other one—liberal, economistic, geared toward stability or 'unprincipled peace,' wanting to keep politics let alone class struggle at bay—that has prevailed. Or perhaps not merely prevailed so much as triumphed and over-turned almost the entire Maoist/leftist/communist project, aside from national unity, sovereignty, and a certain strength of development (which it must be said were also the

Guomindang' s ostensible goals). It is a cliché, but there is indeed something world-historical to the Chinese 'miracle' of massive growth that has brought rising living standards and purchasing power to so many, if also great wealth to a few and massive pollution for all. But the return of China to a global preeminence and presence, coupled with the relative decline of the USA, is here to stay for at least several generations. If the Chinese revolution was, for many on the left in Asia and the former Third World, the biggest global political event of the twentieth century, the rise of China under capitalism has already made it seem like the current century, for better or worse, 'belongs' to the PRC. Both of these revolutions came and come at enormous costs. Perhaps the most problematic one has been the change in the political, or in other words the great tides not of smog and sea-borne plastic but of de-politicization. Even if one does not subscribe to liberal democracy as the panacea, let alone to neo-liberalism in the David Harvey sense, this is indeed a baleful enhancement of the current conjuncture. It is to this that we must now turn to.

But to understand de-politicization and the triumph of a certain type of liberalism, we have to attend to the Cultural Revolution as well. Let us turn to no less conventional a source than one of the volumes of the *Cambridge History of China*. There Harry Harding usefully speaks to the 'crisis of the state' during the entire period from the early 1960s (post-Leap) through Deng Xiaoping's ascendance as a debate and struggle between *liberals* represented by the Liu-Deng line and the radicals.[16] When Mao passes from the scene, and precisely because this struggle was never resolved during the Cultural Revolution and in the end only fragmented the Party and society, the senior/elite cadres get back to business, purge the left, and start shoring up the 'weak political institutions.'[17] From a certain liberal perspective, this is precisely what one does in crisis: you maintain the machines of governance, neutralize all conflicts peacefully or, if need be, forcibly. Harding frames the right (non-radicals) as liberal by default (as the opposite of left), but we may flesh this out further. They are liberal not because of their political-economic views or denial of class struggle after 1949 (though both arguments could be and were made by their opponents) or even because they called themselves this (of course, Liu and Deng would not), but because they wanted to put the pieces of the Party, the bureaucracy, the status quo, and elite back together again. For Harding, their liberality also seems to lie in them being more 'open' (vaguely defined) and less radical, less insistent on class struggle and trans-

formation, and more insistent on the preservation of the post-1949 status quo. In other words, 'complacent' in the Maoist sense mentioned earlier.

What Harding's analysis already, indirectly suggests as well is that de-politicization—the getting back to business and 'peace,' as it were—was the direct, first consequence of the end of the cultural revolution, and was implicit to the line struggle or revolutionary discourse all along. This is about de-politicization in that it wants to place—as the Maoists would put it—not politics but economics, development, and expertise 'in command.' Not that these were mutually exclusive terms. All sides wanted development, for example, and unity within the Party-state, but the struggle was, again, over policy as well as the meaning of socialism, the state of Chinese equality, and the relative primacy of radical politics versus economics. The demonized Liu-Deng or 'establishment' line was, then, not only against the necessity (or even existence) of class struggle but by extension against the political, that is, against antagonistic or dyadic politics and mass participation and supervision of the Party (the mass line). It was a movement toward politics-as-administration of affairs, not world making or continuing any revolution much further beyond 1949. This resonates strongly with Carl Schmitt's analysis of neutralization and de-politicization through liberalism.[18] For Schmitt, once liberalism becomes incorporated into the state it threatens the unity and effectiveness of that state (read: capture by interest groups in competition with one another). It also threatens the proper autonomy of the political (defined as a dyadic logic of 'friend versus enemy' and rooted in, even presupposing, the supremely important entity of the state) by substituting economics and ethics for politics. This also dovetails with a classic but otherwise far-removed critique of modernity, of culture-as-administration, and of the impasses of liberal-democratic politics: Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[19] These were the stakes in the PRC too, and it must be said that Maoism was as much a part of this global struggle under—within and against—the capitalist world system as any other place, only more so.

De-politicization, and the resonance of Carl Schmitt's work on liberalism and the state, has been a strong theme within the Chinese new left and other intellectuals. This often upsets the overly historicist and literal-minded observers or antagonists of the new (or old) left, as if Schmitt were the only, deeply reactionary individual who happened to have produced interesting and potentially—or demonstrably—illuminating writings on one topic or another.[20] Wang Hui, *a la* my reading of Harding and others, has dated the origin of de-politicized politics back to the Cultural

Revolution as well.[21] Wang argues that the failure of the Cultural Revolution lies precisely in this result, or more specifically in the explosion of factionalism (politics trumped by personal loyalties and vengeances, bloodline notions of class, and so on), and then in the re-bureaucratization of the state. It is certainly apt to see the existence of merely personal or vengeful struggles and persecutions as non- or even anti-political, as well as the restoration of the Party-bureaucracy (its complete rule) in the end. To this extent Wang is correct about de-politicization within the de facto logic or development of the Cultural Revolution. But his analysis—perhaps because it must be truncated due to censorship pressures—also cannot account for the positive, leftist aspects of the decade, and it may only be its denouement, the squashing of the revolution, that fits the Schmittian de-politicization model. Clearly the period was also marked by a veritable explosion of dyadic and antagonistic 'friend-enemy' struggles and political conflicts, and clearly the status quo or politics-as-administration was the target of the radicals and those who responded to 'making revolution' as opposed to those who sought to, in effect, *defend* their class position as the children of the elite within the Party system. Perhaps then the Cultural Revolution suffered not from a de-politicizing tendency but from an *over*-politicization of everything, from haircuts and public signage to the far more serious matters of rural health and education, worker management in factories, and so on. Additionally the failure of the Cultural Revolution with the death of Mao and the short-lived Hua Guofeng era—in the important sense of *proximate cause*—should be placed less on Maoist or rightist or any ideology so much as the failure to adequately *institutionalize* leftist goals and achievements even within the Party-state system, such as the barefoot doctor rural health program, gender neutrality (i.e. equality) within education and the Party and workplace, a de facto affirmative action for people from good, that is poor and working-class backgrounds, the right to strike and rebel, and so on. It is in this sense that Maoism failed. Had the Cultural Revolution continued, with better institutional bulwarks and with a big enough bloc of people in power who benefited from late Maoism, the great reversal after Mao's death may have at least been considerably more difficult. And yet, as noted, 'what ifs' are of little consolation and use for those who must make a massive life transition from communism and the struggle for socialism and equality to an equally strident, differently competitive, individualistic, 'meritocratic,' and expensive capitalism.[22]

But the memory of the Cultural Revolution—as grievance (especially for the former persecuted elite and others), but also as radical inspiration as well as nostalgia, for leftists and many former participants—remains. The ideals, memories, and actual experiences of that era are certainly mixed and range from actual social gains and 'the big freedoms' in that era (e.g. to speak freely, write posters, and debate politics), to unjust persecutions and even deaths; as such they simply cannot be contained and negated by a de-politicizing Party, by liberal intellectuals, by the salacious English language memoir industry, or by the discourse of political orientalism. It remains a painful memory for some and a sign of thwarted chances under Dengist capitalism, but also the last, major period of mass democracy, mobilization, and class struggles. It represents unsettled scores and very different codings of the rural versus the urban that exist today. While critical liberal intellectuals do indeed point to it as proof of the need for liberal democracy and its attendant values of individualism and negative liberties, the Cultural Revolution is not dangerous to the Party-state because it suppresses the memory of its allegedly fundamental injustice and thus of official culpability. Given that many of the present Party elders suffered during the period as well, as children of the elite, the moral high ground is already occupied. The period is dangerous, to an extent, because it signifies an era of mass participation, and full, even total politicization toward something other than patriotic consumerist modernity or liberal democracy, namely, toward radical, even absolute, equality and social justice. For all its failure in achieving that 'cultural' revolution (as if this were actually possible), the period also represents this, and has its own leftist if violent morality in the social imaginary. If the Party-state and liberals now share a condemnation of the era, if not of virtually all Maoism after the early 1950s, then the heterodox or leftist perspective on it—that some of it was just, that it is right to rebel, that equality is fundamental—suggests a radical, eminently rational kernel within new left illiberalism in China.[23] The difficult part of this for non-mainlanders to appreciate is that almost none of this can be published within China, in scholarly or otherwise intellectual or serious fashion. One simply has to know mainland intellectuals or others who feel these and speak of it in person, in conferences or workshops for example, or over meals, and so forth. This is, of course, a great limit on acceptable speech placed by an illiberal, quintessentially post- or anti-Maoist party. The Chinese Internet is about the only visible textual source of such leftist as opposed to liberal views, and has been documented in this regard by Gao Mobo in *The Battle for China's Past*. (Liberal 'scar'

writings and condemnations of the period have always been allowed but are also decidedly old hat by now.) If there are to be alternatives to liberalism and de-politicized, illiberal 'statism,' then resources for that will have to be found in part within Maoism and Mao's last revolution from 1966 to 1976, warts and all. For now, however, de-politicization remains the order of the day, arguably more so now under Xi Jinping than ever before.

For all the efforts at cultural or social revolution or *fanshen*, and the struggle over 'lines,' the Cultural Revolution failed because it was *put an end to* by the elite within the Hua-Deng era. And in fact there is indeed at least textual evidence of a turn toward or desire for something like liberalism or normalcy by the mid-1970s. This can be seen as the meaning of the mourning for Zhou Enlai upon his death (seen by many as a mediating, ameliorating figure for the excesses of the era), shortly before Mao's own. One can also see signs of exhaustion and de-politicization in the mid-1970s posters and poems collected in David S. G. Goodman's *Beijing Street Voices* anthology.[24] And the 'Misty Poets' of the same period, such as Bei Dao, can clearly be seen not just as subversive of socialist realist or *revolutionary* romantic aesthetics but as expressing a desire to turn away from the political and to embrace 'classic' romantic/lyrical concerns such as the inner life and nature. Of course the Misty Poets or Zhou's Beijing mourners are a highly selective and elite demographic, and given the relative ban on research into the period, it is hard to say how many such de-politicizing voices there were during the late Mao era. There were also, in contrast, the Li Yi Zhe trio from Guangdong, very much still Maoists, however, who in 1974 criticized the failures of the Cultural Revolution and called for 'socialist democracy.'[25] (Even earlier there were 'ultra-leftist' calls for all but an overthrow of the Party, as well as the direct democracy of the so-called Shanghai Commune of January 1967.)[26] Nonetheless it does seem that some, even many, other people were either tired of making revolution or moreover at a loss—given the twists and turns at the top of the Party—to make sense of the supposed revolutionary process. (This is also what Li Yi Zhe was trying to do.) And yet this in itself—a turning against the political or politicization—underscores the relevance and salience of the Chinese, Maoist versus 'establishment' line-struggle template—again, not a conspiracy but a dyadic or Schmittian understandings of politics—as well as the movement toward de-politicization in the name of an 'unprincipled peace.'

This is to say, then, that one side won, a very political outcome indeed. For Chinese liberalism of the critical but non-dissident variety the ascen-

sion of Deng Xiaoping and his policies was nothing less than the start of a 'New Chinese Enlightenment.' As Shanghai-based liberal academic Xu Jilin puts it:

> After Deng's reinstatement in 1977, the reformists encouraged debate on the issue of whether 'practice is the sole criterion of truth.' It was part of a process initiated by the Communist Party that marked the abandonment of the tradition of Utopian socialism [Maoism] as well as providing a theoretical justification for the policies of secular socialism. The so-called 'Movement to Liberate Thinking' was actually a public and internal party educational process that was aimed at freeing people's thinking from the socialist dogmas of Mao Zedong and Stalin. In a sense you could see it as a Lutheran-style rebellion within the orthodox Marxist-Leninist world.[27]

To be sure this is dismissive of Maoism (as utopian and somehow not concerned with practice) and the price that workers and peasants and the environment have paid for the 'new era.' The Lutheran/Protestant analogy is nonetheless an interesting one, and perhaps apt for the economistic imaginary, given the Weberian analysis of religion as the switchman of capitalist history. Xu also notes, with apparent approval, that this movement was from the top-down (the 'center' of the Party machine in his view). In sum, among the 1980s intellectuals, a new 'mainstream language of the Western Enlightenment' was quickly adopted and a basic liberal consensus emerged.[28] This was then disrupted by the rise of the new left as much as by Tiananmen 1989. While the public sphere and intellectual debate carry on, sometimes in the language of the 1980s 'Enlightenment,' there is no longer a consensus nor a *unified* sphere. More to the point, Xu notes the crucial impact on the 1980s (and beyond) of two best sellers from the right-wing side of the Cold War (also victorious in their own struggle, eventually): F. A. von Hayek's *The Road to Serfdom* and *The Constitution of Liberty*.[29]

While Xu passes over this, it is crucial to recall that Hayek was arguably the preeminent intellectual of the Cold War on the Western world's side, and so extreme as to vilify Keynesianism and the welfare state as much, if not more than 'actually existing socialism.' He is also famous as a fount of neoliberal and Austrian economics. His anti 'statism' (note that word/pejorative, purveyed in the mainland by Xu Jilin among others, hails from Hayek and his milieu) and his belief that the free market = liberty have been massively influential in China, as well as in Western or Latin American neo-liberalism.[30] Yet in the PRC these are called liberals, whereas neo-liberal is an

increasingly stigmatized term abroad. Whereas one can argue that Carl Schmitt's work—to pick an arguably even more reactionary intellectual—can be partially appropriated along Marxist or other lines (e.g. as with Heidegger) due to his intellectual depth and ambiguous style, it is hard to see how von Hayek can be or has been used for anything other than waging a Cold War against the state, or deploying neo-liberalism against the public good and commons. Even Yang Jisheng, the former Xinhua journalist who has written a famous/infamous expose of the Great Leap famine (*Mubei* or *Tombstone*), is a self-professed Hayekian, which is something that should have given some of his progressive and Western liberal (as opposed to neo-liberal) celebrants pause. At any rate it is clear that the 1980s turn—the triumph of the economistic and comparatively 'liberal' line—has been decisive.

In other words the post-49, de facto war against liberalism, and for politicization or continuous revolution, ends with a bang *and* a whimper: the Chairman dies, the Gang of Four is immediately arrested (the ultra-leftists within the CCP elite, suddenly vulnerable), and a broader, subtler but ultimately more powerful movement toward de-politicization proceeds apace. (And that now includes Dengist cadres and liberal voices and interests.) After Mao, as Wang Hui puts it, what China has today is a Party-state with de-politicized politics:

> 'no longer an organization with specific political values, but a mechanism of power. Even within the party it is not easy to carry on real debate; divisions are cast as technical differences on the path to modernization, so they can only be resolved within the power structures.'[31]

The party has no distinctive 'standpoint or social goals,' only a 'structural functionalist relationship to the [repressive] state apparatus.'[32] In addition, the primary functions of the Party-state now, as is often remarked, are the preservation of stability and the facilitation of economic growth, that is, profit. It is indeed successful at these. This end point was perhaps always implicit to the line struggles of the late 1930s and beyond. Certainly Yao Wenyuan, later known as the infamous chief writer of the Gang of Four, thought so. In a polemic from as late as 1975 entitled, 'On the Social Basis of the Lin Piao Anti-Party Clique,' and perhaps fearing the defeat of the (cultural) revolution, Yao offered what seems in retrospect like a scathing but compelling image of contemporary inequality and corruption:

> If we do not follow this course [socialist distribution according to work], but call instead for the consolidation, extension and strengthening of bourgeois right and that part of inequality it entails, the inevitable result will be polarization, i.e., a small number of people will in the course of distribution acquire increasing amounts of commodities and money through certain legal channels and numerous illegal ones; capitalist ideas of amassing fortunes and craving for personal fame and gain, stimulated by such 'material incentives,' will spread unchecked; such phenomena as turning public property into private property, speculation, graft and corruption, theft and bribery will rise; the capitalist principle of the exchange of commodities will make its way into political life send even into Party life, undermine the socialist planned economy and give rise to such acts of capitalist exploitation as the conversion of commodities and money into capital and labour power into a commodity; and there will be a change in the nature of the system of ownership in certain departments and units which follow the revisionist line; and instances of oppression and exploitation of the labouring people will once again occur. As a result, a small number of new bourgeois elements … will emerge from among Party members, workers, well-to-do peasants and personnel in state organs.[33]

Such were the intensities and discourse of the time among the intellectuals and cadres. Of course this may seem too conspiratorial or reductive today (an open question), and Yao and the Gang were quickly dispatched to prison after Mao's death. The Cultural Revolution ended with a whimper and not a bang, due in large part to elite antipathy against it and the maneuvering of Deng Xiaoping (we will return to this question in the final chapter), as well as the Chairman's death. But from a more 'theoretical' or cultural Marxist standpoint, one that believes in a 'culture' of capitalism and in its powerful de-politicizing tendencies (economism, capture of the state by 'interest' groups, etc.), it certainly seems well-nigh pre-ordained in Deng Xiaoping's second (counter-) revolutionary career after the death of Mao. Whatever else Yao Wenyuan got wrong in his life, his diagnosis of 1975 was not one such thing. The clear-headed and rational, if 'extreme,' Marxism—the anti-capitalism—within Maoism has had a second, if minor, lease on life since the 1990s. The movement toward de-politicization—to say farewell to continuous revolution and mass mobilization; to 'actively forget,' that is void the desire to participate politically at all, aside from individually joining the Party; to de-legitimate the very idea of class struggle or class consciousness after 1949; to frame the polity as a market; to see the state and the

people as a business to manage technocratically—were Deng Xiaoping's 'pragmatic' program from the beginning of his rise in the late 1970s. One could argue it stems from his (and Liu Shaoqi's), as opposed to Mao's, Marxist-Stalinist intellectual formation in Russia, or more generously one can accept at face value his (or his followers) self-professed belief in market 'socialism with Chinese characteristics.' One can make a valid case for each. But in either case, having abandoned any strong idea of state planning, they let the market- and capital genies out of the bottle and now struggle to get them back in. That may not be possible in the long run, which may well be the long game of Chinese liberalism. But even if the economic changes eventually necessitate a new superstructure or political system, there seems little reason to presuppose today that this will take the form of liberal democracy.

But in any case Deng's economism—a blind faith in 'the market' as much as in the productive forces—is unmistakable, as is his political quietism or authoritarianism. This was all skillfully summed up in his slogans: 'to get rich is glorious'; 'some must get rich first'; 'it doesn't matter if the cat is black or white so long as it catches mice.' To Mao's rural-proletarian internationalism, Deng was always the adamant pragmatic nationalist, whose Marxism was connected to China's stability and wealth, its recovery from feudal and imperial depredations to a position of national strength and unity. His deep and emphatic, even ethnic, nationalism was never on more display than in his resolution of the Hong Kong crisis/handover, where he and thus the CCP not only famously cursed the inexecrable Margaret Thatcher in Sichuanese, but simply assumed smooth sailing in the handover precisely because they recruited 'patriotic' Chinese tycoons to their Sino-British plan of 'one country, two systems.' Business was booming, so what could go wrong? And of course all Chinese would just get along and be happy to unite and do business together. Just as with Hong Kong, Deng assumed that capitalism or the pursuit of wealth and 'normalcy' would heal all wounds and suture the deep fissures of inequality. If it worked in a brutal sense for the peasantry and the urban/rural divide in China—just move them into the cities as super exploited but suddenly transformed 'migrant workers'—it has failed miserably in Hong Kong, and sowed the seeds for the 'Umbrella revolution' and a disappearing middle class south of Shenzhen. Finally, as one last attempt to define economism in the sense we are, let us turn to Deng Xiaoping being quoted and expounded upon by the current Number 3 man on the Standing

Committee (Zhang Dejiang), speaking to an unhappy Hong Kong in the wake of the city's general decline:

> Quoting Deng Xiaoping's warning that 'development is the only hard truth,' Zhang said: 'Only when the economy continues to thrive will livelihoods improve. Everything else is empty talk. Like a boat sailing against the current, it will be swept downstream if it does not forge ahead.' Without elaborating, he said 'deep-rooted conflicts in economic development' had begun to emerge in the city.[34]

There is in act a point here, even from a certain Marxist perspective: that the economy is all-important. But the liberal or economistic point being made is that political conflicts and inequalities are actually unimportant and to be rendered toothless if 'development' is 'done.' What's good for business is good for Hong Kong and China, in sum.

From Charting the Revolution to Waiting for Geist

The rise of this peaceful 'liberalism'/economism/de-politicization/unprincipled peace has also entailed a change in the political within China ever since, a sea-change that has certainly swept up much of the West and the rest of the world as well, in the rise of neo-liberalism as against post-war Keynesianism or social democracy. If Maoism encouraged, even mobilized mass participation and action within the (confines and powers of the) state-system, the post-Mao, Dengist PRC is marked by the same abstract, absolute limits and confines. But on a decidedly different class-basis (the capitalist class having been officially welcomed into the Party in the Jian Zemin era), with greater powers of surveillance and other technologies of power, and by consciously pursuing de-politicization through pushing consumerism and nationalism as well as official views of the past and present social realities. As noted earlier much of today's de-politicization and liberalism are very much post-Tiananmen (1989) developments. During those 1980s there seemed—to the students and intellectuals at any rate—to be a happy marriage between the Party's official gung-ho economic liberalism and the political parts of traditional/Western/global liberalism, that is by the promise and beginnings of certain reforms in that realm as well. Certainly the leftists were all but gone, purged or persuaded to jump ships after the end of the Gang and the Cultural Revolution. The CCTV multi-part documentary *He Shang* remains the purest representation of

this strange but earnest mix of economism and the promise of political reform or 'democracy.'

While this is not the place to once again rehearse the prior events and aftermath of June 3, 1989, suffice it to mention that after the repression in the Square that June morning in 1989, de-politicization (via repression, censorship, propaganda, de-legitimation of protest) and liberalism-as-economism-and-'peace' were the order of the day. And of the next decades. For all the differences between, say, the Jiang Zemin versus the Hu Jintao versus the Xi Jinping leadership 'eras' (and there are some), they have all maintained attempts to de-politicize Chinese society and culture, promulgating nationalism or patriotism as well as development and growth but in de-politicized and often ham-fisted ways (such as the current 'China Dream' rhetoric of Xi Jinping times). This is, again, the one way in which the now-disgraced but charismatic and at least quasi-leftist Bo Xilai's leadership style stood out. So too for the ruling Party's gestures toward tradition (e.g. Hu's 'harmonious society' rhetoric) or to 'socialism with Chinese characteristics': without any type of 'statist' redistribution of wealth and power to the poor and working classes, this is a type of 'socialism' or communitarian-Confucianism that offends belief (but which should not be equated with more intellectual and/or scholarly efforts at rethinking tradition and socialism). This certainly contrasts with Mao-era repression, censorship, propaganda, and so on: the grass roots and egalitarian authoritarianism of the Mao era were not about de-politicization but politicization and re-politicization, if to arguably self-defeating extremes. Ironically, the various liberal intellectual diatribes and screeds and assorted writings against Maoism and the Cultural Revolution from the late 1970s onward only helped the Party-state de-legitimize the left and any 'illiberal' or not-liberal, radical critique.

Deng's 'Southern tour' of 1992, where the degrees of commodification and marketization were exponentially increased as a response to 1989, is in many ways a greater turning point for Chinese politics than 1989 itself. Deng 'opened' the economy even further in what may have been either a desperate decision to 'let slip the dogs of war' on the socialist dimensions of the economy and society in the hopes of magically resolving the contradictions between pursuing capitalist growth while holding down a communist Party-state. As a result of his speeches and politicking, plans to privilege the urban, coastal areas to further open up or develop Shanghai and Shenzhen, for example, set China's path toward global capitalism in concrete. Deng also spoke against leftism at this point, pointing to it as a

greater threat to stability than rightism, an obvious gesture toward depoliticization (but that did not prevent the rise of a new left later). The year 1992 thus stands as, in many ways, a more important or fateful date than 1989.

And yet if the post-Mao state represents and promulgates a certain 'liberalism' it is also the case that the same Party-state has its own internal liberal critics, who either desire political reform outright (to make China fall in line with 'universal' Western models, to change the Chinese state) or who advocate even greater privatization or marketization to make that political liberalization (as it is always called) a fait accompli and to finally dispense with the vestiges of Mao/socialism/statism. As the cliché goes, the freer the market, the freer the people. In fact these positions are more and more melded: Chinese liberalism—of the oppositional or unofficial type—can only be practically defined by both of these things: an actually shared economism or commitment to free markets and trade and globalization (only disagreeing, if at all, with those who wish to retain state ownerships), but also an anti-state or 'anti-statist' position that can either be explicitly anti-Maoist (who after all represent the state principle) and anti-leftist (new and old lefts), or if more circumspect liberalism can simply, if vaguely, be for 'reform' or 'rule of law' or other code words for political liberalism. In either case the watchers within the Party-state are not wrong to suss out an enemy/antagonist here: even if liberals steer clear of being explicitly anti-Communist Party (which would make them dissidents if caught out), their views certainly represent a disempowering and 'downsizing' of the state and of state capacity in favor of a free-market system. It is the latter anti-statism (and to a lesser extent anti-Maoism) that makes liberalism potentially dangerous. One has to hide the intended rebuke of the Party-state's legitimacy or success, especially, but not only, its revolutionary communist or Maoist roots. But it is the former economistic position which gives liberalism whatever *intellectual* and even 'scholarly' weight it has. This is in many ways a deeply conservative and even perfectly neo-liberal position in the familiar, pejorative sense drawn out by David Harvey, among others: privatization and accumulation by dispossession (of state assets and state jobs and state functions) combined with an elusive but powerful appeals to 'freedom' and individual/entrepreneurial energies and desires.

Perhaps the clearest, and certainly the most explicitly anti-regime and to that extent genuinely courageous expression of Chinese liberalism is the *Charter 2008* document co-authored by the late Liu Xiaobo, himself a

famous and influential liberal dissident/critic from the 1989 protests.[35] Even if one holds fast to the idea that Tiananmen, 1989—misleadingly defined by the students and participating intellectuals—was genuinely democratic and oriented toward mass/popular democracy as opposed to the sectoral interests of those two demographics, Liu's fate and ideological transformation (if he had any) toward full-blown neo-liberalism is instructive. Lest the charge of neo-liberalism in the 1989 air seems misplaced, one must note that the economist Li Minqi, himself a former 1989 leader who did jail time for his participation, explicitly describes his erstwhile self and his then-cohort as neo-liberal in political, economic, and 'occidental' fashion.[36] Li's views and later work, despite his obvious 'authenticity' as a former political prisoner himself, have unsurprisingly been ignored by 'democratic' analysts since 1989.[37] Far more attractive for them—and Liu always refused to leave, it must be said—is the *Charter* author. From hunger striker (albeit briefly) to imprisoned dissident to re-imprisoned dissident, to his death from liver cancer in 2017, his would seem only an inspiring story of human perseverance and humanist consistency, as well as the universal truth and goodness of free speech. Liu's courage of conviction was genuinely remarkable and must be respected. One should also note that his imprisonment—clearly political in the pejorative sense—was not only grossly unfair, it was also entirely unnecessary even from the state's own standpoint of 'stability' above all else. Unnecessary because Liu's views were simply not popular, and the Party-state is not so imperiled and weak as to be brought down by neo-liberal thought with an Enlightenment edge or rhetorical flair. Though imprisoning such people indeed makes it seem so, to some. As with the jailing of Ilham Totti mentioned earlier, if not in fact more so (Totti can at least be—unfairly—imagined as somehow connected to the realities of separatism in other places), Liu's last imprisonment reeked of paranoia and illustrates Chinese post-Mao repressive illiberalism all too well—an ardent liberal treated brutally for being a clear, rhetorical 'enemy' of the state (one with foreign connections and funds). If Maoist (and earlier) revolutionary repression could be justified by genuinely left-wing class politics and by a palpable danger of foreign (Cold War) and perhaps domestic subversion, this is hard to swallow in a context where the internal reactionaries and the imperialists abroad are far less of a threat. The USA has entirely over-extended itself in the Middle East, for example, and is even struggling to hold on to its neo-imperial control there. Its anti-regime monies and efforts in the mainland and Hong Kong are small moldy potatoes. One needs to be clear about

this, even if Liu's own political views and advocacies were eminently objectionable if not downright reactionary.

Put another way, that his fate was unjust is certainly true; but this does not, alas, prevent the knowledges and ideologies and politics of his work, and the *Charter* specifically, from being objectionable in their own terms. The *Charter* is rife with generic human rights rhetoric and a call for a multi-party liberal-capitalist democracy. Moreover, the 'manifesto' clearly contains a specific economic program of privatization and the removal of the state from economic and political or social life. The state's only role is to enforce the 'rule of law' and hold elections, not to govern in any proactive or social democratic way. Liu claims that the lack of (liberal-capitalist) democracy 'constricts China's own development [and also limits] the progress of all of human civilization.'[38] If liberal democracy is what Jawaharlal Nehru and the Indian Congress Party took from the British and used it to 'free' themselves, then Liu sees its absence in China as inhibiting both China and humanity's further development. (Liu also wrote infamously in defense of Western colonialism and the recent American invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.)

But the first thing one notices about the *Charter* is that it is specifically anti-Maoist and anti-Party-state. For it the communist (or even nationalist) revolution counts as nothing: it begins with the first Constitution of 1908, quickly glosses over the republican period, and offers a clichéd version of Maoist 'totalitarianism' and mass death ('Tens of millions have lost their lives, and several generations have seen their freedom, their happiness, and their human dignity cruelly trampled'). China has simply been held back by the Party-state from becoming the same as the normative US-West. Come the twenty-first century, will China 'embrace universal human values, join the mainstream of civilized nations, and build a democratic system?' But quickly the *Charter* gets down to business and deals with the alleged mechanism for all of this democracy and progress: private property, and hence individual rights. 'As the ruling elite itself moved toward private ownership and the market economy, it began to shift from an outright rejection of "rights" to a partial acknowledgment of them.'

From here it naturally follows that the cure is simply more private property and less state. Two major planks are under the 'What We Advocate' section or devoted to sections of the 'Protection of private property' and 'Financial and tax reform.' These and much of the *Charter*'s passages read much like an introductory textbook, rehearsing civics lessons and market logic: the 'true value of private property [must] be adequately reflected in

the market,' taxes should be simplified and their 'burden' be shared more fairly (which, while vague, in context suggests a tax-cut for the rich), and—weirdly—there should in general be 'greater competition among market participants.' This would then seem to be in line with the market and entrepreneur model of neo-liberalism, its human rights rhetoric and claims for 'universal truths' notwithstanding (or rather, being precisely *required* to make the egregious class politics of this more palatable and to retain some semblance of, say, Vaclav Havel or 'freedom'). In fact liberalism and universalism have always been underpinned by logics and practices of exclusion and commodification. One will, in sum, not find in *Charter 2008* any redistributionist sentiment or traditional social democratic claims for people's livelihood. There is no sense of a *social* contract that at least implicitly recognizes substantive as opposed to formal/legalistic equality. So too the *Charter*, in its image of the Maoist, contemporary, and even pre-modern eras, illustrates the presence of Western 'China expertise' and Cold War discourse; it assumes *that* narrative of Maoism as oriental despotism.[39] That is a narrative shared in many ways (the errors of the leftist past, the necessity of free markets and globalization) by the current CCP and liberal intellectuals in general. But Liu also hated the post-Mao regime (and in fact only knew this one intimately) and perhaps most of all the Chinese intelligentsia and academics that followed in Deng's wake.

Of course Liu had—on paper—a right to his views, and his imprisonment for them is, again, illiberal in the worst sense. His official crime was inciting 'subversion of state power,' though it was clearly his views and his Western support (including financial) that mattered more than his actual activities as a writer and public intellectual. (That he seemingly antagonized all of his mainland intellectual and writer peers when not in prison no doubt did not help matters.) And that the CCP does indeed see itself as in a war with Cold War liberalism and perhaps a certain spirit of history (convergence) that it fears or thinks it must actively contend with. It is in this sense that Liu Xiaobo receiving funds from the American government (via the Endowment for Democracy) becomes a big deal, a bit of 'hard' evidence for sinister imperial intent and foreign collusion (even though this was all apparently legal by Chinese law).[40] My point here is not that there was an actual Central Intelligence Agency plot from America to overthrow the Party-state via Liu and/or other neo-liberal 'democracy' or 'freedom' groups. (Nor was this the case in Hong Kong's 'Umbrella Revolution,' which will be discussed in a later chapter.) Espionage and the like are a real part of the geo-political system. But the National Endowment

for Democracy (N.E.D.) deals in American soft power abroad, and such funding efforts and such groups need to be seen as a 'normal' part of the battle for hegemony or discourse that subtends the entire political universe and a still imperial, if in many ways a less violent and invasive modern age (in regard to Asia, Latin America, and Africa at any rate). One cannot realistically fault the PRC or any government from being defensive or perhaps even vigilant about what some political scientists have called 'ideological and cultural security.' But one can indeed point to paranoiac overreaction, stupidly political persecution, and the ultimate impossibility of actually controlling flows of information and changing—by force, and by specific, wonkish laws and policies—the ways that people think about politics or life, outside of an actually coherent and inspiring or motivating discourse and state. In so far as Maoism was successful in changing the culture or creating new identities and discourses, it did this via a comparatively much more profound, systematic, and enabling regime of power-knowledge than the patriotic gore offered in the post-Mao period.[41]

Ironically for the imprisoning state and Liu both, Liu's desires for more privatization and economic 'reform' (too weak a word for the changes he proposes) as well as for a Western/universal liberal democracy are very far from mainstream in the mainland. It is hard to say what his actual as opposed to his perceived threat to 'stability' is. He is, to an extent, known to the general public, thanks especially to his Nobel Prize award after his imprisonment, and he can be in part read on the Chinese Internet. But there is in fact no good reason to think that his *Charter* or other views would find much of an audience outside of Western political scientists (or conventional, avowed liberals), the foreign mainstream media, and, say, Hong Kong's democrats. This is, arguably, not a major demographic and not a terribly important one for the mainland, even if at times it acts like they are a real, international liberal threat. And the signatories from within China appear to have reached all of 8000 or 10,000 people, though admittedly some of them more ordinary this time and not only intellectuals and self-described dissidents.[42]

At the risk of piling on, one has to point to the other problems with Liu's politics and ideologies. It is simply undeniable that he—or his organizations more specifically—has received large sums from the US N.E.D., funded by Congress: the Independent Chinese PEN Centre, Inc., and Minzhu Zhongguo ('Democratic China, Inc.'), where Liu Xiaobo was the president and founder, respectively.[43] He has also notoriously insisted that the mainland could still use a 300-year period of Western colonization to catch up

with Hong Kong.[44] The latter would not play well in a powerfully nationalistic or 'awakened' China. Qin Hui, one of the most renowned liberal intellectuals in China, refused to sign the *Charter*. For him this refusal was justified, not on anti-imperialist or pro-state grounds, but due to China needing more 'debate and enlightenment' as well as economic growth.[45] (We will turn to Qin in more detail below.) None of the problems in Liu's thinking justifies his imprisonment. Regardless of the content of the *Charter*, it is unjust as well as unwise—and for that matter, un-Maoist—to just lock up the reactionaries. But in jail, Liu Xiaobo sits, a victim—perhaps in part a self-victimizing figure—of the fear of political liberalism. As if Liu's and others' belief in a global zeitgeist/convergence toward 'liberal democracy' was a real enough thing. As if there was a real specter of a 'color revolution' against the CCP, organized from abroad. Put another way, Liu was in many ways his own worst enemy, along with the 'international community'—a certain elite within the West and academia—that puts him on a pedestal as 'the right dissident' and even endows him with a Nobel Prize.[46] Unless one thinks there really is that zeitgeist toward liberalism and universal truths, then there is a very bitter irony here in the global production of a dissident: a historical figure produced by the Occidentalism of the Chinese 1980s on the one hand, and by a political or Sinological orientalism on the other. That Liu Xiaobo was very much a sign for the Western and anti-Beijing, anti-communist imaginary (as the Saidian analysis of orientalism would suggest) was revealed clearly in 'expert commentary' published right after his death: 'Remembering Liu Xiaobo: The West's Responsibility in Upholding His Legacy,' 'Remembering Liu Xiaobo—And What the U.S. Can Do,' and 'West mourns Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo, criticizes Beijing' were headlines that were just waiting for his demise.[47]

But Liu and other Chinese liberals are also important for what they tell us about the transformation or degradation of politics not just in China but globally. The *Charter* speaks to a mode of politics that relies on pronouncement, a sort of politics by proxy-statement, a de-politicized politics. Philosophically or intellectually, there is little 'content' to the *Charter* indeed and no real call to action: 'we dare to put civic spirit into practice by announcing *Charter 08*.'[48] It is perhaps not meant to be read so much as announced, posted on the Internet, and signed. And then, aside from whatever discussions it engenders, one waits for the convergence to happen (and for the international human rights 'community' to kick in). The project or strategy of the *Charter 2008*—aside from staging a global media event and a *cause célèbre*—lies ostensibly in the original *Declaration of*

Charter 77 by Vaclav Havel and others in the former Czechoslovak Socialist Republic.[49] Havel's own comments on the Chinese case underscored the importance of 'international solidarity' and the impossibility of predicting when things might change, a friendly gesture—in the present reading—to the great unlikelihood of Liu's *Charter* working.[50] Presumably the idea is for history to repeat itself, even if it takes the requisite 16 years (in the Czech case) or most likely much longer for China's transformation/revolution. Again, convergence, teleology, and blind faith in some universal Geist of history as well as in those very specifically free markets and private properties. (This is in many ways the exact same recipe of the Hong Kong liberal opposition or democratic movement against mainland sovereignty, the subject of a later chapter; but in this case there is a long-standing and committed movement behind the faith in convergence toward 'normality.') This is then a de-politicized liberalism that is even reflected in its tone (the textbook or legal style). So too the *Charter*'s emphasis on the law, its pronouncement on the correct types of laws and constitution is a sign of de-politicization in that it reflects a thoroughly proceduralist notion of democracy. 'We will vote like this; we will have these laws and these rights; and so we will be democratic/free.' To equate democracy not with equality and mass participation (rule) and well-being or peoples' livelihood, but with procedure is in the end a neutralizing, administrative mode of politics, a legal fetishism where laws are equated with justice and embody universal truth. Even Jacques Derrida, the great liberal ethicist, argued that while it is just that there is law, law is not justice.[51] Law and procedure ultimately trump people and politics in this model, and the actually existing Chinese legal and political systems are assumed to be mere masks for 'statist' power.

By comparison, *Charter 77* used stronger language, was less specific and legalistic (though still focused on Czech and international laws), and did not mention privatization at all, let alone tax breaks and market competition. Whatever Havel became after his success, he was not a Western, American style neo-liberal in the 1970s, and the *Charter 77* ('a free, informal, and open associations of people with different convictions') is notable not just for its appeals to human and civil rights but also to a shared sense of responsibility and even unity within difference: 'everyone bears his share of responsibility for the conditions that prevail and accordingly also for the observance of legally enshrined agreements, binding upon all individuals as well as upon governments.' The document proposed no new laws or massive changes, but only adherence to what was on the books

(note that Liu sees the PRC constitution as essentially fake) and in a spirit of cooperation and solidarity: 'Charter 77 does not want to lay down its own programmes of political and social reforms or changes but to engage in the spheres of its activity in constructive dialogue with political and state power.'[52] A comparatively democratic or popular form of liberalism there focused primarily on laws and rights already on the books, so to speak, and in effect asking the regime to live up to its ideals. This has historically always been the better, more effective tactic within modern societies and nation-states. Liu's document, in contrast, rejects all of modern China and the PRC except for those of 1980s and privatization. There is no feigned, let alone sincere, gesture toward 'constructive dialogue with political and state power.' This rejection of the past or political tradition and culture is a common enough gesture in much of Chinese liberalism, vis-à-vis the radical era, though the May 4th urban intellectuals and youth are also ordinarily valorized by liberals and, alternatively, even by the state itself (as precursors to the rise of the revolution and Party).

While Liu famously wrote 'I have no enemies' for his Nobel lecture in absentia, it is clear that he does. He is so consumed by them (the Party-state and all its institutions and paths) and so convinced that they are entirely wrong if not evil that he can only reject them and refuse dialogue. (Of course his repression makes that refusal a *fait accompli*.) The disavowal of antagonistic politics does not and arguably cannot work—and this should not be surprising because of the very dyadic nature of the political, and that as Schmitt also argues, de-politicization can never actually succeed. Bringing forth social and political change through pronouncements—announcing a *Charter* that will change history—is simply not a political act. It lacks a social movement or 'front' behind it, and by and large the Chinese middle class seems solidly behind the current state, correctly diagnosing its class character for the past two or three decades. Note too that China *does* have a public sphere and civil society (albeit in Sinified forms), so the argument that it lacks one and that when it gets one all will fall into place is by this point—over 30 years into market-driven 'reform'—not to be taken very seriously. It is time for liberals to face the fact that their desired outcome and 'mainstream Western Enlightenment language'—even more so than the new or old left's so-called Maospeak—is simply by and large falling on deaf ears, those ears being far more susceptible to consumerism, patriotism, even 'statist' de-politicizing propaganda like Xi's 'China dream.' The Chinese are, in sum, not subalterns who cannot speak, but in fact have a long tradition of protests and strikes and

so on, and a very lively, sometimes virulent, Internet/virtual and other public spheres. It is simply not a liberal government or polity. Theoretically speaking, it may become one someday. But if so, this will more likely happen either through a mass movement wanting and demanding that and getting it in some form or fashion, and/or a CCP elite that, as with the case of late Soviet Russia, desires to abandon its own system for an even more profitable one, in some type of revolution from above.[53] Mutatis mutandis, so too for the new left movement hoping to bend the Party-state in the other direction.

The claim to have no enemies is further notable in light of Schmitt's claim that this is what liberalism seeks to do—to neutralize the friend-enemy dyad or antagonism and to de-politicize politics by putting economics (or ethics) in its place. Such economism, ironically, fits the current Party-state that likewise wants to let a perpetually rising economy lift all boats—aside from its recourse to sheer repression and censorship, of course. If Liu Xiaobo seems too much the dissident outlier and thus a special case of liberalism (and in his courage he no doubt is), it is worth briefly discussing Qin Hui's work, a leading liberal intellectual and economic historian based in Beijing who is arguably the most scholarly intellectual of the liberal movement. Qin's work is diverse and explicitly concerned enough with social justice (for peasants, especially) to win endorsement from the *New Left Review*, the flagship, erstwhile leftist organ of the British ('international') and Trotskyist-identified left that has always been close to Anglo-liberalism. Like Xu Jilin and others, he writes critically of the new left and, true to the 1980s of *He Shang*, sees the Maoist and radical era as akin to an oppressive feudalism (an extension of it). For my purposes it is his political-economic theory that is the most germane, given its connection to what I have been calling the economism of the liberal line of the past and of the current, more familiar liberalism of today.

Qin's work has offered nothing less than an alternative, pro-market, and anti-state economic history of agrarian development in China from the premodern through the Mao era to the present. (He has also worked extensively and comparatively on Russian agrarian history.)[54] Alexander Day has recently and fairly discussed his work in detail, and I will only rehearse the basics of it here. Qin argues that Chinese peasants have always been in a relation of dependency to the Chinese state, from antiquity through Mao (his *bête noire*) to the present. Like other Chinese liberals—including Hong Kong's—he sees the present economy as not a true market system at all. In fact he has recently

tried to argue in a recent seminar at Tsinghua University—and with no alleged 'value judgment'—that contemporary China is far closer to Germany's 'National Socialism' (circa the 1930s) than to the Soviet Union (also conflated with Maoism) or a real market economy and society.[55] Instead of this they should be transformed, through private enterprise, into citizens. Presumably this puts them in cities and with their old cultures left behind; hence Day's argument for the 'end of the peasant' in this case. China will ultimately need (it urgently needs) a liberal political democracy to carry this out. This fairly conventional liberal view is substantiated further by his notion that the 'primitive accumulation' of capital from the feudal-Maoist-present eras is unjust; even reform era injustices are not capitalist but still 'statist' and crypto-feudal. For 'real' capitalist, market-based accumulation is fair since it is not based on extra-economic force but rather reflects market relations, civil society, and formal equality. (This is then very far from a Marxist understanding of capitalism and primitive accumulation; the latter would be easy to map on to de-Maoification and the crushing of social welfare or the iron rice bowl.) Put another way, some social inequalities (classes) based in accumulation are just and some are not. As Day sums it up, 'Capitalist accumulation, operating through the market mechanism, would signal a formal equality in terms of its process, although substantive inequality might result; primitive accumulation was unjust both formally and substantively. By its very premise, therefore, this argument defined state intervention as unjust and the market economy as just.'[56] The emphasis on formal as opposed to substantive equality is a clear sign of the essentially liberal orientation of Qin Hui's work.

Qin Hui's argument will sound very familiar to readers of Robert Nozick, the influential American conservative/libertarian philosopher in the tradition of Locke and von Hayek (Hayek too is a direct influence on Qin). Shades of cultural imperialism indeed. Qin is aware that Nozick is a conservative, but frames this as only true in the Western world, and not in China. One wonders where this leaves the alleged universalism of liberalism and liberal values and economics, as also assumed by the anti-statist von Hayek. Whatever one makes of such an argument about a China-West difference—and it is almost to be expected in the face of a perceived despotic state—it certainly gives lie to a liberal or political universality. It seems that the China difference is always there, in terms of its political tradition. One can try to work with it (and the centralized, unifying state) or try to bring in Western theory to upend it. But in this case it is a very specifically neo-liberal or economistic theory that is more an affront to democracy than an agent of it.

Or, if one prefers, simply note the hegemony of a very specifically American intellectual formation, even upon intellectuals who work primarily in Chinese and are very much rooted in the mainland as opposed to the 'foreign scholar' circuits. To say that all of this is a deep economism rooted in the market as a kind of magical (just) order (what Hayek called 'catallaxy') should, one hopes, be obvious. It is not charting a socialist revolution (or trying to), but also not even a *political* liberalization or transformation so much as waiting for that to emerge once the state is removed from the economy and a 'real' market and 'real' civil society—whatever these might be, even in an idealized (yet statist?) Western Europe or America—are somehow instituted by the communist leaders themselves. Again the Chinese middle class and rich, as scholars such as David Goodman have observed and as a solid two decades of observation might further verify, are also not a natural or likely constituency for the liberal camp. Without an agency or subject to carry out such reforms—other than the private market-Geist—this is very much a de-politicized politics that is animated less by universal truth than animosity toward the old (Maoist) and new left and the—illiberal—Party-state.

What is envisioned in such liberalism is more than just thinking capitalism/free markets are a superior or a potentially just economic system because it can at least create vast wealth that can then be redistributed and have its ill effects alleviated. That bit of conventional, social democratic or Keynesian liberalism, for whatever it is worth, is in fact much closer to someone like Wang Hui of the new left. In fact Qin's theory here, as with Liu's and others' market-idealism and anti-statism, actually allows no such ground for this, no ground for substantive state intervention and indeed no need for it. Even a strong labor movement, let alone a more explicit class struggle politics or economic populism, is simply unthinkable from such a standpoint. One has to wonder, as ever with libertarians or neo-liberals, what difference the reasoning around formal versus substantive inequalities makes to those in the dispossessed, exploited, or simply worse off classes and class fractions. There is no doubt a class question here as well, in that—we may assume—it is better to be 'dependent' on the state if that means better livelihood and welfare than being 'free' of it and 'free' to sell one's labor to profit-maximizing capitalists. The dismal science, as Keynes called economics, is rarely attuned to such experiential, subjective, and existential questions. And even less so with the question of class. So too for an economistic liberalism today. If capitalist economics, and at least the thinking or discourse

around it, is a modern and Western thing in its genesis, then one must also say that the impact of the former on contemporary China has never been greater, economic liberalism and 'oppositional' liberalism alike. While this is clearly not an instance of Western colonialism or imperialism of the classic, directly imposed, and extractive variety, a more flexible, overlapping or 'hybrid' form of cultural and ideological imperialism is no doubt in play. It is up to the 'illiberal'—anti-liberal—elements of the Chinese intellectual political culture to challenge the economistic and elite hegemony (or would-be hegemony) of contemporary Chinese liberalism and market-economism.

Notes

1. Jonathan Fenby, 'Chinese Democracy: The Silencing of Song' (*History Today* 63.3 2013). http://www.historytoday.com/jonathan-fenby/chinese-democracy-silencing-song. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017.
2. 'The death of a revolutionary: The song of Song.' *The Economist*. December 22, 2012. https://www.economist.com/news/christmas/21568587-shot-killed-song-jiaoren-was-not-heard-around-world-it-might-have-changed. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017.
3. There is a minor tradition of 'China Watching' that wants to point to each new Central Committee as harboring a secret Gorbachev, which is to say a secret political reformer who will finish off the process of China becoming-the-same politically. But even the Party liberals, for example former Premier Wen Jiabao types, do no such thing.
4. As noted and quoted in *The Economist* May 26, 2011. 'Boundlessly loyal to the Great Monster.' Just to make the teams and cheerleaders clear, *The Economist* frames the reports with 'Liberalism under attack in China, but at least the liberals are fighting back.' Presumably via their fat investment portfolios. http://www.economist.com/node/18744533?story_id=18744533. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017.
5. Just to clarify the provenance of Chinese liberalism of at least this major, dominant type, and how it better fits American libertarianism and global neo-liberalism, one must note that Mao Yushi recently received a US $250,000 cash reward ('the Milton Friedman Prize') from The Cato Institute in the USA. See *Foreign Policy* May 4, 2012. http://foreignpolicy.com/2012/05/04/economist-mao-yushi-on-why-the-chinese-government-is-not-evil/. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017. Likewise, as noted elsewhere, the vaguely dissident aura attached to long-time Xinhua journalist and famine-chronicler-populizer Yang Jisheng contains no hint of his avowed Hayekian influence, or that he too won a prize—the 2012 Hayek Prize of the Manhattan Institute—for his neo-liberal free-market views.

See *The Economist*, May 31, 2013. https://www.economist.com/blogs/analects/2013/05/hayek-prize. Accessed Nov. 10, 2017.

6. The best current, thoughtful biography of Mao, though far from the most popular alas, is clearly Lee Feigon's *Mao: A Re-interpretation* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), a book that also reflects some recent New Left views and the work of important scholars such as Gao Mobo, Wang Zheng, and Han Dongping. Oddly, no other foreign biography to date reflects Chinese leftist views on the leftist leader of the revolution.
7. Again one has to acknowledge that this lack is no doubt due in part to censorship within the educational, media, and other apparatuses. But this is just to say that the Party-state system enjoys a hard-won hegemony. I'm neither celebrating nor condemning liberalism's lack of appeal here, though will address the consequences of this limit later.
8. See note 21 below, but for an example and discussion of such essentially individualist and art for art's sake art—which I will code as liberal here—see the work of Wang Aihe, for example 'Wuming: An Underground Art Group during the Cultural Revolution' (*Journal of Modern Chinese History* 3.2 2009: 183–199). The early work of the Misty Poets (what became that 'school') such as Bei Dao is the paradigmatic case in point. This is not to disparage such art as art but to frame and situate its politics within a larger field and to connect it to a global liberalism.
9. See Mao Zedong, 'Combat Liberalism.' *Selected Works of Mao Tse-tung*. Vol. 2 [1937]. http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_03.htm. For the notion of 'within the true,' see Foucault, *The Archeology of Knowledge*, and especially the Appendix (Trans A.M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Pantheon, 1972). The essential point for our purposes is that there is no Truth—certainly not in the human sciences—but only truths embedded within discourses, that is regimes of truth, rules for speaking, and so on. Neither Truth nor truths exist outside of discourses.
10. For the more Stalinist or paternalist view, see Liu Shaoqi, *How to Be a Good Communist*, originally published in 1939. Online at: https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1939/how-to-be/ch01.htm. Accessed Nov. 14, 2017. This can as always be contrasted with Mao's *Critique of Soviet Economics*, written on the eve of the Great Leap Forward (Trans. Moss Roberts. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977). http://www.marx2mao.com/Mao/CSE58.html. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
11. William Hinton, *Fanshen: A Documentary of Revolution in a Chinese Village* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997 [1966]).
12. See Rebecca E. Karl, *The Magic of Concepts: History and the Economic in Twentieth-Century China* (Duke University Press, 2017). I should note that Karl's book is also concerned with 'the economic' in the long decade

of the 1930s as well as the 1980s, and skips over the Mao period in this study. Also the work of Wang Anan whom she studies here is of a more heterodox Marxism than what I am calling the 'Soviet' or 'Stalinist' type of economic-political thought found in Liu and Deng. My own sense of economism as opposed to the economic is similar but flows out of the work of Schmitt, Mao, Marx, and a more *Grundrisse*-inspired reading of *Capital*.

13. Mao Zedong, 'Combat Liberalism.'
14. This (Deng's spearheading of the 1957 anti-intellectual struggle) has long been the case made by historians and scholars such as Maurice Meisner and Gao Mobo.
15. For the agitprop film of 1975, directed by Li Wenhua, see, for example, https://archive.org/details/Breaking_With_Old_Ideas. For Red Guard documents, see Michael Schoenhals, Ed., *China's Cultural Revolution, 1966–69: Not a Dinner Party (East Gate Reader)* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1996) as well as Gregor Benton and Alan Hunter (1995).
16. Harry Harding, 'The Chinese State in Crisis, 1966–1969,' *The Cambridge History of China Volume 15: The People's Republic* (Roderick MacFarquhar and John K. Fairbank, eds., Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1991. 105–217).
17. Harding, 214.
18. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political. Expanded Edition* (Trans. George Schwab. Chicago University Press, 2007).
19. T. W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer. *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Trans. Edmund Jephcott. Stanford University Press, 2002). Of course, these co-authors were familiar with the work of Schmitt, even if they occupied the opposite end of the spectrum from the famous/infamous former jurist of the Third Reich!
20. For an overview, see Prof. Flora Sapio, 'Carl Schmitt in China,' published by the Australian Centre on China in the World (https://www.thechinastory.org/cot/carl-schmitt-in-china/). Accessed Dec. 4, 2017.
21. Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics, From East to West.' (*New Left Review* 41 2006: 29–45).
22. This point—that such a shift from revolution to Dengism/capitalism was not only of huge existential import (and tragedy) but would necessarily color many individuals' views of the Cultural Revolution, is a point made often in the work of Gao Mobo, among others, on the historiography of the period, especially in memoirs.
23. My comments on the cultural revolution here, as with those earlier on Maoist discourse, means that I would part ground from any liberal analytical framing of Chinese (or other) politics in general, and certainly of the post-war period through the 1970s. For a liberal Hong Kong view oppo-

site to my own, see Pang Laikwan, *The Art of Cloning: Creative Production during China's Cultural Revolution* (London: Verso, 2017).

24. See Goodman's valuable *Beijing Street Voices: The Poetry and Politics of China's Democracy Movement* (London and Boston: Marion Boyars, 1981), which deals mainly with the 1978–1979 movement or protests and the 'spirit' or milieu of those involved. As with the 'Misty Poets' movement it is, however, hard to say what is 'democratic' in such work (the poetry), as opposed to its anti-state or anti-official or anti-Gang of Four element, and an implied individualism. All of this, or a reaction against the Cultural Revolution, are not by definition 'democratic.'
25. For the key text of Li Yi Zhe, see Benton and Hunter, *Prairie Fire*, op cit.
26. On the ultras, see Wu Yiching, *The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis* (Harvard University Press, 2014) and the classic essay by Wang Shaoguang, '"New Trends of Thought" on the Cultural Revolution,' (*Journal of Contemporary China*, 8.21 1999: 197–217).
27. Xu Jilin, 'The Fate of an Enlightenment: Twenty Years in the Chinese Intellectual Sphere,' (Trans. Geremie Barmé. *East Asian History* Dec. 20, 2000: 169–186), 71.
28. As with the new left, any attempt at listing liberal intellectuals will invariably leave many out or make debatable inclusions. Even the distinction between liberal and neo-liberal or clear 'rightists' such as Mao Yushi can be fuzzy. But in addition to Xu Jilin, who is an avowed 'centrist' or third way type of liberal (anti-'extremes'), others frequently cited or referred to as liberal partisans include Qin Hui, Xu Youyu, Zhu Xeuqin, and Liu Junning (also a signatory of *Charter 2008*). Liu Xiaobo was not an academic but a dissident of course, though still considered by liberals as an intellectual of note and merit. As for what unites the 'movement' it seems to me to be based on two things: reactively, an anti-leftism, of at least Maoism and Chinese Marxism; and a pro-market or pro-private property baseline, which is to say an anti-state position vis-à-vis the economy and social planning. It is no coincidence that many liberals are economists (or most economists or liberals), deeply influenced by classical or neo-liberal economics. The ones named earlier and discussed here are, however, also more explicitly political liberals and identified as such. The economists are sometimes just shy of speaking to the political beyond the drive for reform/privatization. Of course there are many other competing distinctions, such as understandings of liberty versus freedom versus rights, social versus individual justice, the state as such, and so on. But such terms, important as they are, are also minefields of reifications and misreadings of one another. Better, in my view, to stick to classical Marxist notions of politics, that is the question of the economic base and production which is also, in the end, a class position and a side-taking.

29. See Xu Jilin, 184.
30. Rebecca Karl has a good discussion of the rise and use of Hayek in contemporary China. See chapter 3 of *The Magic of Concepts.*
31. Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics,' 32.
32. Wang Hui, 'Depoliticized Politics,' 35.
33. For the whole text, see https://www.marxists.org/archive/yao-wenyuan/1975/0001.htm. Yao's prophecy is worth quoting at length and has been bandied about in recent years more often than one might think. Kalpana Mishra was way ahead of the curve, however, in pointing us to this text and offering useful glosses in her *From Post-Maoism to Post-Marxism*. See as well the discussion in Frederick C Teiwes and Warren Sun, *The End of the Maoist Era: Chinese Politics During the Twilight of the Cultural Revolution, 1972–1976* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
34. See Joshua But, 'Hong Kong losing its competitive edge, Beijing warns: Top official hopes city will forge ahead, but is accused of trying to divert attention from reform,' *South China Morning Post* April 28, 2013. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1224953/hong-kong-losing-its-competitive-edge-beijing-warns. Accessed Nov. 16, 2017. The economism could not be more clear than in Zhang's words: 'Only when the economy continues to thrive will livelihoods improve. Everything else is empty talk. Like a boat sailing against the current, it will be swept downstream if it does not forge ahead.' … Without elaborating, he said '"deep-rooted conflicts in economic development" had begun to emerge in the city.' That there is a point here, and perhaps some substance to this illiberalism other than it being anti-liberal politics/voting, is a subject of the final chapter.
35. See Liu Xiaobo et al., 'Charter 08: a blueprint for China,' (Trans. Perry Link. 2008) http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/chinas-charter-08. Accessed March 2012.
36. See, for example, Li Minqi, Wang Dan, and Wang Chaohua, 'A Dialogue on the Future of China' (*New Left Review* 235 (1999): 62–106).
37. Li Minqi, *The Rise of China and the Demise of the Capitalist World Economy* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2008).
38. Charter 08, Ibid.
39. Liu has long had his champions in Western academia, including noted Sinologists Perry Link in the USA and Geremie Barmé in Australia. For Barme's remarkable tribute essay after his friend Liu's death, one that reveals their great, shared antipathy to virtually all other mainland intellectuals and academics, see his 'Mourning' essay at *The China Heritage* website and journal dated June 30, 2017 (http://chinaheritage.net/journal/mourning/). Accessed Nov. 15, 2017. It should go without saying that my own point is not 'guilt by association' for anyone involved—we all have our friends and

'comrades' and representatives in China. Though not enough foreigners ever admit this in print. The point instead is that Liu's connection to anti-communist critics and scholars abroad, let alone to funds ultimately authorized by the US government (i.e. The National Endowment for Democracy), clearly antagonized the Chinese state and was a most fateful decision for all involved.

40. See the links to the N.E.D.'s financial disclosures at this blog: https://blog.hiddenharmonies.org/2017/07/13/liu-xiaobo-rip-but-we-should-never-forget-the-14-million-yuan-from-ned/. For example, Liu served as president of the Chinese chapter of PEN for several years. PEN received almost US $900,000 during Liu's five years there. For example, 2010: $170,000; http://www.ned.org/region/asia/china-2010/. Again all of this was apparently fully legal, and my point here, again, is that this fateful decision becomes a dangerous pretext and tells us something about what motivates such repression. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
41. The degree of change or effect under Maoism is an open but profound question. Clearly the state was able to undo Maoism fairly quickly, especially in regard to many of its institutions and the economy, and not least due to the veritable coup d'état after Mao's death. At the same time, as the previous discussion of Maoist discourse suggests, Maoism not only worked practically but also worked subjectively or culturally in some ways. The work of Gao Mobo and Wang Zheng illustrates the latter, for example. Gan Yang's essays on the three great pillars—situating Maoism as the chief indigenous tradition of social justice and political participation—is another case in point. See Chap. 2 for more on Maoist discourse.
42. See, for example, Harrison Jacobs, 'Here's the manifesto that landed the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner in Chinese prison' (February 5, 2015, *Business Insider*) http://www.businessinsider.com/heres-what-landed-liu-xiaobo-in-chinese-prison-2015-2. Accessed Nov. 16, 2017.
43. See note 35, above.
44. See Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, '"The Right Dissident": Liu Xiaobo and the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize' (*positions* 19.2 2011: 581–613).
45. See Qin Hui, 'Critique of Charter 08: Democratic Debate and Renewed Enlightenment is More Necessary for China' (Trans. David Kelly, *Boxun News*). http://www.boxun.us/news/publish/china_comment/Qin_Hui_s_Critique_of_Charter_08_Democratic_Debate_and_Renewed_Enlightenment_is_More_Necessary_for_China.shtml. Accessed Jan. 2012.
46. See Sautman and Yan for the full argument.
47. See, respectively, Andrew Nathan at *Foreign Affairs* July 13, 2017 (https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2017-07-13/remembering-liu-xiaobo); Yang Jianli (a Tiananmen 1989 exile) writing in *China Change*, a website/GONGO funded in part by the same N.E.D. (https://

chinachange.org/2017/07/22/remembering-liu-xiaobo-and-what-the-u-s-can-do/); and 'Reuters staff' at http://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-rights-reaction-idUSKBN19Y2DC?il=0. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.

48. See the final paragraph of the English version: http://www.opendemocracy.net/article/chinas-charter-08.
49. An English translation of the 'Declaration of Charter 77,' authored by dissident and later Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel, can be found at https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125521/8003_Charter_77.pdf. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
50. See Havel, 'Remarks by Vaclav Havel and Two Members of China's Charter 08 at the Ceremony for the Homo Homini Award' on April 30, 2009, in the *New York Review of Books*. http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2009/04/30/remarks-by-vaclav-havel-and-two-members-of-chinas-/. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
51. See Derrida, 'Force of Law' (Trans. Mary Quaintance. *Deconstruction and the Possibility of Justice*. Drucilla Cornell, Michael Rosenfeld, and David Gray Carlson, eds. New York: Routledge, 1992): 3–67.
52. See page three of the original English translation of the Charter '77, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/125521/8003_Charter_77.pdf. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
53. For the Soviet interpretation here, see David Kotz and Fred Weir, *Revolution from Above: The Demise of the Soviet System*. (New York: Routledge, 1997).
54. See *The China Story* (Australian National University) for a brief biography and bibliography of Qin's work (https://www.thechinastory.org/key-intellectual/qin-hui-秦晖/) *as well as links to online writings*. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
55. See Qin Hui, 'Does the China Solution resemble National Socialism?' (Trans. David Kelley). https://interactives.lowyinstitute.org/publications/does-the-china-solution-resemble-national-socialism/. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017.
56. See Alexander F. Day, *The Peasant in Postsocialist China*: *History, Politics, and Capitalism*, (Cambridge University Press, 2013): 64.

CHAPTER 4

No Country, No System: Liberalism, Autonomy, and De-politicization in Hong Kong

If any space in the world today illustrates the powers and limits of liberalism, classical (which is to say: colonial), as well as contemporary or neo-, it is Hong Kong, the would-be city-state and, like Macau, a 'special administrative region' of southern China.[1] While tiny by mainland standards at a mere seven million, and certainly not a major part of the bloody British Empire in the manner of South Asia, the city has a remarkably large, global footprint for its size, including within China. It must also be said that it is often poorly understood across the Lo Wu border on the one hand, and is ill-served by the academic and English media adulation of the territory's 'importance' for the mainland as a 'free' and 'open' space on the other. The exceptional global presence of the city is due to many reasons—its influential movie industry, its unique landscapes (the most skyscrapers in the world by far), its particular culture and language, its food, and so on. But perhaps the strongest muscle for its footprint, its greatest leverage, has been its special status as an 'autonomous' city even after its handover/return to the mainland. This is thought to be written into the Basic Law or mini-constitution of the city as well as the 'one country, two systems' principle, as worked out by the Deng Xiaoping-led CCP and the local British and Chinese colonials.[2] As we will see that Basic document turns out to be highly contestable in a battle over interpretations offered by the local democratic, that is politically liberal politicians/activists on the one hand, and who are not powerless given their hegemony in educational and media institutions, and by the obviously still more powerful sovereign, Beijing on

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the other hand. More on the law and movement later. But so far what I am saying points to one thing: Hong Kong's global footprint and highly favorable image in at least the English language media and political world has to do with its difference—a hierarchical, normalized difference—from the mainland. And this very much stems from its colonial past. It is better, more free, 'special,' and—in a rather condescending but popular phrase used in Hong Kong—'not just another mainland city.' For much of that media and for the many who claim to want full autonomy or de facto independence from the mainland, it as if the SAR stood for Semi-Autonomous Region and not a Special Administrative Region.

Put another way, *Hong Kong's global presence and therefore its power and visibility exist and persist because of the Western symbolic power embedded in it.* This may even explain the academic and media attention afforded to Hong Kong not only frm the West but from the mainland. This symbolic dimension may in the long run persist even after Hong Kong fades—if it does fade—as a preeminent hub of global, financial capital, especially as it flows in and out of China. The latter may itself depend on how far Xi Jinping et al. will crack down on and restrict the —heretofore legal—flight of capital out of China but through Hong Kong, either into its strato-spheric property markets or out further into the world via 'business.' To be sure Hong Kong's important status also has to do with it being the most English-language-friendly part of China.[3] In still other words, the former 'pearl of the Orient' is 'exceptional' because it was a 'successful' British colony in general and because it was and to an extent still is a space of colonial liberalism. On some accounts, Hong Kong is or was 'arguably the most important part of China for 150 years,' precisely because it was not a part of *political* China and was therefore spared of the latter's trials and tribulations.[4] Hong Kong is the one place on Chinese soil where lib-eralism, classical as well as degraded, is alive and well, even hegemonic in the intellectual and cultural spheres. But in the current conjuncture, this liberalism is in direct competition with the power, difference, and politics of the actually sovereign mainland, which simply isn't going to concede to the democrats' political demands. It is also not going to 'recognize' or acknowledge the rise of a particularistic Hong Kong—as opposed to 'Chinese'—identity. The clash between 'Beijing' and Hong Kong's vari-ous democratic parties and groups and individuals thus reveals to us the specter of mainland illiberalism, and also the limits and real weakness of the sickly ghost of political liberalism (the democratic movement) in Hong Kong, dating back to the late colonial era.

For all the actions and visibility of the opposition, and even despite their own best efforts, that movement as a whole has largely been de-politicized and reduced to theatrics or grandstanding as well as filibustering legislation in the city legislature (LegCo). As a staunchly capitalist and competitive city and society (or lack thereof) with huge revenue surpluses yet very small government and social welfare or security, Hong Kong is always near the bottom in opinion surveys purportedly measuring happiness. Further below the mainland as well as Taiwan and Singapore to name three very different places. But its current unhappiness and discontent is something other than this. It speaks first of all to its economic stagnation, continuously high inequality, its loss of exceptional status, and its un-governability. But equally important has been the political morass and stagnation, where neither the Chief Executive (CE) nor the LegCo nor the mainland can accomplish anything (the latter not being allowed to intervene except exceptionally). This has produced great frustration across the board but also an increasingly precarious and perhaps unsustainable living situation for the city as a whole and as a 'society.' Overvalued yet irresistibly rising phenomena include property and the hegemony of the rentier class's interests and desires (approximately one million mortgage holders); Hong Kong localism and nativism, from a basic civic pride to xenophobic, anti-immigrant, and racist constructions of identity pitted against 'mainlanders'; autonomy or even independence as deeply desired if impossible goals; and finally, pan-democratic political intransigence and continuous opposition to all legislation and reforms—to governance—clashing with an equally obstinate and more powerful 'Beijing loyal' establishment and Chief Executive, as well as the actual mainland officials ambiguously connected to the latter. (There appears to be a 'disconnect' within this last indeed.)[5]

While post-1997 Hong Kong politics in light of 2014 is more than worthy of book-length treatment,[6] the following analysis of the 'Occupy Central with Peace and Love' movement (which quickly escalated into the 'Umbrella Revolution') will attempt to at least show this impasse in more theoretical detail. And moreover to diagnose it as a conflict between competing political discourses: a colonial or Occidentalist liberalism on the one hand in Hong Kong, and an 'illiberal'—or is it a liberal economism? —from the mainland or 'loyalist' side on the other hand. In other words the conflict is not in the end based in different cultures and identities, let alone in an ethnic divide (as many would have it). But it does have to do with the aftermaths of colonialism and imperialism: liberalism as a divisive yet politically de-politicizing force that simply fits ill with the mainland

Party-state system, which hates liberalism in the Schmittian sense even as it is fully complicit with global capitalism. If Brexit and Trumpism speak to the failures of what Nancy Fraser has brilliantly called 'progressive neo-liberalism' and the escalation of xenophobia and racism, then the Hong Kong-China example both resonates with this and departs from it. There is plenty of xenophobia and a literally reactionary nativism in the city, for example, the Hong Kong Autonomy Movement and the popularity of the sensationalist writer Chin Wan, the 'Civic Passion' party, and yellow-peril rhetoric about mainlanders. And its progressives (the various democratic-liberal parties and individuals) are often neo-liberal or just laissez-faire in economic terms, when they care about such terms at all. (There is also a small and dwindling but long-standing 'league of social democrats' with a more left pedigree.) While they have not been defeated to the extent the American neo-liberal democrats have been, and they remain a relatively popular and significant force, the larger point is that they have virtually no chance, by rule, of winning a majority in the city's legislature and moreover are blocked from making it to the city's mayoral (Chief Executive) post. The functional constituencies of the legislature (set-aside seats for various professions) and the rules for CE selection indirectly via Beijing (as in the Basic Law) preclude them actually taking power. This is why they are adamant for 'universal suffrage' aka 'civic nomination' of the CE; it is a question of freedom as they present it, but it must also be said that it is also their own will to power, a desire to rule *their* Hong Kong.

These were the two key, dominant political phrases and demands of the Umbrella protest, though they have a longer history. We can leave to one side the fact that even the Western systems of liberal-capitalist democracy do not have direct nomination but must go through party machines and so on. It is an impossible demand that Beijing simply will not concede, as even the most die-hard partisans must know. This is axiomatic. But that has not stopped anyone, including the recent rise of localist and quasi-independence parties and voices, from making these same, very specific demands. This presents us with an interesting, ideological question: why is this the case? No doubt one can suggest that this is about the heroic fortitude of the democrats and the great fight for freedom against communist Chinese tyranny or at least illiberalism; or alternatively the will to power of a local political elite with decidedly abstract and middle-class values. So too there is a clash of at least political cultures here, turning on a one-party system versus a multi-party city system that is as fractious as it is recent or young, and while the mainland clearly understands Hong

Kong very little, or does not care to, the city itself is just as ignorant of Chinese politics as a whole. All of this is in play.

But what the rise and fall of Occupy shows us is that there is still more to this persistence and impasse. What unifies all the pan-democratic and related oppositional parties (the 'suffragists') is a belief in *convergence* or *liberal convergence* more accurately. The mainland will fall next year, or maybe the year after, or at least by 2047 when the Basic Law is officially scrapped (if it is to be). If they keep at it, resolutely banging on about voting for the CE, filibustering in the legislature, holding annual anti-CCP events, and so on, then eventually it will work because sooner or later the mainland will implode and converge into normalcy and liberal democracy and so on. The Geist lives, at least in (parts of) this southern Chinese territory. After convergence Hong Kong will be free. Though curiously this essentially religious (if secular) faith-based reasoning turns not on something grand but on the mere procedure of voting. After convergence and suffrage 'happen' Hong Kong will fix itself through acts of legislation, presumably quickly. The naiveté of this should go without saying, not least in a city utterly dominated by its own, native bourgeoisie and property cartels. But note that the current Party-state—or at least its Hong Kong policy wings—also shares a belief in convergence, just the other way around: that it will learn to be part of the nation, will discover its ethnic-nationalist belonging, or will just have to shut up and adjust, converging with the irresistible force that is the sovereign mainland and its magical economy.

All of this, both sides, native and mainland, speak to a failure in politics, a failure of the political. Much of this failure is guaranteed by the Basic Law mini-constitution itself, which, like the handover itself, promises both that nothing much will change—that Hong Kong will keep its autonomy and 'system'—and yet that it will return to and become part of an enormously larger, in some ways radically different, political and economic entity or nation-state called the sovereign PRC. All of the documentaries in the world about student leader Joshua Wong or the wonderfully creative art, slogans, and visuals of the movement and of the city will not change the power relations/sovereignty involved, and will apparently not shake the dubious belief in voting as, not merely a procedure, but the skeleton key to democracy, freedom, and autonomy as well as truth, beauty, light. What beliefs in convergence do, when put into practice like this, is to make politics a matter of economics, to substitute that, or ethics (e.g. appeals to voting rights! Patriotism!), for actual political struggle and contestation between antagonists to be fought out and negotiated in the political

realm—at the level of the state or related institutions. To be sure the Sino-British-Hong Kong Basic Law system or compromise enshrines this impasse and state of de-politicization. But if Hong Kong is to arrest its decline and go forward, both those 'Beijing loyal' and 'democratic' forces will need to find a path of engagement beyond waiting for opposite convergences.

Underneath the Umbrella: What's There?

The long-promised, frequently announced (over two years) 'Occupy Central With Peace and Love' movement finally took place in early October 2014. It may have been delayed even longer had it not been triggered by a college student-led boycott across the city in mid-September. The immediate cause was a late summer decision by the mainland government to essentially reiterate its policy on how the city's Chief Executive ('mayor') is elected—not through direct public nomination and vote but through not-so secretly pre-screened candidates then chosen by a small nomination committee, principally representing favored business sectors. Needless to say this status quo statement was unpopular throughout the city, but it especially angered the democrats and youth. The students were clearly the vanguard of the protests. An eminently peaceful and non-violent demonstration from its beginnings to its end in late December, it became much larger and broadly supported by the city at large when the police fired tear gas at 'occupying' protesters behind a few barricaded streets downtown. Hence the photogenic umbrellas—a decent remedy against teargas, but an even more brilliantly televisual tool for the cameras. Given the presence of foreign media in Hong Kong, a headquarters of finance capital and English language in China (though the latter is in decline), the Umbrella moment quickly become a global media event, and one on officially Chinese but 'freer' soil. Principally occurring on the main island near the governmental headquarters in the Admiralty and Causeway Bay districts, but later including the more working class Mongkok district as well, at its peak the protests reached about 100,000 people at any one time. A large number made to appear even larger on screens by the narrow corridors and dense cityscapes that are uniquely Hong Kong. But there is no denying the turnout was large and serious, that it persisted admirably and (mostly) peacefully for nearly three months, that it was led, in so far as it had a central leadership, by students and young professionals, and was arguably the most significant political event—or protest at any rate—in the history of the city/colony. Much larger than the more violent and radical but brief riots during the Cultural Revolution, which augured in a new phase of repression

and the squashing of dissent, especially of the left or would-be nationalist and anti-imperialist left of Hong Kong. The repression or legal harassment of the Occupy leaders or activists has been milder but also, ironically and unlike in Wukan, without the welfarist type of state- or city-level compensations that subtended Hong Kong's rise in the 1970s under the British.

The decision to fire teargas was decisive, and galvanizing—of the streets but also of the public or 'silent majority' at large. Prior to the student-strike in September, and given the frequent delays and re-announcements of when and how it would start, there was already a good deal of skepticism about the Occupy plan and what it might actually do. The traditional pan-democrats (including the chief organizers of Occupy) are long-standing actors in the Hong Kong polity and civil society. At the same time, as such, they are somewhat 'old news' to younger generations and a known entity—they are always there, and have solid and consistent, if varying, and never overwhelming electoral support; they also never quite accomplish anything in terms of suffrage or the budget and so on. The shift from 'Occupy' to the Umbrella 'Revolution,' however, took the event from political business as usual to a genuinely massive and global media event. The entire mood of the city quickly shifted to strong support of the protesters, especially of their right to protest, and against any crackdown on their assembly. In a city where the police had long been popular moral exemplars, something new was afoot and it reeked, perhaps unfairly, of Beijing (i.e. there is no evidence of who ordered the teargas attack, if anyone other than the police). From the moment the teargas flew and the umbrellas popped open, the original organizers of Occupy lost control of the movement, even at various times asking everyone to leave for their own safety. It would not be too much to say that virtually the entire city, as conservative and alienated and non-political as it can be, was unified in the early aftermath of the teargas.

By mid-December the movement petered out, as protests eventually do, with far fewer people staying in the streets and occupying the zones. To be sure this was also caused by the city's Chief Executive C. Y. Leung (the de facto Beijing appointee) insisting on the allegedly 'illegal' occupation needing to end. But it is also true that the general public seemed to be losing interest or growing impatient with the impasse or lack of a resolution or practical effect (and perhaps the traffic hassles). As if it just wasn't worth extending longer, as the message (or messages) and the affect being sent to Beijing was loud and clear. A non-dramatic ending for a movement that held the world's attention far more than even Wukan (an angrier, less telegenic event, but one with palpable outcomes), and an event closer, global-media-event-wise, to say Tahir Square or even Tiananmen, 1989. The latter

was used by the very sympathetic English language media and even by some China experts.[7] A Chinese protest and a subsequent Tiananmen analogy is as predictable as sunrise and sunset, but in this case it is one clear difference that stands out: if 1989 students and intellectuals had either a very vague and non-specific demand for democracy and were not, in fact, demanding the end of the Party-state system (with some exceptions), Hong Kong's 2014 movement was entirely specific, even legalistic: the demand was, again, for universal suffrage and civic nomination, which would be a direct repudiation of the current Party-designed system and even to the official mainland interpretation of the Basic Law (about which, more later).

This no doubt speaks to the differences between the two political cultures and belief systems, be it in 1989 or in 2014. That difference and time span itself speaks to the deceptive nature of 'convergence' understood as a real thing or force as opposed to an interpretation or ideology. This departure from the vagueness of 1989 is arguably very much to the credit of Hong Kong's liberal democrats and especially its student youth movement. Howsoever young and 'naïve' they may all be, vis-à-vis the mainland's power and sovereignty and Hong Kong's own political system, they are well informed and on point when they speak of why voting is important (recall powers, how a legislative process as in the West ideally works, and so on). They have the liberal and 'civics textbook' catechism down. Indeed, it is this that even gives some weightage to mainland chargers that 2014 reeked of foreign interference in Hong Kong—it is clear that the Hong Kong students are learning this from somewhere (albeit in Hong Kong) and this 'somewhere' is definitely not a mainland space or political culture. That being said, there is also no good reason to see the 2014 movement as funded or animated by anything other than home-grown anti-communism and people like the loud media tycoon Jimmy Lai. There are certainly small groups and NGOs in Hong Kong that indirectly get US money, but the same is true of the mainland. If I may speak anecdotally, some of my own undergraduate students that same fall term of 2014, none of whom were leaders but merely participants, would put my former American students to shame in this regard, as the others of us heard first-hand in class discussion. Such youths' learning and knowledge is genuinely impressive in its own right. But the contrast between the two Occupys, Central and Wall Street, also reflects the difference between living under an actual liberal-capitalist democratic regime like the USA and the far more seductive idea of living in the ideal or textbook one.

And yet perhaps because of that very specific demand in 2014, after it was made repeatedly, and knowing that an immediate yes was not forthcoming (in 2014 or likely ever), the movement did lose steam by

December, as least as an eminently political protest directed against the actual government and electoral process. Or put another way, by the second month of the protest it became a less political event and more of a social activist and even 'cultural' 'happening.' This is not a criticism of that development in itself; it was no doubt meaningful for the individuals involved, as well as the police and observers and the city as a whole. This dimension—the creativity and virtuality of it—has also been the main area of academic or intellectual inquiry to date. The art and visuals, the slogans and complex use of Chinese/Cantonese, the claiming of public space, and the purported *experiences* or existential aspects of the Umbrella Revolution have been fairly well documented. More articles and films are no doubt forthcoming. Perhaps most significant within this was the 'salon' or discussion circles or groupings that sprung up among the protesters, and more generally the conversations that must have taken place in the newly created, temporary public space of the occupied street areas.

This is all intrinsically interesting and of value for Hong Kong studies (among other things).[8] My own view is that if one wants to call *this*—the 'culture' or imaginary of the event, the event as a virtual republic—the actually democratic and 'radical' aspect of the protest event, then this is a reification.[9] There is simply—to date—no proof or data or evidence of the Umbrella movement being secretly and unconsciously anti-neo-liberal or substantively democratic (e.g. around the economic or class, or even 'social power'), let alone anti-capitalist or leftist.[10] To make the argument that it was 'radical' or genuinely 'subversive' in some way, one has to rely on pure semiotics or symbolic significations (occupying shared space, seizing the highways, boycotting classes, holding salons, eating free sausages from sympathetic hedge funders). One has to then and *necessarily* argue that this was all happening unconsciously, since there were no such political demands staked out in the public sphere or civil society or by movement leaders in so far as they existed cohesively or purposefully. Ideologically, the protest at its height and most coherent was chiefly liberal, in a very explicit and obvious way: conflict over the meaning of a legal document or quasi-constitution, perceived violations of rights, the repugnance of the mainland 'communist' regime, and so on.[11]

It is important to note at the outset that those protests and the democracy movement from the 1980s onward have not been based in social or substantive equality. This is not the central or even a major demand of any of the parties or of the protesters (whom were eventually quite diverse in

other ways). Hong Kong's political culture, inchoate as it may be, does not include a discourse of social democracy to be found in parts of Europe, let alone any rhetoric of equality, workers' centrality to the nation, the right to rebel, and so on that may be found in some protests across the northern border. Missing as well is the essential populism and economic critique powerfully captured by Occupy Wall Street's 'the 98% versus the 2%.' Hong Kong does have a vibrant and active civil society or public sphere (albeit with little public space)—this has not been repressed since 1997 or 2014. It is unlikely for that to happen given both the difficulties of any such planned repression and, moreover, the lack of power civil society has in Hong Kong as well as elsewhere. As Michael Hardt and Toni Negri once put it, civil society has generally 'withered away' and been subsumed by the state; it can largely be ignored by the latter.[12] Protest can still have effects, clearly, and is often the *only* means to help produce or even stop political and social change. But such effects are not guaranteed and in any case do not amount to a robust civil society that stands autonomously from and can contend with the state, as in basic Hegelian and bourgeois historiography of the rise of capitalism and liberal democracy. Hardt and Negri's essential point here is that modern, global societies have now evolved new, subtler forms of power and control than this model will allow.

To be sure specific examples of economic and other inequalities are reported on and discussed in Hong Kong's various media, as they are everywhere else. But this too is not the same as having a democratic or other political culture that turns on equality and, for example, what used to be called even by classic liberal political theorists, economic democracy. For Hong Kong, as will be discussed later, the dominant, perhaps even the sole understanding of 'democracy' is procedural and liberal more generally. As student leader Joshua Wong said it in an interview, 'our goal is to make Hong Kong more liberal, and then more equal.' Wong, no doubt a future politician within the Hong Kong democratic establishment, at least posits equality here, and so offers hope for a more egalitarian political culture to come, but as something that comes after 'liberalization.' This will sound dubious to most seasoned students and theorists of politics. But in any case the lack of a discourse of social equality is striking. When the 2014 Chief Executive, C. Y. Leung, pronounced that 'Democracy would see poorer people dominate the Hong Kong vote,' he not only revealed himself as the arch-capitalist authoritarian (vetted by the People's Republic!) but in effect exposed the liberal democracy movement for their

maniacal focus on electoral rules and Western parliamentarism while having little to say to the poor or working classes.

While narrow in scope—the legal and procedural debate or battle over elections—the 2014 event was political in the sense of being about a political process and two antagonistic demands or sides. We can perhaps leave to one side the Schmittian point about liberalism neutralizing politics and making it a matter of administration, since the political liberals have never had command of the government and they do very much seek power. There was certainly a friend/enemy split in the streets of 2014. Hong Kong is in this sense a political fight over how to administer the society and for whom, curiously turning on pro- or anti-'Beijing,' though at no point do 'the masses' or the six million without property holdings have an adequately representative party. In that sense one can also speak of Hong Kong's politics as still being de-politicized, despite the massive increase in protests since 1997.

But to return to 2014: the protest movement shifted, to what I have called a social as opposed to a political event, or to a substantive democracy movement. 'Democracy,' if it has any meaning at all today outside of the proceduralist and legalistic definition it has been reduced to, is meaningless unless it turns on a rhetoric and politics of real or social as opposed to formal equality, redistributionist or revolutionary, and the general will. Politics has to be dyadic and antagonistic and a struggle over fundamental yet conflicting interests—a contestation of the state and how it is used or not. And if equality and power are to be taken seriously, then the economic realm and class divisions of Hong Kong society have to be at the forefront. As Jodi Dean is fond of reminding us, Goldman Sachs doesn't care if you raise chickens in your back yard, or, if we transpose, HSBC and Big Property don't care if you occupy their freeway for a while. Both Occupy movements, East and West, were welcome outbursts in that they expressed discontent, gave the lie to a 'happy' status quo or non-political 'silent' majority, and exercised free speech. But Hong Kong's fell short of being political, beyond the articulation of a demand for full and direct nomination. That is, again, not to deny the seriousness of the Umbrella moment or the existential or other significances. In a de-politicized conjuncture, and a generally traditional 'Chinese' or conservative society such as Hong Kong, such outbursts are welcome on principle. If nothing else it was a very real outburst of free speech and right to assembly, such rights really only existing in their practice.

My focus here is, as has been obvious, on something other than the creativity or imaginary of the movement: the politics proper of the event, on the meaning of the demands and antagonism between 'Hong Kong' (its opposition, especially) and 'Beijing,' and what this means for understanding politics or the political in the city and more globally. Along these lines, it must also be noted that Hong Kong's Occupy did share one thing with the Occupy movement of Wall Street, USA, and in fact of much recent American social and political movements since the 1960s: a certain 'tyranny of structurelessness,' as feminist intellectual Jo Freeman famously put it. Or more simply, a lack of unified leadership or coherent, articulated organization and exit strategy for the protest leaders and participants. At any rate, end it did after three months.[13]

The immediate aftermath of the movement in this 'politics proper' sense has been, or was, a counter-proposal from Beijing about how to reconstitute that CE selection process. The composition of the 1200-member committee that nominates candidates would have, unfortunately, remained the same. But the threshold/votes needed for getting nominated would be lowered and the number of candidates increased. There would then be a second round of committee voting, and then two or three candidates would be put to a vote by the city in a one-woman one vote, first past the post system. This was put forward to the legislature and was—predictably—firmly rejected by the pan-dem representatives. It is indeed far from a direct nomination system (which, again, actually exists nowhere), and still makes it difficult if not impossible for any oppositional democrat to get elected/nominated by that selection committee. But it was a concession from above the border with Guangdong, and there would have been no good reason *not* to accept it and nonetheless keep right on protesting and demanding for more. But of further note is the small debacle of the so-called loyalist or establishment parties, who had planned a walk-out to prevent a quorum and hence an actual vote/rejection of the compromise measure taking place. This too was botched on their own part (miscommunications), in a sign of just how dysfunctional even the so-called loyalist establishment can be. In fact it must be remembered that there is plenty of blame for bad governance to go around the—quite narrow—Hong Kong political spectrum. Including the benign—but effectively malign—neglect from the mainland.

There *was* considerable pressure city-wide to accept the electoral reform proposal as a small yet practical step toward better 'suffrage.' But the pan-democratic movement (the parties and their real and virtual supporters) has

never been given to compromise, given their essentially faith-based belief in convergence and/or CCP collapse, about which more later. But without this reform entering into law, such as it was, the Occupy/Umbrella movement can be said to have achieved nothing tangible or practicable, much like the Wall Street one. Nothing has improved politically since then, except arguably for the worse: continued political stagnation and even decline in peoples' livelihood (welfare), further economic integration which chiefly benefits the rich and property holding rentier class, and in fact some consolidation of power within the establishment (further controlling university governing councils, legally harassing occupy activists, and so on). Their failure to achieve, arguably even to try to achieve anything practical or measurable, also did not necessarily hurt the pan-democratic movement. Their own view is that it did not; and indeed electorally, the pan-democrats have more or less stayed even in the following legislature elections. The real post-Occupy event was the election of three younger, more stridently 'localist' or even independence-proclaiming candidates. Each of these victors ended up being disbarred for refusing to take their oaths properly and instead mocking them. The two 'Youngspiration' party candidates may fairly be called xenophobic if not frankly racist and right-wing, albeit in a juvenile way. The third candidate from 'Demosisto,' the oddly named new party/grouplet composed of former student leaders, may be fairly called a *de facto* independence party, given their goal of complete autonomy and 'self-determination' for Hong Kong. Strange fruit—the nativists or 'localists' in particular—of a by now 'legendary' Occupy movement. But also one that is entirely predictable given the rise of xenophobic anti-immigrant and general anti-'communist' sentiment in the SAR, before and after that protest, just as much as the hierarchical and exclusionary nature of liberalism. It all points to a deep and, alas, very practical or real impasse, the stakes of which are nothing less than the political future of Hong Kong.

Had that reform proposal been accepted it might have changed the recent, post-occupy CE election and therefore Hong Kong's political system and political culture. David Zweig, a Hong Kong-based political scientist of long-standing, has recently argued that even as constrained as Beijing's proposed new system was, it would have meant that after being approved/screened by the selection committee, those two or three candidates would have had to actually campaign in the city in a far more substantial and interesting way.[14] With somewhere between 40% and 60% of the electorate on average, the democracy-desiring voters would have had to have been addressed, whereas the roughly 30% of the electorate who are 'Beijing-friendly' or pro-government are big enough to command

attention as well. What is more, the two or three candidates would have had to compete for votes from the populace, and not just the elite 1200 of that committee.

What Hong Kong had instead, as with the previous two CE elections, was a largely contentless parade of inanity before the obvious choice all along was elected by a wider margin (current CE Carrie Lam). To be sure, both candidates were unsurprisingly and clearly neo-liberal in their economic orientation (runner up John Tsang is the former financial secretary of the city, and adamantly against government spending and, e.g., social housing). Thus, if what Zweig argues is correct (and his numbers do seem to add up), even on proceduralist democratic grounds, the pan-democratic and anti-Beijing forces achieved nothing so much as de-politicization and a perpetuation of the status quo that they *allegedly* hate as their political enemy. Or are they too not part of the same structure and problem, as if a recording playing on an endless loop. Like the neo-liberal progressives of the USA and Britain, their movement also does nothing to stem the tide of a rising xenophobia and hatred against the mainland and its political system or sovereignty, a reactionary development within the city that can only end badly for tiny Hong Kong.

There is no reason to think that Beijing will offer another counter-proposal for electoral reform, and in fact the new CE, Carrie Lam, has already said that that is off the table for the next five-year election cycle. This speaks to Beijing's as well as Hong Kong's growing impatience not simply and intolerantly of protest, but of the perceived narcissism of the traditional pan-democrats and suffrage-opposition 'movement' in general. Indeed the aftermath of Occupy and the umbrellas as of 2018 and the LegCo system, is that the traditional pan-democratic movement has been somewhat sidelined electorally and lost its veto power.[15] Short of 'Beijing' falling apart entirely in that half decade, the cause of 'civic nomination with universal suffrage'—while pleasing to the ear of a Western-educated viewer—is pretty much the political zombie it always has been in Hong Kong (more on this via the Basic Law later).

If the failure of the opposition in Occupy, in terms of its effect and aftermath, is easy enough to see, how to explain the intransigence of the (liberal) democracy movement in general as a sort of continuous filibustering opposition and, relatedly, a demonstrated, if unprofessed, faith in convergence? This is a question that extends beyond Occupy and traces back to the Hong Kong democracy movement's origins in the colonial era of the 1980s. To understand this is to understand the limits of contemporary

liberalism or neo-liberalism as a 'democratic' or worthy political ideology and movement. I must note here another, contributing explanation or cause for this faith in convergence: Christian faith itself, with its undeniable belief in some form of teleology and Messianism attached to human mortality and a higher being or order. It is no accident that two of the three founding 'fathers' of the Occupy Central movement (law professor Benny Tai and Reverend Chu Yiu-ming) are deeply religious individuals who make much of their faith. Such faith may arguably be the *ur*-force within all convergence thinking, at least in the West or in colonial modernity around the globe. It is worth recalling that religion is more than a mere ideology or belief-system and assorted dogma that is either true or false. It is something akin to a Foucauldian or structural discourse: an apparatus with a long institutional and material history, well before modern notions of progress and political normalcy and development, and that is so fundamental that it speaks to us and helps shape and limit what we can and cannot think. The force of its rhetoric lies precisely in its sublime or moral dimensions and aspirations, a would-be transcendence of even the specifically political world of social forces and antagonisms; convergence thinking is powerful because it speaks to moral duty (and superiority and will to power) and also to transcendence in the face of misery and death. Even Marx meant something like this when he spoke of the 'opium of the masses,' but the point here is that this can and does also inform the allegedly secular world of liberal-democratic protest. Christianity also has a prominent place within Hong Kong and its civil society, just as it had a significant role in the 2014 event.[16] Much of Hong Kong's moral education has long taken this form—that is a religious education in formal (church) and informal terms, in primary and secondary schooling (public and private) as well as in family or private life. Indeed the local, *public* system of schooling in Hong Kong is dominated by Christian schools. This has to be counted as one of the failures of de-colonization.

This all derives from the colonial era, where traditional Chinese moral education was weak and where the mainland's revolutionary path and developments were mostly forbidden subjects or invoked only as nightmares across the border. Two of the four Occupy leaders (one a reverend) are explicit about the Church or 'faith' being a large part of what inspires their activism, and another founder, while not religious, describes it as also being about spiritual values.[17] This rise is a familiar phenomenon in Asia and elsewhere, not least because religion can, as ever, provide resources of hope, existential meaning, and belonging in societies such as Hong Kong

and, increasingly, China, that have little or weak 'moral education' (to adopt a phrase used in Hong Kong) but with real needs for such meaningfulness. There is an obvious homology to be made between faith and convergence, at the level of fantasy and desire and 'righteousness,' in regard to the rise of Christianity in Hong Kong or, for that matter, to mainland Chinese nationalism or patriotism. But the larger question here is not one of faith and morality alone, nor one of the individual leaders' or the participants' individual biographies. Beyond 'faith' feeding into and reproducing 'convergence' thinking, we have to attend to other aspects of Hong Kong's political quagmire, its state of de-politicized politics. Much of this is hard-wired into the SAR's constitution but others aspects have also to do with the legacy of colonial liberalism.

The Basic Law: One Country, Two Systems, No Politics

The genesis of Hong Kong's stagnation dates from the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1985, the mini-constitution or 'Basic Law,' and the general principle of 'one country, two systems' as generally laid out by Deng Xiaoping. That Basic Law document says this:

> The socialist system and policies shall not be practised in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years.

This is a tall order, even if China were not capitalist and thus given to the forces of homogenization and assimilation characteristic of that and 'globalization.'

Which is to say the root of Hong Kong's political and even economic ills are rooted in that historical juncture and in that decision or rather, that *non*-decision to let the god-like forces of the market and ethnic identification, inside and outside of Hong Kong, sort it all out. This is as opposed to politics or the process of the political (the state). Outside of any actual, explicit planning or more detailed, unambiguous policy making before and after the handover—something forbidden by the promise of autonomy or *two* systems—then what the Declaration and Basic Law turn upon is nothing less than a dual and even mutually exclusive 'theory' of convergence: economism and ethnic belonging for the mainland, and

for Hong Kong, a 'free-market' liberal capitalism, itself always global, leading to the *mainland's* as well as Hong Kong's reform or transformation into a normal democratic regime, of both places joining up on what neo-liberal US President Bill Clinton once informed the Chinese was 'the right side of history.'

That handover arrangement in many ways left the colonial system and era intact (merely switching the embodied races and skins of the leading politicians and bureaucrats), even if this was done at the time for entirely pragmatic reasons, with fears of capital flight perhaps chief among them. The mainland's gambit, as done by the utterly pragmatic and nationalistic Deng Xiaoping et al., and as noted in an earlier chapter on liberalism and economism, was simply to 'let the party continue' by maintaining if not escalating 'prosperity' or capital accumulation: Hong Kong can keep being capitalist and 'autonomous' while it somehow still joins the sovereign country/power as something other than a mere neighbor. Hong Kong was to somehow return yet remain untouched and keep its 'system' (a vague word indeed) pristine and autonomous, for a period of 50 years. This was in effect, if not by intent, to buy time for the homogenizing forces of the market to do their work, in China as well as in the enclave city, and for 'brotherhood' or national belonging to kick in. Just as the Liu-Deng rightist or liberal line in favor of economism and 'peace' or stability stood in opposition, in some crucial instances, to that of the Maoist line in favor of 'politics in command,' the Sino part of the Sino-British declaration also indexes a faith in development/economism, a simple pragmatism, and a neutralization of politics and antagonisms. As such the '1c, 2s' principle and much of the Basic Law are actually impossible because they wish to snuff out politics, not deal with them. The resultant documents are deliberately vague—pointedly ambiguous as many such diplomatic or trade texts are—and an act of de-politicization. As if one can have economic and 'capitalist' integration and 'intercourse' between the two places, including rapidly increased immigration from the mainland (always part of the deal), but not have any effects on the putative autonomy of the society or culture. Needless to say, what in Hong Kong is sometimes called 'mainlandization' or even 'colonization' by 'the communists'—all of it easily explicable by the force and centrifugal pull of the Chinese economy and its continued development or expansion—is something that was fully implicit and arguably even obvious from the very beginning of the Sino-British deal-making.

The immediate issue of 2014 and the electoral process ('democracy' as locally defined) overall has been one particular part of the Basic Law, and it is worth quoting in full (emphases added):

> The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be selected by election or through consultations held locally *and be appointed by the Central People's Government.*
>
> The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by *universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.*

Thus the role of the *sovereign* Party-state up north—to have a real role—is clear in the first paragraph, and arguably even in the second's reference to a 'representative committee' that would inevitably include Beijing-friendly business and other constituencies. By election or by consultation, the central government *will* appoint. The rub comes with the second part about universal suffrage and 'in accordance with democratic procedures.' Universal suffrage literally just means that all will vote—precisely what Beijing offered in the counter-Umbrella proposal. And this is what they have long insisted on—that it is *they* who are upholding the Basic Law. From the 'pro' Beijing side, it is the opposition who are violating and endangering it with the civic nomination demand. (The Basic Law invocation game can be played by numerous sides, which is at once the 'genius' and awfulness of the document/agreement.) Needless to say this is entirely unconvincing to the democrats or like-minded, for whom the only legitimate system would be the 'universal' or Western one, that is who insist that there must be 'civic nomination' before the vote. For them, this is precisely what 'in accordance with democratic procedures' means. Indeed it does in much of the world—again with the caveat that some type of direct civic nomination without parties or other obstacles does not exist in any major city or country of the world. Even so, this leaves out the rather large exception of the sovereign, China, which has never had such a system and which defines itself as having its own system and tradition of democracy and governance. It is the PRC that in this instance stands up for difference or particularity, as opposed to the liberal universalism of Hong Kong's opposition.

This debate over the Basic Law is a fascinating battle of interpretations over an ambiguous document (or Article therein). At the level of the text itself—a level that does not actually exist but that literary critics sometimes still like to pretend does—the issue is thoroughly ambiguous and, what is more, undecidable in any objective or empirical sense. This is precisely because the document's language simply *is* ambiguous on the voting Article in particular, and ill-conceived as anything other than an exercise in expedience from the British and Chinese sides, as well as an unspoken statement of faith in an eventual convergence to come (either Sino or British/Free). How does one define what a 'broadly representative committee' is? What 'accords' to 'democratic procedures'? Recalling that representation signifies both picture and proxy, and that it will always therefore be selective, incomplete, open to contestation and the force-fields of power and politics, this fundamental ambiguity cannot be wished or protested away, alas. This cuts both ways—the mainland-identified side (their interpretation) is also unlikely to persuade anyone who desires direct civic nomination, or sees that as something of massive symbolic import. In the tussle over the Article, a far more pressing issue is ignored: the reform of the 'functional constituencies' that favor big business and property developers to the point of their dominating the city and all its people, from foreign domestic workers to the lower middle classes. The latter reform, it is worth saying, would be for more consequential for equality and a legislative politics of redistribution. The fetish for voting and the roles called forth—Defenders of Chinese Tradition versus Freedom Fighters—may be personally gratifying but can also be seen as a sideshow. Such reform is also something that can be demanded by a vibrant and active protest or civic culture (which Hong Kong has) or be LegCo member, without also demanding the one thing they cannot have (direct nomination of an anti-communist).

In the end, the battle over Basic Law interpretations *is* however decided, and decided by the 'camp' with the most power. It is the mainland and its 'loyalists' or local supporters who have the power to make their interpretation count as the correct or true one. That the current opposition groups and individuals will never buy into this matters far less than they, or the mainstream media, would like to admit. To all of the latter, the Beijing government in general, and the Sino-Hong Kong system in particular, lack legitimacy. But this is an instance—to be found in democratic as well as 'illiberal' regimes—where legitimacy matters far less than power and brute fact. The pan-democrats and their ilk (including the

city's activist youth) simply lack power outside of the 'civil society' and certain media and educational circles (where it is strong); taken together, those for 'suffrage,' let alone full autonomy, may not even form a statistical majority in the city, and while many may be said to be prosperous and secure financially, they are far removed from the corridors, conversations, and networks of ruling class power, which in Hong Kong are inevitably capitalist and cross-border in orientation.[18] As is well known in the city, the majority of working class and poorer voters, living in humble and cramped but subsidized flats and with at least access to (an admittedly deteriorating) basic public infrastructure or safety net, regularly vote for some of the Beijing-friendly parties, such as the DAB (Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong); and the rich go another way as well (e.g. the Liberal party). Perhaps both demographics are guilty of a certain 'economism'—or an honest pragmatism within the working class—but in the absence of a real economic agenda and program it is hard to see either bloc moving toward the 'suffragist' cause. This leaves the various democrats now competing for the votes of the lower and 'average' middle-class fractions, including the more Western-identified and liberally educated, as well as the youth vote that is increasingly drawn to the full-on nativist or quasi-independence groups. This, plus the fact that the Legislature is stacked to prevent any clear majority of a single party (only 40 or the 70 total seats are popularly elected) means that the democratic movement—as it is currently composed—can likely never govern at the LegCo level, let alone at the CE or mayoral level.

But all of this, it must be said, is not just about interpretation of a legal document and the power to uphold that interpretation. The other thing underneath the umbrellas was this: the brute fact that 'Beijing' is simply never going to allow the nomination, let alone the election, of clearly anti-communist and/or anti-Party-state democrats. The elite or big dollar class in Hong Kong is not on board with this either (which makes the lack of social democratic discourse in Hong Kong all the more striking). So too for the more recent politicians and activists from the genuinely xenophobic if not clearly racist nativist groups (as opposed to the far more harmless and acceptable 'Hong Kong pride' localists). This is an obvious instance of illiberal China being authoritarian; but it should not be a surprising or even scandalous one. At the risk of personification and banality, one can note that political systems in general tend not to tolerate, let alone dialogue with, social and political movements aimed at that system's ruin or radical transformation. This de facto ban is also given, in so many words, in the ambiguous design of Article 45. But even that document's importance, so

dear to many who came of political age in the later 1980s and 1990s, is greatly over-stated given the power differences that have always in reality been first and foremost. Hong Kong was never going to have an equal seat at the table with Beijing or the PRC as a whole during its period of transition or 'autonomy,' and nor could it. Hong Kong is still well placed to be a conduit for foreign capital, given its roughly Western legal system and English-friendly environment and, in sum, its greater transparency and 'freer' environment for capital. It also the largest offshore yuan hub for mainland money, *which may be precisely why the Party-state, too, wants Hong Kong to remain autonomous.* It is there to legally 'launder' wealth from the mainland. For this reason alone Hong Kong democrats or non-conservatives may want to think through their a priori commitments to autonomy. So too it must be said that 'autonomy' is not a value to be found within the Chinese political culture, let alone the state-systems old and new, be they understood as Confucian or Leninist or other. And as an ethical ideal, it is also not particularly compelling in a modern, globalized world. If 'no man is an island,' as John Dunne put it in the seventeenth century, then no port city is either, be it Dubai or Hong Kong.

It is also no secret, least of all to PRC officials in charge of Hong Kong affairs, that the traditional democracy movement, from its very beginnings with Martin Lee in the late 1980s up to the present, seeks (wishes) the peaceful transformation of the Party-state into a more Westernized ('universal') democracy. That Hong Kong cannot become such a thing without that happening first or simultaneously up North, and that tiny but proud Hong Kong could even lead the way. A nice, even inspiring, liberal universalist sentiment that—in a very different register—could even resonate with the *Communist Manifesto.* To be a Hong Kong democrat, then, is to have a mission, even one beyond your newly or someday-to-be free city. Note the strong sense of exceptionalism here, as if Hong Kong were *that* (American) 'city on a hill,' and note as well as the liberalism bestowed by a colonial/Western educational formation that continues in at least many of the local, elite universities. Moreover, note the faith in convergence. Changing China is *not* an absurd thing to think for Lee and the original democratic generations, precisely because of this odd and oddly secular yet religious, liberal yet conservative, historical yet mythic, faith. This is in many ways a fascinating response to Hong Kong's relative powerlessness. It speaks as well to the fact that it never had a significant independence movement during its 15 decades of colonization. In the face of being weak, tiny, and irrelevant to Britain and to the mainland, excluding the bankers and the rentier class, Hong Kong imagines itself at the leading edge of freedom and the most important place within China.

This does, again, have to do with the Western symbolic power embedded in the city. Even Shanghai has no such pretension.

This desire to change China is hardly a scandal, and is in fact a modern Chinese tradition in itself. But for the mainland it can resonate with the specter of American attempts to contain and constrain China into becoming 'normal' via some type of 'velvet revolution.' The latter specter was indeed invoked during the 2014 protests by the 'mainlandist' press in Hong Kong (e.g. *Wen Wei Po* and *Ta Kung Pao*). And it is undeniable that some groups or entities within Hong Kong's civil society receive funds from the American National Endowment for Democracy (via the US Congressional budget) as well as from, to take a notable example, by Next Media tabloid-tycoon, and arch anti-Beijing anti-communist Jimmy Lai.[19] Even so, however, it would be deeply mistaken to see the protests as something other than a home-grown Hong Kong movement, or to think that there is an actual threat of anything dangerously velvety and soft appearing and encompassing and smothering and transforming the city, let alone the mainland via the city. It is just that for Hong Kong, 'home-grown' is also always global and crisscrossed by many flows of people, money, and goods, which is, again, why it being an historical port 'space' as much as a colonial entrepôt means it cannot be autonomous and never has been. This too cuts both ways: Hong Kong cannot be an autonomously or 'authentically' Chinese/mainland city, and is not one now, due not only to its ethnic and other diversity but to the great majority of its citizens never having lived under the PRC.

At any rate, as far as having 'oppositional' democrats in the fold, in 1984, Deng himself was quite explicit that even Hong Kong 'leftists' (and whatever this meant, he did not like) as well as 'rightists' could serve as elected 'administrators' of Hong Kong—the only 'requirement was they must be patriots, that is, people who love the motherland and Hong Kong.'[20] Lee and most pan-democrats—such as Albert Ho—have fit that well enough, with the exception of the few virulent anti-communist rabble-rousers like 'Long Hair' Leung Kwok-hung and 'Mad Dog' Wong Yuk-man, or arguably the most colonial-elite party in the city, the 'Civic Party' formerly known as the Barristers' Party. This was all allowable—and still is—because of the (perceived) patriotism (or ethnic belonging), which could encompass colonial (Chinese) liberals as well as the odd leftist or rightist and of course the tycoons. But, crucially, also because the local, liberal, democratic faith in convergence was always non-threatening to at least the Deng era apparatchiks because there was no actual or perceived

threat to sovereign Chinese power. In fact for all the lively protesting or 'action' in civil society occupied by the oppositional parties in the broadly defined 'democratic movement' since the 1980s, this was always at another level a decidedly non-political or de-politicized movement. There was simply no way for this civil society movement to actually challenge or take on 'state' or city-wide power. Civil society is itself non-threatening even in 'full' democracies like the United States and Britain, whose publics, for example, vehemently opposed the war on Iraq to no effect whatsoever. What is to be done then? Legislation can be blocked through filibustering, and it usually is by the democrat-dominated LegCo opposition to the CE (to any CE), who have usually managed to secure enough seats to do so. But this just leaves an already iniquitous and—for the propertyless lower middle class or the working class—dire status quo in place. When they filibuster legislation to death, the democrats no doubt see themselves as liberal freedom-fighting heroes. And the CE or government does present bills as an all-or-nothing bundle, similar to the US system: one has to accept the sweet deal for property developers, or mainland business interests, for example, to get the other good deals in public works or new subsidized housing. (Or the government will withdraw the whole bill.) The democrats respond by filibustering, apparently on principle (an anti-government principle if not an anti-state one). But this can also be seen as negligence or worse; at least from the standpoint of governance—of a city and populace desperately needing this as well as economic development and decent jobs—this is at the very least a pyrrhic victory, unless one's own property values are unaffected either way (and they rarely are). Then all of the political theater is just that—performance and 'culture.' For the wealthy of Hong Kong, be they democratic or otherwise—and recalling that, for this SAR, those with land *are* the ruling class—democrat, establishment, nativist, patriotic, what's the difference? Property is the main source of capital, savings (social security, patrimony), and power in the city; it is tightly controlled to stay that way for the rentier class.

From Liberalism to Post-colonialism to Impasse: Sound and Fury in the Enclave

But the traditional democratic movement has weakened in recent years, even if the demand for 'free' voting and a Western electoral system is still live. In fact some of the more recent groups, like the democratic youth's 'Demosisto' party, have called for a veritable constitutional convention before 2047

arrives (when the 'two systems' bit runs out). The desire for all the liberal, formal procedures of democracy is there then, though still little about equality and *social* democracy. This lack of concern for equality is, again, what makes us characterize such 'democratic' groups and politics as decidedly liberal, as opposed to left. But for better and for worse this desire for a new constitution remains sheer fantasy outside of some actual collapse of the mainland system and—which does not necessarily follow—or convergence of both the Hong Kong and mainland systems. Well before Occupy, it has been self-evident that the Party-state in the North is not dissolving or imploding or becoming a 'normal' democracy anytime soon, and likewise is not coming over to the opposition's reading of the Basic Law. This impasse defines Hong Kong politically, and seems irresolvable unless one has faith in convergence (Sinified or liberal). The so-called establishment or loyalist parties also remain ineffectual, partly due to their lack of organization and coherence, but also due to them having no actual connection with the mainland given the latter's commitment to 'two systems' and relative 'autonomy.' Ironically, for all the charges of mainlandization and 'communist take-over' flung about, and notwithstanding the economic integration of the two places (e.g. via tourist industry), the allegedly 'Beijing aligned' establishment seems to receive little if any advice or guidance from the mainland. Or if it does (in some clandestine fashion), then it seems spectacularly inept at carrying that out or defeating their pan-democratic opponents. The establishment simply takes a consistent pro-business line, and at times a pro-Beijing line in defending that one reading of the Basic Law, and consistently opposes the pan-democrats trying to oppose Beijing on all fronts. The problem is not just this 'negligence' from Beijing—which is arguably a major abdication of responsibility—but that the pan-democrats are themselves just as much part of the establishment.

But while the traditional opposition has always been tolerated, much has changed in Hong Kong since the first post-handover decade, and even since Occupy. It is as if Hong Kong is finally having its anti-colonial moment, after its return to what Deng Xiaoping—at a great distance from Hong Kong—referred to as 'the motherland.' Just as any rational hope for the PRC's collapse or convergence has faded, the SAR has also witnessed a marked rise in a not merely 'localist' or 'proud' Hong Kong identity—which has long been around, if also on the rise—but in an exclusivist and xenophobic and 'anti' one. The xenophobia is by now well documented academically, if also underrepresented by, say, venues such as *The New York Times* and mostly ignored by Hong Kong studies.[21] Note that by xenophobic here we do not simply

refer to anti-tourist sentiment or criticisms of the mainland in general, but rather to, for example, the 'anti-locust' media campaign, where mainlanders were literally depicted as locusts invading Hong Kong. The other salient example would be the 'anti-smugglers' protests against mainlanders crossing the border to buy goods such as milk powder and then returning to sell it at a higher rate ('parallel trading'). The question of Hong Kong's identity is an academic cottage industry in itself, second only to the quest to prove that there is such a thing as a unique and wonderful 'Hong Kong culture' that makes it different from the mainland and, presumably, everywhere else. For our purposes here, the two salient points to make are that the rise of a, or any specifically, Hong Kong identity has indeed been a major sociological phenomenon, well before and after the Occupy and Umbrella event. So has been the rise of a more assertive or confident mainland Chinese identity, as compared to the somewhat naïve or arguably 'colonial' Occidentalism or 'Western fever' of the immediate post-Mao period. But two, it is the rise of a specifically separatist or 'independence' or full 'autonomist' *political* identity that is the most significant aspect—for our purposes—of this more general process. By the latter I mean simply one, fairly obvious thing: not only are there some actual, explicit calls for independence in the city (e.g. by xenophobic groups like Civic Passion or Youngspiration) but that even the claim for full legal and legislative let alone a 'social' autonomy (which is clearly also what many desire) is simultaneously a claim for political independence. It would be required to realize the autonomy even in narrowly legislative terms.

All of this demands much more space than we have in this concluding section. The rise of explicit and de facto independence 'movements' and sentiments, in a former British colony that never had them before, is fascinating in itself. While they do not pose a threat to Chinese sovereignty in any substantive way, they may nonetheless continue for some time given the—perceived and therefore real—lack of soft power and even legitimacy of mainland rule. In so far as it can even said to be ruling other than through tourism, immigration, and skyrocketing property values. The turn toward independence, in rhetoric if not in reality, has also upped the ante of what it means to oppose Beijing from Hong Kong. The mainland- and local elite are unhappy with it, and it certainly raises—for understandable yet highly misleading reasons—the specter of national security and not merely feelings of belonging or not. If the separatist or full, political autonomy movement speaks of colonialism from up North, the PRC clearly sees this, in turn, as a question of Western-sponsored (or inspired)

imperialism in itself. At the same time this all reveals once again the impasse of the political conjuncture and the limits of a now anti-colonial liberalism.

One way to quickly plot this development is through the rise and eclipse of the 'Hong Kong Autonomy Movement,' which refers to a specific group and social media presence inspired by a local public intellectual, Horace Chin Kan Wan, circa 2011. Both are still around (Chin recently lost an electoral bid for LegCo). But the central demand for autonomy—to a greater degree than the traditional pan-democrats—and the claims for re-colonization by Beijing have become more popular and dispersed across the city. There are by now a number of groups, activists, and even politicians who view the mainland as an alien, colonizing power that is hell-bent on negating Hong Kong's autonomy, identity, and so on. Local undergraduates speak and write of it consistently now in their university magazines (much to the consternation of the previous CE, who has tried to re-exert his power over university governance). While autonomy is nothing if not a liberal (and individualist) conceit, philosophically and otherwise, their rhetoric is notoriously illiberal if not explicitly xenophobic. 'Civic Passion' is the most notable party in this regard, and one of its members even won a recent LegCo seat, at the expense of one traditional pan-democratic candidate (Mr. Albert Ho). Two other arch nativists, from the post-Occupy 'Youngspiration' as noted earlier, also won seats; they then lost them almost immediately by refusing to properly take their LegCo oaths. They chose to instead curse the mainland and refer to Hong Kong independence. Other revealing group names include 'Hong Kong Indigenous' and 'Hong Kong Resurgence Order.' The rise of independence rhetoric is indeed striking since the end of the Occupy movement, seen as a logical next step for many frustrated by the failure of that event. The rise of the xenophobia and anti-immigration stances is unfortunate for all concerned, if also familiar to any student of contemporary globalization (a better way to see the PRC's 'colonization' of its own territory). From a still larger perspective, a liberal-democratic, less xenophobic group like 'Demosisto' can also be placed within an expanded 'autonomy movement' that seeks a de facto independence without necessarily calling it that. Their proposals to hold referenda on self-determination and draft a new constitution for the city are not only, say, dubious but just as clearly show the independence-by-any-other-name sentiment.[22] In terms of practical politics, of what is to be done according to their own views, the explicit anti-colonialism and independence claims of the full-on nativists like 'Civic Passion' are homologous to the newer democratic groups that speak of

'self-rule' for Hong Kong by Hong Kong people (whomever this might all include). But as any student of post-colonialism would know, these last two phrases indeed derive from the national liberation, de-colonization struggles of the last century. The claim for self-rule only makes sense if you are ruled by foreigners. Such groups stop short of calling for independence for at least two reasons: it angers Beijing as well as the Hong Kong powers that be, and so amounts to putting a target on one's back; but it is also an unpopular if not laughable opinion in the city at large.

The clamor for 'real' Hong Kong autonomy/independence has many roots, including the phenomenon of what we usually call nationalism, here transposed to nativism and a city-based (if at times uncivil) imagined community. This goes beyond mere pride in one's city or hometown, such as exists in most places. Hong Kong certainly has that, and moreover has since the 1970s (in particular) a significant and specifically Hong Kong identity that is ready-made to be taken up by individuals who have no real, other option (other generations being more connected to the mainland or the British Empire). But note that even this 1970s 'origin' comes after the crushing of the brief cultural revolutionary period in Hong Kong, or in other words, a reaction formation against the radicalism, including anti-colonialism, of the mainland.[23] Thus, Hong Kong identity, even or perhaps *especially* of the more politically civic (pan-democrat/suffragist) kinds, has to do in this context with a colonial liberalism. It not only makes a classically liberal political demand ('free' elections, freedom or autonomy from the other, negative liberty) but also draws on colonial discourse. The valorisation of Western style liberal democracies (generally in massive crisis in the actual West) as against despotic communist rule is already a part of this. That is, it is a part of a Cold War-colonial intellectual inheritance that assumes not only the evil of communist officials but also the unfreedom and abnormality of the (mainland) Chinese citizens/victims. Hong Kong, as represented by Chin Wan or by more mainstream thinkers, sees itself as free of this unfreedom, as an almost Western/universal country in political terms. But Hong Kong identity—let us call it the intellectual political identity or 'culture'—also turns on knowledge about China and Chinese politics as well as about Hong Kong itself and colonialism. It draws on this and perpetuates it. To see this, we need to briefly unpack Chin Wan's popular book from 2011, *On the Hong Kong City-State*.[24] Chin constructs Hong Kong not as colonial territory handed back peacefully and happily but—thanks to a mostly hands-off or elite-collaborative governance under the British, as well as their promulgation of 'traditional local culture' to ward off mainland patriotism—as a de facto, mostly autonomous

city-state. Whether by intent or by happenstance, Hong Kong was mostly autonomous under the British, as compared to the far bigger and—until recently—far more consequential colonialisms in Asia and elsewhere. To be fair, other work suggests that at least the colonial governors often felt that way, as London often had far more pressing concerns in its empire—such as de-colonization movements!—to contend with.[25] As for the mainland and Mao, they were not in any hurry to get Hong Kong back, something they surely could have done militarily from 1949 onward, and were content to leave Hong Kong be and with a relatively porous border at that.[26] (It was also a useful source of foreign currency and would have been an additional headache to incorporate; Hong Kong was and is, from the standpoint of state-level realpolitik, just not as important as Taiwan.) In sum, Hong Kong is a mini-country, a mostly autonomous and 'free' one with its own language, laws, mini-constitution (including the Basic Law later on), passport, culture, and so on. It is also vastly superior to modern China, which has destroyed the traditional culture and been degraded by the communists.

What is more, this de facto autonomy and unique history is somehow the way forward for Hong Kong now. Insist on your autonomy. Foster, embrace, proclaim your local, native Hong Kong identity; quit identifying as Chinese (despite your superior and more authentic Chineseness), and so cut off any patriotism at the roots. China is China, unfortunately for them, and Hong Kong is Hong Kong. If you make it in China's interest to just leave you alone, insisting on autonomy rather than independence, those practical 'communist-colonizers' will do so. This again speaks to the non-difference between self-rule or full autonomy and de facto independence. But for Chin and many of the general opposition to the mainland, this is somehow different. Chin also argues elsewhere that Hong Kongers form their own *ethnic* group, as distinct from mainlanders, in another paradoxical and morbidly fascinating if incoherent response to contemporary Han or nationalist chauvinism coming from north of the border. Such a body of public intellectual work as Chin's (admittedly of more interest than many mainstream pundits in the city) and the rise of nativism in general are arguably due to the underdevelopment of the political culture (and system) of Hong Kong. By this I mean its lack of awareness about how the mainland system operates and what that intellectual political culture is, as well as about how such 'eff you' messages—the nativists' inflamed rhetoric—might be perceived by the elite and ordinary Chinese of the north. That too is ultimately a historical condition stemming from the colonial past and the preaching of Hong Kong exceptionalism.

This 'autonomism,' then, marks a clear break from the pan-democratic dream of changing China, even if it is equally an exercise in wish-fulfillment. Chin Wan and the youth movements are quite critical of the pan-democratic establishment, and see them as having accomplished little other than their own careers. For Chin and the Hong Kong Autonomy Movement, it is time to wake up and focus even more on Hong Kong's difference from China. More recently Chin has eviscerated the holiest of sacred cows in Hong Kong, at least after the integrity of the Basic Law: the annual June 4 commemoration of the Tiananmen, 1989, repression. The global significance of that event is said to be that it is the only place 'on Chinese soil' where that happens—a rather striking contradiction if Hong Kong is not really a part of China except by name. (Similarly, Hong Kong is one of the few places 'on Chinese soil' where imprisoned dissident Liu Xiaobo was relatively well known and respected.) Chin, as he had done earlier with the recent death of Li Wangyang while in custody (a former mainland 1989 dissident), simply asks Hong Kong democrats why they care so much and identify with people who are not their own, and whom they ordinarily do not seem to like or respect. 'How close were you to Li?,' he asks. It is a good and radical (i.e. root-seeking), if obviously rude question in this context. It is worth recalling that that Beijing event took place well before the youth of Hong Kong (and China) was conceived. The rejection of June 4 and thus mainland identification have been popular with Hong Kong youth, though some student groups have also decided to hold their own, smaller and alternative commemorations on the same date. Chin's point is again one of a wake-up call: If Hong Kong is Hong Kong, and not China, then 1989 and June 4 should matter much less to it. Though ironically the perceived irrelevance of 1989 is nowhere more obvious than in the mainland itself! This too is part of the general rejection of the pan-democrat parties, who have, it must also be said, long used that annual event as their most important day for fund-raising and for associative meaning purposes.

It may fairly be said that the best-selling Chin Wan certainly and many other groups like Civic Passion and Youngspiration are part of a rising illiberalism in the enclave. This will be fairly obvious to any observers of the anti-locust campaign, the screaming protests against 'parallel traders' or 'smugglers,' even the resurrection of the British-era flag in some protests, and so on. But in fact these are largely still liberal political formations to the extent that they make coherent political demands at all. They want their rule of law adhered to, including new legislation, and are essentially rights-based thinkers; it is just that they want to take some

rights away from others (a Hong Kong for Hong Kong people sentiment). They are not anti-capitalist but far more likely—in standard liberal Hong Kong fashion—to point to how crony capitalism distorts real free-market capitalism, which is a fair and good thing by definition/faith.

The plea for independence—sure to fall on deaf ears more often than not, even in Hong Kong—can further be read as a rejection of the inherited strain of convergence thinking. China is so awful in general, and the communists so powerfully entrenched (as if there were a rival party to begin with!) that neither changing it nor expecting it to converge into normalcy is feasible. Independence or full autonomy is the only possible solution, as Hong Kong cannot change China and it shouldn't even try. Despite the impossibility of such 'solution,' the rejection of the desire to change the mainland may well be a healthy development for Hong Kong's political culture at least in the long run. Leaving aside the undeniable nativism and even racism of many of the assorted 'localists' and/or independence seekers, there is in this a much more realistic assessment of the political balance of forces; of the actual as opposed to the merely 'Western symbolic' power embedded in Hong Kong. Chin Wan and others are aware that neither the USA nor the UK is going to stand up for Hong Kong except in the odd speech here and there. (Again, Chin is not for independence.) Demosisto's young Joshua Wong, on the other hand, has followed the Dalai Lama's lead in befriending even right-wing anti-CCP politicians in the US government (e.g. Marco Rubio and Nancy Pelosi, among others).

To be sure the autonomy movement does not point to a hitherto unknown or otherwise brilliant secret to fending off mainland influence on Hong Kong—the growing influence and mediation of its present and future social realities and economy. These movements, while poised as the successors to the pan-democrats of days gone by, are not in a position to break the political impasse or quagmire of Hong Kong. As noted earlier, the Basic Law itself—which few want to change, aside from Chin Wan types of nativists—largely prevents this, and the rejection of China's concession to the Umbrella protests does not help either. But beyond this, there is not only the immigration of mainlanders who are used to living under actual Chinese rule, as well as the mainland-identified elite and the Hong Kong working class. There is also the brute reality of the economic base tying the two places together, of which the super-structural aspects of the law, the electoral system, the cherished identities, and lived experiences of being authentically or 'purely' a Hong Kong person are merely players

on this larger, basic stage. Hong Kong simply cannot be autonomous in the ways it has been imagined by the political opposition and culture to date, and as was perceived to be the meaning of 'one country, two systems.' Its economic autonomy as a small island territory of mostly rock, one that lost its manufacturing base decades ago to Guangdong proper, is a foregone conclusion. Hong Kong produces almost nothing aside from tourist and financial services and rentier capital. Even its highly ranked universities are inordinately small and unfortunately held back from expanding.

But the vision of a *political* autonomy for Hong Kong fares no better. The mainland as sovereign power simply will not allow it. As noted, the PRC even sees itself—perhaps cynically, perhaps genuinely—as already adhering to the Basic Law and the 'two systems' principle in so far as these things actually matter (which is arguably not very far in general). *Cultural* autonomy—if there is such a thing—may actually be feasible, for example, around the use of Cantonese and traditional characters, protection for the movie industry, all the traditional festivals, the Christian churches, the affirmations of Hong Kong identity (even to the point of superiority and chauvinism), or in sum all manner of ideological permutations short of an explicit or otherwise obvious declared claim or movement toward *political* independence (including the desire to elect anti-communist or anti-PRC politicians). There is no question that this last unspoken but obvious limitation is illiberal. And one might argue that cultural autonomy can be tolerated precisely because it doesn't matter politically or pose any threat to the rule of capital and capitalists. This is a standard if arch Marxist response to 'culturalism' with more than a grain of truth to it; but it must also be said that culture—as ideology, as a 'whole way of life'—matters a great deal subjectively and existentially. All the more reason, then, to advocate for this on democratic or other grounds and to wean one's self off of the ideology of liberalism, if this is possible.

Even Hong Kong's one great advantage—freer if also less ideologically diverse speech than in the mainland, by far—could be and in fact has been largely protected so far.[27] But as for political autonomy: highly unlikely short of that fantasy of convergence. Thus, that rejection of convergence thinking as evinced by the independence and full 'autonomist' groups may in the end be an initial step toward a more functional governance for the SAR, even before 2047. The impossibility of that demand, now made explicit for the first time (de facto independence aka full autonomy) and likely to fade away, may lead to a more realistic assessment, confrontation,

and negotiation with Beijing. Protest and the streets will remain crucial, as they are in all political societies, to keep the state in check. But so is realism. If politics is the art of the possible, as the old cliché goes, then Hong Kong's political culture may become more fruitfully and actually politicized. That politicization, ironically enough, began in earnest after 1997 after the seeming or merely nominal end of colonialism. But an *effective* politicization, and the development of one or more social movements that make real, not merely performative demands on the state, awaits. Such a scenario has been held in check by the fantasies of autonomy on the Hong Kong side (by its opposition) and those of a peaceful economism/developmentalism in the mainland sense. But these have reached their limits.

To be sure this qualified optimism for Hong Kong's political future—that it is to have a political future and a more livable and real society—all presumes that Beijing is actually listening to Hong Kong's discontent and unhappiness, and willing to step in and get things done, despite being hamstrung by the Basic Law and '1c, 2s' themselves. And despite being deeply invested in the tycoon and elite business classes. This is of course a large assumption. The liaison office has been especially discouraging in this regard, with one official (before Occupy) even proclaiming that redistribution of wealth in Hong Kong had gone too far and one cannot forget the rich, capitalist class. As the legal chief of the central government's liaison office in Hong Kong put it in his (and the C.E.'s) case against direct nomination: 'The business community is in reality a very small group of elites in Hong Kong who control the destiny of the economy in Hong Kong. If we ignore their interests, Hong Kong capitalism will stop [working].'[28] This statement is, one again, a textbook example of what economism and market liberalism have become within the Party-state and its avatars. With knowledge of the real conditions of Hong Kong like this (it is a decaying city with runaway prices and negligent governance at best), it is clear that the Party-state needs to clean its own house before it faces up to the real SAR.

But as is well known, the central government *will* respond to protest and looming crises if forced or in effect enabled to (the Wukan protests of 2011, analyzed in the next chapter, are one such example). This means that Hong Kong will simply have to enter the arena of 'righteous resistance' broadly defined and appeal to the Communist Party-state to fix its problems. This includes protesting and speaking out against the authoritarian and stridently pro-business officials in the Hong Kong-mainland

liaison office and in the Party in general, and certainly against its own local political establishment (which includes the pan-democrats and now the localists).

Rather than seeing this as a left or right step—one wonders if this distinction is meaningful in a political culture like Hong Kong that lacks a discourse of social equality and substantive democracy—it makes more sense to see it as a step northward, and toward the future. The present is bleak, dictated by the forces of economism and de-politicization. But there is also no chance of convergence. That Hong Kong will 'authentically' become part of China in 2047 (the official end of 'one country, two systems'); that it is already economically, culturally, and socially integrated in many ways, and for better and worse; that tomorrow it will only be more so: all of this cannot be denied if we are to retain any semblance of realism in thinking through Hong Kong politically.[29] And thinking politics without some type of realism, critical or otherwise, is a merely academic exercise in the pejorative sense. One needs to reckon with the brute facts that Beijing is not going to cede political autonomy to Hong Kong and that the city is not going to have an equal seat at the table with the nation. So too the mainland government's decisive role in the impasse needs to be critically analyzed. The Basic Law, colonial liberalism understood as proceduralist 'democracy,' faith in convergence, and economism/market forces understood as a cure-all politics: these have all reached their limits and produced only an impasse. To date, 'Beijing'—which is to say the power holders and liaison office in charge of Hong Kong-China—is content to let the market or in other words capital and cross-border collusions hold sway and force a kind of de facto 'autonomous' status quo. An unprincipled peace indeed.

This impasse could very well last for another generation or three, until such time as 2047 and the technically separate systems are moot. But sooner or later Hong Kong's democrats—and others—will have to start their own long march out of the colonial era's borrowed time. They too will have to start a long march into and through the admittedly, currently 'illiberal' mainland Chinese institutions and political culture. This would involve two basic affronts to current, dominant sensibilities: Hong Kong's own powerful and sense of exceptionalism, its inherited sense of liberal superiority to all those 'other Chinese cities' on the one hand, but an actual, political challenge to the mainland's drive to de-politicize society through neo-liberal development or economism on the other.[30]

Notes

1. Two useful and widely read historical texts on Hong Kong are Steven Tsang, *A Modern History of Hong Kong* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), and John M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007). An excellent overall study of the SAR's recent politics up through 2004 is the collection, *Remaking Citizenship in Hong Kong: Community, nation and the global city*, Agnes S. Ku and Ngai Pun, eds. (London: Routledge Curzon, 2004). For the true basis of power and domination in Hong Kong, namely, by capital and a cartel-like property market (and it overlaps clearly with mainland capitalists), see Leo F. Goodstadt, *Poverty in the Midst of Affluence: How Hong Kong Mismanaged its Prosperity* (Hong Kong University Press, 2013) and Alice Poon's classic, surveying the system from the British onwards, *Land And The Ruling Class In Hong Kong* (Second Edition. Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing, 2011).
2. Chapter 1, Article 5 of the Basic Law text notes that Hong Kong will keep its 'capitalist system and way of life unchanged for 50 years,' and China will not impose its 'socialist' one. This is the clearest, explicit legal statement backing up Deng's 1c, 2s remark. If China was not fully capitalist in the 1980s—and certainly the breaking up of the commune system in 1983 marks the end of Maoist economics—it is much closer to it now, which radically undercuts the very idea that there are two systems, in political-economic terms. The absence of Marxism in Hong Kong's intellectual political culture is felt acutely here. See the city government's website for The Basic Law full text: http://www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/chapter_1.html. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017.
3. Though this too may be fading, and there are no doubt more English speakers in, say, Zhejiang or Guangdong province than in Hong Kong. For fears of English slipping in Hong Kong, see, for example, Victor Fung Keung, 'Declining English standard hurts HK,' in *The China Daily*. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2012-11/01/content_15862375.htm. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017.
4. See John M Carroll's history of collaborative colonialism, *Edge of Empires: Chinese Elites and British Colonials in Hong Kong*, 6. (Harvard University Press, 2009).
5. As the noted Hong Kong studies professor Lui Tai-lok aptly asks in the July 15, 2015, *Hong Kong Economic Journal*: 'What is the use of the pro-establishment camp?.' http://www.ejinsight.com/20150715-what-is-use-pro-establishment-camp/. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017. Lui's work on the middle class of Hong Kong is also germane here, though as I try to argue the complicity of the more politically liberal and active voices of the oppo-

sition—also overwhelmingly middle class or above—also helps produce the de-politicized present in Hong Kong. See Lui, 'Rear-guard Politics: Hong Kong's Middle-class'(*The Developing Economies*, XLI-2 (June 2003): 161–183).

6. I have not yet had a chance to read the promising but forthcoming collection edited by Wai-man Lam and Luke Cooper, *Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong: Localism after the Umbrella Movement*, which includes an afterword by movement leader and law professor Benny Benny Tai Yiu Ting (London: Routledge, 2018).
7. See, for example, the failed attempts to work the Tiananmen 1989 and May 4, 1919, analogies in America's liberal magazine, *The Nation*, in a notably superficial 2014 piece by historians Jeffrey Wasserstrom and Denise Ho, 'What Occupy Can Learn from History.' https://www.thenation.com/article/what-hong-kongs-occupy-movement-can-learn-history/. Accessed Nov. 21, 2017.
8. See in particular the essay by Pang Laikwan, 'Civil Disobedience and the Rule of Law: Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement' (*Verge: Studies in Global Asias* 2.1 2016: 170–192), which analyzes a putative, highly promising turning point in Hong Kong's history marked by Occupy, due to the 'emotive embedding' and 'intersubjective factors' clearly displayed in the sites of the occupy movement. One can certainly agree with the emotional importance of the movement for most involved, and with the importance of emotion and affect in general. But as will be obvious I am here working with a different understanding of what the political and politics are, and presumably 'democracy.' Imagined communities are important but are not the same thing as actual, institutionalized communities who can deploy organized power or act in the political sphere. Similarly, nationalism and the nation-state are different entities.
9. This is also the place to note that there was a much, much smaller yet long-lasting Occupy Central movement in 2011, that was clearly anti-capitalist and more along the lines of the Occupy Wall Street movement. See the essay by Liu Shih Ding, 'The new contentious sequence since Tiananmen,' (*Third World Quarterly* 36.11 2015: 2148–2166).
10. In my own view that analysis is still all about liberalism and the law, since democracy on my account (e.g. following Rousseau and Marx) has to be about mass rule, economic equality, and the general will.
11. See the brief article, 'Legalistic and Utopian: Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement,' by Sebastian Veg in the erstwhile, self-professed 'flagship journal of the Western left' (*The New Left Review* 92 March–April 2015). https://newleftreview.org/II/92/sebastian-veg-legalistic-and-utopian. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017. Rather than being pejoratives, 'legalistic' and 'formal democracy' are published without comment or counter-balance.

12. See their *Labor Of Dionysus: A Critique of the State-Form* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994).
13. Subsequent months and years have seen arrests and jail terms (circa 2017) for some former protesters and organizers (e.g. Joshua Wong) though also the convictions of several police who beat one 2014 activist. There have been several, much smaller protests since (as there were before), and even a notable and violent riot, aka the 'Fishball Revolution' in Mongkok during the 2016 lunar new year. The violence was one way and absorbed by the police, it must be said. As of 2018 one 'fishball' rebel and founder of a local nativist independence party, Edward Leung, has received a seven year jail sentence for violence. The rise of localism as against the mainland, as noted earlier, has escalated since the Occupy/Umbrella protests. But nativism and localism have been unmistakable mainstream features of Hong Kong for decades, and the more xenophobic outburts have also to do with rapdily expanding mainland tourism, pressure on local social services, and so on. There is no question that Hong Kong is suffering under a hyper-capitalist and poorly managed integration with the mainland, though this is less about the lack of voting and some vague 'freedom' than people's livelihood being endangered by local as well as mainland and foreign elites, i.e. capital. The nostalgic romanticization of 2014 is well underway, as if pre-ordained.
14. See his March 24, 2017, article in the *South China Post*, 'The chief executive election Hong Kong could have had.' http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2081575/chief-executive-election-hong-kong-could-have-had. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017.
15. For updates on the 2018 election cycles, see the South China Morning Post. http://www.scmp.com/topics/legislative-council-election-2018. Accessed April 1, 2018.
16. See, for example, Chan Shun-hing, 'The Protestant community and the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong' (*Inter-Asia Cultural Studies* 16.3 2015: 380–395).
17. See the 'Voice of America' report to this effect, 'Hong Kong Protest Leaders Recall Spiritual Motivation' http://www.voanews.com/a/hong-kong-protest-leaders-recall-spiritual-motivation/3027178.html. Accessed Nov. 21, 2017. See also *Theological Reflections on the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement*, eds. Justin K. H. Tse and Jonathan Y. Tan (New York Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).
18. The statistical question here is important and yet I know of no data or polls that address it in a substantial way. Most surveys done by, for example, HKU's 'public opinion program' duck this question by dwelling obsessively on identity crises around Chineseness or Hong Kongness. Both the establishment and the opposition may not want to really know, for different reasons, how much the majority of people really care about suffrage as opposed to financial precarity. Compounding the majority opinion ques-

tion are, of course, the British functional constituencies and the absence of a direct one-person, one-vote system for what is, after all, still just a small city by Chinese standards.

19. See the NED's own admission by way of denying a connection to the Umbrella protests. https://www.ned.org/the-national-endowment-for-democracy-and-support-for-democracy-in-hong-kong/. Accessed Dec. 1, 2017.
20. Deng's speeches on Hong Kong are readily available online, and a great insight into his mentality in general. This one from 1984 is 'Maintain Prosperity and Stability in Hong Kong.' http://en.people.cn/dengxp/vol3/text/c1250.html
21. For an extremely well detailed analysis, see Barry Sautman and Yan Hairong, *Localists and 'Locusts' in Hong Kong: Creating a Yellow-Red Peril Discourse* (Maryland Monograph Series in Contemporary Asian Studies, no. 2. 2015).
22. See the group's statement on popular sovereignty and referenda here: https://www.demosisto.hk/article/details/46. Accessed Nov. 28, 2017.
23. On the riots see Gary Ka-wai Cheung, *Hong Kong's Watershed: the 1967 Riots* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009) and Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009).
24. See his *Xianggang Chengbanglun. (City-State Theory of Hong Kong)* (Hong Kong: Enrich Publishing, 2011). For an excellent review of Chin's ideas, see Tommy Cheung's 'Father of Hong Kong Nationalism? A Critical Review of Wan Chin's City-state Theory' (*Asian Education and Development Studies* 4.4 2015: 460–470). Chin Wan works primarily in Chinese, but his writings are frequently translated in part by his followers, often by Mr. Chapman Chen, and are readily available on Facebook and other fora on the Internet. One should also note that Chin's views seem to be changing in light of even more extreme nativism, and he insists that he does not call for Hong Kong independence, just its more or less full/complete autonomy. As noted earlier, this is a distinction that makes no difference. But see Alex Lo's column in the April 28, 2017, *South China Post*, 'Horace Chin, 'father of localism,' draws red line against secession.' http://www.scmp.com/comment/insight-opinion/article/2091282/horace-chin-father-localism-draws-red-line-against-secession. Accessed Dec. 1, 2017.
25. See the works by Tsang and Carroll, note 1 above.
26. For an argument that China deliberately stopped the British from granting Hong Kong independence *a la* Singapore (and which assumes British good intentions), see the discussion of recent archival documents by Gwynn Guilford, 'The secret history of Hong Kong's stillborn democracy' (at the news outlet *Quartz*, 2014). https://qz.com/279013/the-secret-history-of-hong-kongs-stillborn-democracy/. Accessed Dec. 1, 2017.

27. This may seem rather counter-intuitive to anyone following the recent arrests of tabloidesque (and, again, virulently anti-communist) publishers who were based in Hong Kong. See the *South China Post*—a Hong Kong newspaper—for background (http://www.scmp.com/topics/hong-kong-bookseller-disappearances). But it must also be said that the accused are accused of violating mainland law on or in the mainland (e.g. selling their books there, via Hong Kong post). The point here is not that Hong Kong has free speech in any case (which strictly speaking exists nowhere), but that it is markedly freer, including on campuses and in political fora online or in various buildings. One of the most rational fears in the city is that such relative freedom or autonomy will be squandered by deeply tendentious and implausible calls for independence.
28. See the report and interviews with then-C.E. during the initial weeks of the Occupy/Umbrella movement, 'CY Leung: "Democracy would see poorer people dominate Hong Kong vote."' October 21, 2014, *South China Morning Post*. The quote here from mainland official and lawyer Wang Zhemin dates from the weeks prior to the movement. http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1621103/cy-leung-democracy-would-see-poor-people-dominate-hong-kong-vote. Accessed Dec. 4, 2017.
29. I return to this question of realism and politics in the concluding chapter. For a contrasting view to mine, one that draws on Vaclav Havel, see Hui Po-Keung and Lau Kin-Chi, '"Living in truth" versus realpolitik: limitations and potentials of the Umbrella Movement' (*Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 16.3 2015: 348–366).
30. As this book goes to press I must also note again that in recent by-elections for the empty seats from those disbarred localist candidates (who won in the aftermath of the umbrellas), the democratic bloc has lost their veto power. This may spell the end of the democracy-as-filibustering mode of politics for the liberals/opposition, which in the long run can only be a good thing as Hong Kong attempts to transition away from being a failed city-state.

CHAPTER 5

Wukan!: Democracy, Illiberalism, and Their Vicissitudes

Hong Kong's democracy, localist, and nativist movements (and assuming these are indeed three groups rather than one), before and after their opening up by the umbrellas, arrived at the same old dead end of political impasse, which is to say at a status quo victory for the property-owning class. This may have even been the point: the point is to participate in the 'civil society' and demand that which you cannot have, while waiting for the implosion or liberal-democratic convergence of the mainland, or you at least wait for the next opportunity to do it all over again.[1] The earlier, 2011 'Wukan Uprising' that took place 120 kilometers to the east makes for an interesting, resonant comparison in the analysis of impasse, and the limits and failures of liberalism and economism, or in other words the de-politicization of politics through the market and 'growth' as much as by sheer force or repression. This chapter presents a basic narrative of the rise and fall of the Guangdong villagers' protests over land seizures and for justice and 'democracy,' before turning to an attempt to mine their meaning for politics more generally. There are two political bottoms lines right now, in effecting political change and contesting or bending the government in some reformist or otherwise progressive way. But these exist, as in Hong Kong and as in much of the world, in a context of impasse, or a political conjuncture defined in no small part by the triumph of de-politicization and the power or rule of capital and money. But if this

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is a dark period for politics around the globe, it is—contra liberalism old and new—in some ways still more, not less, promising in China as compared to other places such as the USA and even Hong Kong.

One, protests have to triangulate the 'foreign' liberal and native illiberal narratives, with the former being an absolutely crucial (if academically unrecognized) move to make. It is not as if the fourth and fifth estates of the media, old and new, are going away, nor their global presence even within a strongly policed and thoroughly Chinese-speaking mainland field. Needless to say, this contention with liberal, Cold War or otherwise normative, liberal, Western discourse is only a problem for China and perhaps other parts of the developing or the former Third World countries. Westerners do not have this problem. The latter bottom line, the working with the tradition of 'rightful resistance' or expressing a critical loyalty to the Party-state while pursuing your specific or 'real' demands and goals, is likewise a Chinese problem but can also be seen as a more universal or global political condition: one has to work within the system in some fashion or other, as opposed to occupying a symbolic or utopian space somehow outside of one's real conditions of existence and one's inherited situation. On a smaller scale, this can even be seen as what the Bernie Sanders supporters in the last US presidential election had to do—work within the existing electoral Party-state system in the hopes of having any effect at all. A gambit by no means guaranteed to succeed, but at the present time the best chance of realizing one's goals and political aims. What is clearly more 'Chinese' or PRC-specific here—again one must recall that politics or the political is never universal in their actual, particular manifestations—is not only having to counter Western liberalism but to do so while inhabiting a currently illiberal Communist Party-state context defined against the former but also mandating an end to politics in the name of stability and economism. This is all, in sum, the first political bottom line.

The second one is simpler if more an immovable object: that political economy is fundamental, and that without addressing that substantively and directly both at the local *and* national levels, all 'democratic' or other protest victories will be hamstrung, limited in scope and in duration. This is true even if such protests are properly and narrowly focused on, say, specific land seizures or electoral laws (as in the Hong Kong SAR). This may sound platitudinous, and there is admittedly no shortage of essays in, say, cultural or post-colonial studies arguing for a return to some type of

Marxism or political economy. But the problem with platitudes is not that they are false (they are usually correct) but that they are so obvious as to carry little weight. What we will see in the case of Wukan, however, is precisely the limits of democratic or other politics in the face of the rampant developmentalism or economism of the current PRC; this is where the weight of the political-economic claim I am making is, and where the heavy lifting must take place in the future. Emphatically, economic struggles like those in Wukan and elsewhere in China—around labor exploitation, land seizures, and the like—thus also have far more substantively democratic potentials than more proceduralist ones like Hong Kong's in 2014. Additionally, it must also be said that in the analysis of Chinese politics in particular, with its obsessions with the Chinese Party-state form and the lack of 'normal' democracy and civil society and so on, one finds little attention at all to the economic base as a kind of structuring framework or force in itself. And as Fredric Jameson has never tired of pointing out, in contemporary post-modern culture (if one wants to hold on to this periodization), it is easier for people to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism as a mode of socio-economic production and way of life. Certainly China has been more optimistic and positively invested in the future compared to many other places. But as looming social crises and contradictions pile up, inequality and environmental degradation chief among them, it or the Party-state has likewise been unable to imagine another mode of economy and life. And yet that imagination is going to have to re-emerge in China and elsewhere for even 'local' problems and conflicts like Wukan (or arguably, the integration of an unhappy Hong Kong). What is going to matter is less the absence of liberalism ('democracy') than the absence of a sustainable and humane 'moderate prosperity' (to invoke an official goal of the CCP); however, this is going to be entirely impossible under an economy dictated by the mad pursuit of profit and growth.

This point about the fundamental importance of political economy, that the economy is necessarily already political and must serve the people (rather than the other way around), is, one should add, an essentially 'new left' or post-Tiananmen insight into China just as much as an old-fashioned Marxist or social democratic one. While most conclusions on the left and within contemporary political thought are undeniably bleak—and for good enough reasons[2]—there may as yet be some resources of hope in struggles like those of Wukan, which aim or aimed less at achieving political

liberalism or similar goals, and more at livelihood as well as the theft of common or public goods. Surely this is an advance on the occidentalist 1980s of Beijing, or of the utopian liberalism of Hong Kong's grail-quest for autonomy and liberal voting rules.

Contesting Illiberalism, Liberalism, and Theft

In late 2011, a village of 13,000 people in coastal Guangdong and near the city of Lufeng captured global media attention in a way that a Chinese protest had not done since 1989. (Three years later another one, even more telegenic and open to mass media, would erupt to the south in the Hong Kong SAR; a comparison to which we later return.) The Wukan Uprising, as it came to be known (somewhat inaccurately), would not stop until local elections were held at the expense of the ousted local CP officials in 2012. Several of those same protest leaders themselves came to power. The Uprising or its aftermath emerged again in 2016, after one of the newly elected officials himself (Lin Zuluan, aged 72) was arrested for corruption and bribe-taking, once again leading to a series of angry protests after his televised (and quite possibly forced) confession. These 'final' protests continued until fall 2016, albeit at a much smaller scale and with less international attention.

Wukan is nonetheless arguably more famous now, or more admired in a way, than its neighboring city, Lufeng. Far from being known as an important city today in the way that the 'model' ones are (e.g. Guangzhou), Lufeng is perhaps best known as a hotbed of crime and methamphetamine production,[3] though it also administers Wukan. However, Lufeng, not unlike thousands of villages during the land reform and revolution, had a more admirable past in the days of revolution gone by: in 1927, as a result of communist-led peasant uprisings, Lufeng along with nearby Haifeng formed the first Chinese Soviet territory (county-level). From March 2011 until early 2012, and especially for four tense months in the autumn, the village of Wukan—it was indeed a mass protest—took to the streets to protest illegal land seizures and corruption. For a while it looked like this part of Guangdong might reconnect with its radical past in its demand for justice against a land-robbing gentry class.

At the same time, however, a close look at the video of the protests, or the well-known documentaries hosted by Al Jazeera TV, reveals to us that these are not poor, dusty peasant rebels of days gone by but rather more akin to urban-villagers defending their communal property, to be sure, but

also their comparatively bourgeois standards of living compared to the 1920s and the 1930s. Neither the Red past nor the image of democratic 'velvet revolutions,' circa 1989 or more recent, is an apt comparison. Wukan was about land (and the return thereof) first and foremost, and then about democracy in the sense of a right to that land and in the need for new elections and officials. Thus, Wukan was called an 'Uprising' as opposed to, say, Hong Kong's Umbrella 'revolution,' though, as noted earlier, the latter was indeed more a media buzzword and fantasy of some type of convergence into a pure democracy. Interestingly, Wukan was also a more militant and even violent confrontation, and yet the one that resulted in new elections and governmental response, and not any overthrow of the Party-state system.[4]

What happened in Wukan prior to this is familiar enough. Two local officials had sold hundreds of acres to private contractors for building roads and housing estates, without consent from or compensation for those who had thereby lost their land. The local officials had offered no public consultation with the villagers to begin with. Illegal land sales have skyrocketed in recent years, across rural China. Land and property are key everywhere in the PRC, as its economy shifts to a later stage of capitalism and new accumulation crises. But land has not yet been privatized. This public nature of land is arguably the last substantial legacy and holdover from the momentous land reform effected, at great costs and with great difficulty, by the first generation of Chinese communists and radical peasants. But Wukan has mostly stopped farming (and fishing). This fate is part of the general decline of agriculture in China and Guangdong, as well as the looming depletions of fish stocks worldwide. With the decline of its traditional economies and skills, and with no alternative economic strategy in place for *rural* development other than rapid urbanization elsewhere (the exploitation of the countryside's surplus laborers-turned-migrant-workers), you get methamphetamine production and other forms of crime like land seizures. Land has become an even more valuable and even more urgently 'needed' resource. Not least for the communist officials who must show that they are making profit and 'growing the economy' (a bitter phrase given the agricultural decline), and in this case through illegally selling public land to property developers.

In addition, prior to the mass protests, a local leader, Xue Jinbo, died of an apparent heart attack while in police custody. This can only raise intense suspicion about police brutality, and it fed into long-standing anger over corruption. An angry protest turned into a militant stand-off

with the police and the Party. The villagers refused to disperse despite the real threat of police violence. The streets, occupied in a real, militant way, were shut down. The local state or government was not in control of the village even after several weeks: a very rare occurrence anywhere, not least in authoritarian and illiberal or repressive systems like the USA and China, that do not refrain from using violent policing.

Crucially, and before any denouement, this little village rebellion quickly became a global media event—a genuine spectacle that complicated what 'inside' and 'outside' China meant. The foreign media, crucially including Hong Kong and its Cantonese and Chinese abilities, arrived and gave it the usual spin—looming, deadly violence, a potential collapse of the state (of at least the local government), perhaps a genuine democracy movement *à la* 1989. The protesters were indeed calling for officials to step down. And yet the movement and media were not suppressed by the local police, clearly under direct orders not to do so, most likely coming from above in Lufeng city or higher. Even the national editorial media like the *People's Daily* and *Global Times* eventually (and relatively quickly) got on board regarding the validity of the villagers' demands. The *Global Times* later announced that the lesson of Wukan was that government at all levels should eliminate the 'oppositional stance' in dealing with protests, as this was *not* usually needed. This was a remarkable response from important propaganda outlets precisely because such protests can indeed go either way: accommodation and/or peaceful resolution, or violence. Well before this major and national-level media intervention, Zheng Yanxiong, the local Municipal Party Secretary (Shanwei), had complained loudly about the way the protests in Wukan had spiraled out of control; he blamed the villagers as well as the foreign media for the chaos. That will sound familiar to students of Tiananmen: blaming foreign media and a select 'bad element' is ominous, and grounds for legal persecution and worse.

We must note—crucially—that at the beginning of the protests, the fledgling movement did invoke what the researcher Laurence Dang has called 'indirect,' anti-party, and 'human rights' rhetoric in a locally distributed publication/flyer called 'Voice of the Hometown' (鄉音).[5] Almost two years before the movement erupted in the streets, some activist villagers also invoked human rights rhetoric on the Internet, specifically the 'International Human Rights Protocol.'[6] What was in the air of Wukan, in other words, was precisely liberal political discourse aimed at transforming or at least stopping bad, authoritarian, and illiberal regimes. And the lib-

eral convergence narrative dating from the post-Mao 1980s (and from the Cold War and even the colonial periods years before) was as ever on the minds of the foreign media, that 'democracy' in *The New York Times* sense has to happen sooner or later, and is the only alternative to one-party domination and systemic grievances.

To be fair, in Wukan, there *were* strident demands to remove officials and hold local elections, voiced during a very serious public or 'civil society' protest. But these same eminently democratic demands are not necessarily alien to the Chinese political system, even if they do contradict official, de-politicizing propaganda promoting stability, 'dreams', harmony, and so on, and even if they do risk a nasty response from the police. It is easy enough to mock or dismiss the 'socialist' and 'democratic' terminologies and aspects of the current PRC, and not without good reason given the scale of corruption and inequality alone. But they remain part of the state's or system's own self-understanding, and also a part of at least some citizens' own self-understandings or beliefs. The socialist or revolutionary aka social justice basis of the state's legitimacy, howsoever contradictory or dated, is not without a certain power and effectiveness. Rhetoric is never merely rhetoric.

The key shift within the movement from its inchoate start in 2009 and that rejection of a liberal or human rights stance—arguably the secret of its eventual success—was how it responded rhetorically to the initial, official condemnation (e.g. from Secretary Zheng) *and* to the foreign media in particular. It is as if the villagers had learned an important lesson from 1989, not only about how to better address the central government but also the global media spectacle emerging in front of them. They triangulated both narratives and forces: their criticism by local officialdom and media as troublemakers, the foreigners' presence and implied story about democracy, and the battle against the Party-state in the name of freedom in some abstract sense. They appealed, through both media/camps, to the Party center above the local and provincial levels.[7] From this point forward, after the typical illiberal response from the secretary and the 'viral' escalation of the protest, what emerges in the media and public sphere is rhetoric that was anti-local official, anti-corruption, and of course anti-land seizure, but also explicitly *not* against the CCP as a whole. In fact, they spoke positively about the Party as a whole and consciously distanced themselves from the '1989' or 'velvet revolution' type of narrative. They spoke instead from within the informal and flexible but long-standing Chinese political tradition of loyal or 'rightful resistance.' We will turn to

this concept and point later. Here is Chen Jibing on this, quoting Zhu Mingguo, the deputy to the powerful Guangdong provincial secretary (and now Vice Premier), Wang Yang:

> The villagers said to me that under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party they had farmed the land without paying taxes and also enjoyed subsidies and free education. 'We do not oppose the Chinese Communist Party. The Chinese Communist Party is good! What we oppose is the village selling the land without telling us', [said Zhu Mingguo]. Zhu Mingguo added: 'If these demands had been satisfied earlier, would this matter have built up to such an extent?'[8]

That sense of loyal opposition, and the respect for it from someone high up like Zhu or perhaps even Wang Yang, seems clear here. It is important to keep in mind that we are talking about the theft of a lot of money (and land) and a protest that shut down a village in what became a global media event.

One must note as well that the foreign media were allowed to stay, thus broadcasting to the global 'Sinophone' and English language world what was happening. Rather than seeing this as an example of the all-important watchdog role of speaking Truth to Power, thanks to the free media, it is more useful to see the foreign media as being useful, if unsolicited vehicles, for the villagers and the state to communicate with one another. The presence of the foreign media and thus the discourse of liberalism or liberal convergence became part of the script of the Wukan protestors themselves, that is, of their self-positioning against local authorities. Fully aware of the live national and global coverage of their protest and themselves, they often invoked how this was a local, Wukan problem, nothing more or less; that it owed nothing at all to the foreign media or outside forces—and by implication liberalism—neither in China nor abroad. This is at one level simply common sense and self-defense. One knows what the police and state can do when provoked. But there is more to it. There was at least an implicit awareness within Wukan of the power of the global media spectacle, including of Chinese and foreign voices, just as there was an awareness of the perils of the so-called counter-revolutionary behavior. This was a much more savvy use of foreign as well as Chinese media than in 1989, and arguably in Hong Kong a few years later, where the legitimacy of the PRC state is almost unthinkable. A contemporary report from *The New York Times* brings this awareness and professed faith in state legitimacy home:

> The press center was a jumble of warm bodies and laptops and tangled wires, sprinkled with empty cans of Red Bull. On one wall of the living room was a portrait of God staring down from the heavens. Below that was a small wooden cross with a figure of Jesus. And below that, taped to the wall, was a white sheet of paper with a statement in Chinese and English. It beseeched reporters not to call the protest an 'uprising.' 'We are not a revolt,' it said. 'We support the Communist Party. We love our country.'[9]

If you watch the original four-part documentary on Wukan broadcast by the English language Al Jazeera network and website, made by Singaporeans Lynn Lee and James Leong, you will see a common refrain from several villagers—that the Central Committee (i.e. the national-level Party-state) needs to know what happened, what our demands are, and can fix this.[10] Aside from the absence of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric, this is virtually the same type of tactic one often sees reflected in revolutionary fiction during the land reform era in the countryside and the promulgation of new communist laws (e.g. free marriage) and leadership. One imagines that the famous rural propaganda writer Zhao Shuli, author of just such red classics like 'Meng Xiangying Stands Up' and 'The Marriage of Young Blacky' (also aimed at feudal and Nationalist corruption), would approve of the strategy. Of course, this is also an older tradition belonging to appeals to the emperor and the belief in good, morally exemplary officials. You need to get the good official to come down and take care of things, to follow the laws and processes that exist on the books or by precedent. But it may well be a trap to posit some long continuity of the 'feudal' or say Qing dynasty to the present; even the Qing were arguably modern at any rate, and in the present moment there is certainly no sense, other than an Orientalist one, in seeing Wukan's rhetoric and tactics as part of some seamless tradition. In the modern form, rebellion and serious protest—the other strong political tradition, very much animated by the radical past—do not contradict or mutually exclude such appeals. While Wukan was taken up to be—or disparaged as—a form of 'Chinese democracy,' the point should be less around liberal democracy as either a normative or demonized ideal type and instead on the power of recall and accountability.

The appeals to Beijing ringing out from Wukan were, in any case, not 'merely' rhetorical asides or caveats to defend one's self but clear and direct signals. Wang Yang, at the time a nationally rising Party official in

competition, it may be felt, with then-superstar official of Chongqing Bo Xilai,[11] sent a work team down to investigate the uprising. Here is the denouement of that work team and of the Wukan Uprising, via Reuters:

> On December 20, after a week of siege, Wukan's villagers received a text message from Zhu on their mobile phones: Their demands were reasonable and were accepted. 'The majority's aggressive actions can be understood and forgiven; we will not pursue any responsibility', the message said in part. Wang fired Wukan's village boss, Xue Chang, and Xue's deputy. Zhuang Liehong and two other members of the Wukan Hot Blooded Youth League were freed from jail. The village declared an end to the protests. 'People's democratic awareness is increasing significantly in this changing society', Wang Yang was quoted as saying by the state media a week later. He even called for a 'Wukan approach' to reforming village governance.[12]

We cannot know whether the appeal to the legitimacy of the Party-state above the local is or was 100% sincere and 'authentic.' How much was deliberate, perhaps even ironic manipulation of appearances and perceptions, to the media and the state and to the Singaporean film-makers? Was the use of such appeals simply strategic, a very fortunate, calculated turn away from the other possible road of 'human rights' and liberalism or some form of anti-statism? Moreover, how much of the uprising was down to clan and kinship politics in the area (different factions, or even different beneficiaries of the previous sales), as was also rumored at the time? And how much of the central support from above was really about Wang Yang vying for promotion and a big success, as a direct response to Bo Xilai and the upcoming national reshuffle of leadership positions? Or are Wang et al. truly good officials doing their moral and political duty with an eye toward establishing necessary political reforms in Wukan and China? All of this is plausible and even likely, at least in part. Such is the nature of politics in an increasingly globalized and complexly layered world.

Nonetheless, the triangulation was an effective tactic and it played with, or re-articulated certain discourses: Western anti-communism or political orientalism about China; Dengist de-politicization and the fetish of stability and order in the name of patriotism or nationalism; the fear or desire for convergence in one direction or the other. When the protesters signify 'The Communist Party is good' even while virtually shutting down the village, they are in other words invoking the liberal or foreign 'model' of convergence and transformation of the Party-state, but only to distance themselves from it in an expression of support for the Party's right and

duty to intervene politically, including to set up new elections. (Again one must note that the squashing of such a protest in the name of public order and social stability in a developing nation would ordinarily seem inevitable.) What fascinates is the manipulation of perceptions and appearances—producing these in a certain dialogue with foreign and national media, playing off would-be authoritarians from Shanwei, Lufeng, and Wukan (or above), against foreign reporters and foreign or global liberal perspectives. The Wukan Uprising, in other words, also had to do with the politics of knowledge or discourse, just as Hong Kong's Occupy did (less effectively or more impractically), and as any real hegemonic struggle must.

Wukan Worked

If politics is the art of the possible and a struggle over interests as well as for something more effable but arguably even more important—social justice and equality, say—then Wukan must be measured as both a remarkable success and a well-nigh tragic failure. (Interestingly, this is one way to describe Chinese socialism or the long revolution as a whole up to the present.) The specific demands were not for 'suffrage' and non-Party elections, of course, as in Hong Kong, but for land compensation and new elections in the actual system that exists. It obviously took a tremendous, and brave, protest by many impassioned, angry people, but the central government did intervene. The protest leaders Yang Semao and Lin Zuluan became elected officials (deputy and Part secretary) in the new village-wide election; the problem of land seizures was at least openly acknowledged and set on the agenda. The deposed leader was given a three-year jail sentence for corruption. Others lost their jobs and Party memberships. According to Xinhua news agency, as of 2014, a total of 330 hectares of stolen land had been returned, and provincial officials have 'earmarked' tens of millions of yuan for improving village livelihood.[13] A more recent government report puts that figure as 566 hectares (about 1400 acres), and promises more.[14] (However some of the villagers, including Yang, have claimed that far more was stolen, and this remains the central problem of later unrest.[15]) If we want to emphasize the practical and possible, we can say it was a remarkable victory. As noted Chinese sociologist Sun Liping argued at the time, Wukan could be seen as heralding a new China model of democratic governance: 'a model for resolving social contradictions and contention in rural China, i.e. "realizing people's

interests while maintaining social stability.'"[16] For once the people's part (their interests if not their recall power) of the PRC moniker seemed to bear out, and stability was not used to crush dissent.

The 'Wukan model of Chinese democracy' may be too strong a way to put it. Wukan would have had to been the proverbial spark to a prairie fire, albeit one demanding reform and recompense as opposed to ousting the Party in general. But mainland intellectuals have a propensity to think and write in terms of 'China models'—a refreshing refusal of American academic nominalism—and this is not meant to imply there is only ever one such model for the entire nation. So too one could easily argue that Wukan fits squarely within what Sebastian Heilman and others refer to as the 'guerrilla style' of rapidly and continually adaptable government in the PRC, dating from its Maoist origins during an era of war, imperialism, and revolution.[17] At any rate, at the very least, the initial success of Wukan gives lie to coding the entirety of political China, or even the Party-state system as simply draconian and illiberal to the core. Recall power, accountability, elections: three benchmarks of what is understood to be democracy. The movement and its initial success, including the lack of repression, inspired other protests. Two other villages in Guangdong and one in Zhejiang followed suit, and invoked Wukan as their model or inspiration specifically. (They did not achieve the same dramatic effect.) Despite its later limitations or failures (to be discussed later), Wukan is still remembered in Chinese media and intellectual circles, far beyond typical mass incidents. Again one wants to add that its status as a global media event played a role here, as happenstance as that may have been. Nevertheless, it is striking for one small village to have produced such a spark, and all the more so for the land (some of it) to be returned as well as other forms of compensation. (We will return to the question of amounts later.) This is more than the 'occupy' movements West and East seem to have effected, though the latter are or were also different animals altogether in their refusal to demand anything specific (in the case of Wall Street) or to demand only the impossible (as in Hong Kong). There was no prairie fire engulfing the CCP and initiating a velvet/liberal revolution but nor was that the intention in Wukan, whose villagers seemed to be operating through a very different self-understanding and political understanding than that dictated by contemporary or even 1989 liberalism. In sum, Wukan was indeed hailed by some Chinese and foreign media and intellectuals—notably Sun Liping as noted earlier—as a potential Chinese model of local or village democracy. And why not?

Predictably enough, extant academic commentary on Wukan reads it as failure, or in other words as more of the same: the lack of liberalism or a 'proper' civil society, the lack of a demand or even a capacity for a 'real' democracy in China due to its communist system, and so on. Thus, Hung Ho-Fung, an American sociologist from Hong Kong, writes that Wukan was too Confucian and failed to genuinely challenge, let alone subvert, the 'authoritarian status quo,' because of villagers' belief in the central government's authority and legitimacy; they were 'submissive' and 'begging for mercy and aid from the highest authorities.'[18] This assumes that such appeals to authority were completely genuine and not tactical or sly. This is at least an open question. His response frames the citizens' actions as merely akin to feudal or traditional social relations: the humble petition to the emperor, as opposed to a modern or universal political demand for rights and recognition. In sum, China can't become a democracy or 'become-the-same' until this fealty is sloughed off. Despite Wukan actually being in large part about voting and recall power, and redistribution of land, it still fails from this cold war, liberal 'political science' convergence perspective. In fact, this is a common refrain of many studies of protest in China, including the student movement in 1989, which was seen as too servile at one point, when three student representatives went on bended knee and delivered a petition to Premier Li Peng at the Great Hall of the People. What we have is the hoary, interpretive opposition from classical area studies or orientalism during the Cold War: tradition versus modernity. It returns us to the limits—or rule of discourse—in framing political China as monolithically illiberal: it can only fail to meet the liberal standard. Even when protesters—at some real risk—do succeed in generating concessions, this is still, in effect, unfortunate and a failure because it only shores up the legitimacy and power of the authoritarian single Party-state. For Hung, the villagers were not 'independent' enough and lacked the proper civic mentality, or failed to ask for the right, authentically subversive type of democracy or reform. Another recent, sociological study of such protests (albeit not on Wukan specifically) along these lines actually sees such protests as de-politicizing and akin to 'client-patron' relations with the state, and so preserving and propping up the protesters' own 'state domination.'[19]

Legal scholar Stanley Lubman has remarked that 'Wukan seems fated to be remembered, if at all, as a failed attempt to remedy the illegality of village leaders, with no prospect of being used as a model for reducing well-known social contradictions in rural China.'[20] This is a rather huge task set

for one small village protest, especially for one case of illegal land seizures, or even for the so-called rule of law that, as the liberal constitutionalists would have it, needs to be implemented across China. If Wukan *could* be a model for village democracy—and note that the processes for removal of officials and new elections were already on the books—it would not quite be a new model but actually about the government doing what it already can and should do. As for large-scale 'social contradictions,' it is also hard to see how elections or land returns would in fact solve these—a point which we will return in the concluding section. Speaking of convergence models following the normative liberal zeitgeist, famed mainland novelist Yu Hua chimes in, mocking the 'Chinese' belief in the upright official from above who will set things right.[21] Instead China and the mainland Chinese need to snap out of their false consciousness. For Yu Hua what is needed is not politics but judicial action and presumably 'rule of law' (which invariably implies a Western constitutional system).

In response to such liberal views one must ask: *so what* if these protests are historically influenced by 'Confucianism' or 'tradition'? Why is this a bad thing if it works? And what if these conventional notions of 'civil society' and individuated citizenship are not universal and necessary stages on the great train of history? What is signified through such readings of Wukan as failure, not victory, is the discourse of liberal universalism and a residual Cold War intellectual formation. The Party can do no good and must be opposed analytically at all costs. Any signs of loyalty, nationalism, or patriotism—in China—are suspect, if not indexes of traditionalism or even totalitarianism. But, again, why would such tradition or 'communism' be unfortunate other than it not being the correct form of governance according to current doxa stemming from conventional Western educational formations? What is most striking here is that the village protestors, in their shift from a generic human rights type of rhetoric to direct appeals to higher authority (and the state), seem to have learned something, deliberately toying with and using the liberal convergence narrative (and foreign media) toward their own ends.

And yet the Wukan victories or concessions, however non-revolutionary and perhaps ultimately fleeting, were indeed judicial and legal, involving courts, cops, rights, and laws, and including the old Maoist one of it being right to rebel. It is not that the Chinese have the wrong legal and political systems and instead need the right (liberal) one, and then things will be sorted. What such conventional wisdom elides is what Kevin O'Brien and Li Liangjiang have called the 'rightful resistance' technique of Chinese

protest (not *all* protests but many), which is also a part of the political culture and system. This is not some type of 'ancient' or transhistoric system, but it is an historical tradition as much as a modern form of protest. The essential idea is that it is rights and law based and assumes the legitimacy of the state-system as it currently exists, and even the basic values thereof; these are variously appealed to when such laws or values are broken, be they land theft or corruption, pollution, reneging on promises, and so on. This should seem a familiar if not universal form of protest, and it certainly resonates with the Wukan Uprising (and is in contrast completely lacking in the Hong Kong context). But this becomes especially notable in China because such 'rights consciousness' and beliefs in the legitimacy of the Communist Party-state system are simply not supposed to exist, at least according to liberal analysts. (Or again the rights-based thinking is supposed to lead in a fully liberal-democratic direction, not a 'communist' one.)

As Steve Hess summarizes O'Brien's and Li's work in his article on Wukan: 'by positioning themselves against corrupt local cadres who are violating the center's policies rather than the regime itself, claimants can assert moral leverage in interactions with the state, minimize personal risk, and maximize their likelihood of victory.'[22] This better captures the Wukan dynamics than the liberal critiques noted earlier. But for Wukan—and presumably for future global media events—one must also factor in the presence of the foreign media and how they must be *used*, not just 'reported to.' Wukan and China are global precisely because the foreign media are there, including social media dissemination that always escapes the so-called Great Firewall. Again one must allow for the deliberate, distanced use or tactical deployment of such fealty or professed legitimacy—the possibility of this, since we cannot get inside the protesters' heads, and do not in fact need to. The point is to better understand how protest and politics work (failures or successes). The rightful resistance concept is useful because it does not require this, just as it does not require liberalism or liberal democracy as the normative political values (e.g. there can be different forms of citizenship in the world).

More recently, Johan Lagerkvist has argued that Wukan (among other protests) shows the work of a 'shadow civil society' in China that in effect makes up for the lack of, or constrained, existence of a 'real' civil society by acting in the same way, which is to say outside the constraints of official diktat and, say, stability discourse. This is a helpful suggestion indeed, and to an extent resonates with the arguments and appreciation of Wukan

advanced above in that it tries to suggest that the Wukan citizens were not mere dupes. At the same time, however, it is hard to separate official and unofficial or 'independent' action and thought, including in China, and the distinction between the shadow and thing itself can likewise be slippery. Lagerkvist is concerned to find a movement toward democracy in China, but we should also be concerned with whose and what type of democracy and state we are talking about, let alone whether or not there can or even should be such a linear or 'progressive' movement.[23] In other words, perhaps the form of the Chinese state is not the problem so much as its economic neo-liberalism and unjustified authoritarianism or illiberalism at times. In another reflection on Wukan, Luigi Tomba asks us whether or not every major protest in China has to be coded as part of a movement toward democracy?[24] Clearly the answer is no (as Tomba argues as well), especially if the latter is to be defined along the lines of a Euro-American country, or for that matter Japan or India. (The present author sees this as less of a problem than do Tomba and Lagerkvist.)

The framing of Wukan is also, unsurprisingly, tied to the powerful discourse of liberalism and specifically to the more or less generic concept of 'civil society,' which is probably indispensable to the very idea of political science (a rule of its discourse), and thus to most studies of political China. (Excluding more Marxist or other heterodox forms of political theory, that follow the former's critique of the concept in Hegel as essentially bourgeois and marked by fundamental class exclusions.) As part of the transformation of liberalism to something like a more reactionary neo- or libertarian form, 'civil society' is usually given a specifically anti-state gloss, as opposed to it being a more or less peaceful and useful medium for the state, the middle class, and for governance to adapt and proceed. And yet since protest (and the general political intellectual culture) in China is not anti-state, this concept is often at odds with what actually happens in China, or with how protesters, intellectuals, and others understand themselves and their own political views. As the protests in Wukan were explicitly 'pro' Party and pro-state or appealed to such values at the upper levels, they can only seem illiberal or failed to those in the conventional political science mode. And yet Wukan was also clearly a public sphere or civil society-*like* movement (a public or groupment outside the official state channels), like many others in China and elsewhere. What we can say, then, and with Johan Lagerkvist of Stockholm University, is that the Wukan 'Uprising' represents a '*shadow* civil society' movement.[25]

This is useful indeed and resonates with the rightful resistance concept as framed above, in that it allows for its dynamics and substance or positivity as a political event and action, originating outside the purview of the state, and without framing it as lacking the proper liberal forms and norms and without reading it as 'statist' in some pejorative sense. As he notes, it is misleading to frame Wukan as an Uprising in so far as that implies an anti-state politics of transformation.[26] While militant and brave to the point of turning back the riot police, the 2011 protests were not in this mode.

Lagerkvist also tantalizingly adds a new dimension to the analysis of Wukan: the importance of 'ancient' clan power and networks within the village(s) and protests (clans are essentially familial lineage groups where people share a surname). This too, if indeed relevant to the protests and land conflicts (property conflicts between clans, and between clans and the state), would challenge the conventional liberal models of civil society and democratization, and no doubt set off all the feudalism detectors in the field. (Clans were, to be sure, demonized as well in the Maoist era, and not just by current officialdom, for fairly obvious and arguably compelling reasons.) The clan factor may also relate—again in some admittedly unknown way—to the downfall of the protest leaders and the original movement for land justice.[27] Clans and the state (divided loyalties indeed) do not quite mix even today, and hostilities can be very mutual indeed.

Wukan Failed

But unfortunately one must now also measure the Wukan Uprising as, in part, a failure, even in its own terms or the terms of at least some of the main protest leaders: to regain all lost land or compensation thereof, and presumably to personally lead the village forward as new, good officials. (While some land has been returned, much has been or was in dispute through 2016.) This acknowledgment of failure will be different from coding the movement as failed because it did not or could not achieve a liberal-democratic transition; different also than framing it as a failure because it did not realize some type of pure emancipation imagined by anarchistic ultra-leftists in California.[28] We will return to the meaning or implications of this fall momentarily; it will be more instructive to examine it as an exposure of political and economic limits both within China and globally. Approximately one year after those new elections ushering in the new and deposing the old officials, Reuters reported in 2013 that:

> Three village committee members [said] they believed that [a local businessman who bought the land for his company] was being protected by higher authorities to avoid bringing down other officials, bank executives and businessmen who profited from Wukan's land sales.[29]

This is entirely plausible. And in any case, even by 2016, not all land alleged to have been taken has been returned or compensated. The central remaining dispute is precisely over how much land was stolen or sold, with the villagers—and new officials—claiming a far higher number. Moreover, since those new elections there have also been several arrests (on the grounds of corruption) and resignations. As early as October 2012, former youth protest leader and newly elected official Zhuang Liehong resigned out of frustration, claiming he was 'unable to handle the wishes of the villagers from within the village committee,' and referring to irreconcilable differences with the senior leader of the protests Lin Zuluan (林祖銮).[30] It must also be said that his resignation came a mere seven months after his election. Zhuang subsequently migrated to America with his wife, leaving their baby behind until a friend brought him over as well. They are now applying for political asylum in New York City. Zhuang has since returned to human rights rhetoric, in interviews with 'Radio Free Asia' and the like.[31] When in Rome do as Romans do, as the saying goes. But this does cast light on the previous road not taken before the Uprising—the human rights option and thus some type of liberal universalism that will only be seen as anti-Party-state in toto and therefore something to be repressed. The access to visas and air-fares and diasporic communities in global metropoles also reminds us that this is far from the old Soviet days of radical democracy and peasant revolution in Guangdong, as these particular villagers are by and large wealthy and mobile in comparison.

More serious have been the arrests, new rounds of elections, but without enough perceived progress (according to some, *The New York Times* reports of villagers' feelings[32]), and the outbreak of new protests in 2016. Yang Semao (杨色茂) was the first former protest leader-turned-official arrested, in 2014, accused of taking bribes before standing for re-election. He was eventually convicted and sentenced to two years.[33] According to one Times report, Yang did acknowledge 'accepting 20,000 renminbi, or about $3,200, in bribes but said he immediately donated half to a local school and returned the remaining amount.'[34] The 2016 protests were triggered by the arrest of Lin Zuluan, the former number one organizer

and leader of 2011, and one of the last remaining elected officials from the Uprising. Lin had called for mass protests over the fate of the unreturned communal lands and was promptly arrested. This triggered the protests again. These were smaller in scale than 2011, but still estimated at between 2000 and 4000, a significant amount of a village of 13,000. In the aftermath, a total of nine villagers were arrested and convicted as a result of these last protests (appeals are pending). It would appear that the right to rebel had been rescinded this time, perhaps because of the increasing illiberalism in the Xi Jinping era. Lin confessed, perhaps by force, to inadvertently taking bribes, in one of those televised confessions broadcast by state television for high-profile cases. He was sentenced to three years. These arrests (Lin's and Yang's as well as another former leader, Hui Ruichao's), and those of the protesters in 2016, are the truly disheartening aspect of the rise and fall of the Uprising. After a momentous success in securing elections and governmental response/remediation from above, Wukan witnessed a second round of elections in 2014, and then this denouement—for now—in 2016.

It is hard to imagine what the villagers could have done, or done better, by themselves. While these last protests were brief and did not become a global media event, and therefore remain hard to read from afar, the tactic of a 'Long Live the Communist Party!' chant can be heard in video reportage, but such moves clearly did not work in this case. The foreign media were comparatively absent and so less well used by the protesters this time. Outside reporters were again singled out for criticism and warnings, including most especially the Hong Kong outlets. The local/state media seemed ready, and they too may have learned from having been 'played' in 2011. This too suggests the influence of Hong Kong's Occupy/Umbrella protests—partially understood in the mainland as a would-be velvet revolution reeking of imperialistic/colonial contempt for the Party-state—and Hong Kong's anti-communist, partisan media. Needless to say, this is not a salutary influence but rather one that fuels the illiberal drive. The harsh crackdown on the 2016 protests and perhaps even the arrests of Lin and others, would also seem to have to do with the Xi Jinping era, as opposed to the comparatively more relaxed Hu Jintao and Wen Jiabao era. (Wukan erupted first during Hu's last year as general secretary, and he further stepped down from the presidency in 2013, when Xi took over.) Under Xi concern with stability—the unprincipled peace Mao associated with liberalism—has become paramount. Protests, strikes, dissident actions, and the like are not only tolerated less but are also going to be more hard-pressed

to activate the discourse of righteous resistance. That being said, one is sure that protests and other public actions will be taken, and that same discourse remains at least one viable route and a part of the political culture. In the end, Xi Jinping will pass from the scene before opposition, political conflict, or that tradition fades away. Again one needs to recall that de-politicization, so successfully carried out by the post-Mao regime and by post-welfare or neo-liberalisms, nonetheless, has its limits.

But again the fundamental issue, practically speaking, is the land—how much remains to be compensated or returned. One wants to automatically side with the villagers/protesters, and for good reason. The problem of land seizures is well known and undeniable, even by state media itself, just as Xi's rise has been all about his anti-corruption drive. And in Wukan, such seizures were actually, bravely, and to an extent successfully contested. Again it is worth noting that this is not due simply to the officialdom's malfeasance and corruption in a moral sense but in the real pressures placed upon local and regional officials to keep making money, that is showing profit and growth and 'development.' For its own part, the state media now proclaims that Lufeng 'has made progress on the Wukan problem': a seven member committee of representatives from county, city, and nearby villages, as well as Wukan has been established to arbitrate land disputes and certify new ownerships; more land has been returned; housing construction offered for poverty-stricken families; and 'efforts' made to improve social welfare, health, employment, and so on. The same piece notes that the government disagreed with Lin and other villagers that they should be compensated about 500,000 yuan for their land being reclaimed and that Wukan only should decide all land disputes; it also notes that Lin was guilty of taking bribes made by contractors and kickbacks when buying ships for the village. If one were to read this report literally, it would seem a remarkable and largely successful resolution to the crisis and to the illegal land seizures prior to 2011. From a political stability and livelihood standpoint, if those improvements to living and working conditions are actually made in Wukan, it will turn out to have been a very effective protest indeed, despite the remaining injustices. And even if Yang and Lin were indeed framed. This is not to say that they were a *necessary* sacrifice, *a la* Stalin's remark about needing to break eggs to make omelets. But it is to mark the complexity of the situation and of Chinese politics in general, including the ability of the centralized, 'illiberal' state to do other things than repression.

As for corruption, or the newly elected officials being guilty of it, it must be said that this is not something to be automatically dismissed, if only due to the well-known scale of the phenomenon in China. Not least at the local and rural levels. One may also note that Zhu Mingguo, the upper-level cadre instrumental in helping resolve the case for Wang Yang in 2011, was convicted in 2014 for taking 141 million yuan in bribes and kickbacks over his career, and for violating the one-child policy. His sentence may be unrelated to his success in Wukan, or it may actually be. Corruption runs from top to bottom, as does infighting or factionalisms, and one cannot rule out prosecutions being 'personal.' But those jail sentences for the 2016 protesters suggest a different, equally obvious, and more compelling story: a crackdown on dissent or political conflict, even *within* the Party or properly elected local governments.[35] It is possible that all of these stories can be true in small or large part. Protest-leaders-turned-officials putting their hands in the till like everyone else; the amounts of land being in real dispute (two sides as to who owns what) or simply impossible to return, or simply being hoarded by the Party; a very hard or conservative, anti-protest turn (of *any* protests) under Xi Jinping, and one that may not be turned back: all of this is plausible. But the clear repression of the 2016 protesters rings the clearest and loudest. It is a clear instance of illiberalism at its worst in China, the construing of all dissent and protest as 'subversive' and traitorous, in a throwback to the very different times of revolution, post-war construction, and the high Cold War. If repression of class and state/nation enemies was justifiable back then in classical Marxist or Leninist fashion (and this is at least arguable), it would seem the enemies now are either avowed, antagonistic liberals or other anti-Party people, or those (anyone) who would interfere with the smooth functioning of the economy. If neo-imperialism is more subtle and ambiguous in the current conjuncture than in the Mao era, the Party-state's reaction to perceived or actual 'enemies of the people' is in many ways harsher than before, and less justified.

It's the Political, Economy

To this extent it may seem that the liberal/convergence narrative may yet have the last say—that 'democracy' means a Western electoral system (and constitution) and nothing else will actually work until the Chinese state-system is replaced with this. And yet what does it mean to say that the

Chinese system, here illustrated by the Wukan protests, does not work because it is the wrong type of democracy or is not democratic at all? As argued earlier, aside from the multi-party aspect, Wukan would seem to be the very epitome of democracy and recall power and accountability through elections (and note again that the guilty parties prior to 2011 have also been jailed). The state actually responded positively to what it saw as the—just—general will.

But if the liberal dismissal represents one limited interpretation, the official one—even as portrayed by official media in the end ('Wukan makes progress')—also has its obvious, and telling, limits as well. Unless that *China Daily* article saying it has made good progress is more or less factually correct (which one must admit is possible). But in that case, the arrests for merely protesting in 2016 would be glaringly contradictory. For then Wukan would truly be a working and successful model of 'Chinese democracy through righteous resistance' that the state itself could unabashedly uphold and propagandize even to the villagers. But the post-Mao Party-state does not actually want to politicize and thereby empower the society of what used to be called the masses. Wukan may, then, also seem to indicate that the official 'China model' of stability—the attempts to neutralize politics and protests via economics/prosperity/money/development—will hold sway for the foreseeable future, not least because it is buttressed by the power of the state (and cops and courts) as a certain iron fist held behind the ideological or cultural legitimacy of the state. This is indeed the likely reality for the near future, barring any sudden changes to Xi Jinping's plans as head of state.

And yet there is still more to learn from Wukan, even while acknowledging these limits. Hong Kong's protesters could in theory, for example, learn to play the international media better, by triangulating in some fashion the 'friendly' English language and local media with the mainland media. Why not see the mainland as an international media in effect, to be used for one's own ends? Aside from the Hong Kong opposition's complete antipathy to mainland politics and legitimacy, there is no good reason for them not to, and to instead tactically embrace the righteous resistance mode. (And this contempt or ignorance for all things PRC is not actually a good reason to begin with, as the *professed* belief in the state's ultimate or 'last instance' legitimacy is all that matters.) It is also worth noting for Hong Kong that the tradition of such righteous resistance or rhetorical-political appeals is also a relatively elite one, as noted by O'Brien, among others. It isn't about groveling or weakness (though

Hong Kong is indeed weak in a sense) but about achieving recognition and speaking like one belongs, so to speak. It actually thus fits middle class and ruling class Hong Kongers' privilege (e.g. the Civic Party of barristers) compared to other Chinese cities and populations. It is at any rate high time to drop the fairly hysterical pretense, articulated by some, that Hong Kong exists in some chain of equivalence with, say, a far more powerfully (and ethnically) dominated region like Tibet.[36] Hong Kong's so-called independent media—the tabloidesque, anti-communist *Apple Daily* in particular—might also take note, and at least rethink what is to be gained by pursuing only a hostile and antagonistic relationship to all things 'officially' PRC. To be sure, this would amount to a paradigm shift for Hong Kong, and one is far more likely to see the status quo and Hong Kong exceptionalism continue to fester for the foreseeable future.

But there is more meaning to mine here, in thinking through Wukan. Just as Hong Kong's politics is not just about the specific and small city on the periphery of China but about the contemporary fate of liberalism, namely its degradation and weakening into neo-liberalism, Wukan also reveals the very real limits imposed by the economism of the Party-state, and arguably the *relative* unimportance—the limits—of democracy understood as elections and recall powers and rules of law within a given system or civil society. It is not that these things are trivial; they clearly are not and even worked effectively—at the very least *worked*, had effects—in the case of Wukan. But just as 'bourgeois civil society' has always more or less excluded the working class and dispossessed, struggles over democratic procedure and politics in the narrow sense often, if not always, pull one away from the action and structuring reality of the economic base, understood as not just the base to the superstructure but the basis of social life and individual aspirations.

Now it may be that the former leaders were all framed, punished for having won earlier or for asking for too much back. Or it may be that they succumbed to taking money illegally, inadvertently or not. And it may well be that all of the land seizures claimed by Wukan protesters were indeed thefts, never belonged to neighboring villages as now claimed, and so on. But in the end, the focus on the elections and bureaucratic obstacles, or on thievery and corruption and specific political persecution, takes us away from the central problem as seen from a larger and more structural perspective than that of the form of democracy of the Party-state at the local or upper levels. That problem is the current mode of capital accumulation within China, or in other words with a Chinese variety of capitalism or

developmentalism and an attendant state apparatus that, depending on one's perspective, is either fully captured by capital and capitalists or is on the verge of losing its capacity to do anything but 'tail' the spiral of accumulation and its iniquitous effects.

That economy—and not just the Party-state's drive to de-politicize the populace while it rides the wave—is the heart of the matter. The principal contradiction of Wukan divides and expands into many: that the land is communal yet not farmed; that it belongs to the commons yet is not used thusly, so much as traded and commodified; that agriculture is in decline yet nothing has taken its place; that labor has been thoroughly commodified in a nominally socialist state; that class inequalities and the evisceration of 'statist' welfare likewise subtend this commodification of labor (i.e. exploitation). In other words, the problem of Wukan is the problem of China as a whole, and of a now fully global capitalism or neo-liberal regime of accumulation that must seek ever new means of profit. In the context of the PRC, which had nationalized and communalized so much, this inevitably takes the form of the theft or privatization of formerly common or public resources. From an almost fully public economy in 1978, two years after Mao but before Deng, China's 'statist' economy now stands at about 30% of the whole economy.[37]

But another way, Wukan's problems—even specifically the land question and those original thefts—cannot be resolved, or even adequately mediated, by 'democracy' as a set of electoral procedures and even laws in the liberal sense of rights, negative liberties, and even human rights. What if, for example, Wukan could elect not righteous resisters but, say, a 'correctly' liberal Hong Kong-esque anti-communist, or a solid social democrat of the European variety? Would this alleviate poverty in Wukan, such as it still exists, or bring the land back to those who held it? In other words, if the Wukan event has 'failed' in general terms, this is not a failure of the siege, of the resultant elections as procedure, or of the state's other responses to that siege, such as the re-compensations and other funding to date. These are all things to affirm and hold forth as effective and important as far as they went. And that were betrayed later, if not by the subsequent corruption or alleged greed/false claims of some of the original protesters, then certainly by the arrests and long sentences against the 2016 protesters.

What has failed, beyond this crackdown years down the line from the original 2011 protests, and despite all the undeniable successes of China's economic and global rise after Mao, has been precisely that post-Mao

capitalist turn. In other words, the de-Maoification of the economy in the pursuit of profit and wealth is defined in capitalist and 'modern' terms like automobiles and skyscrapers and an unbalanced, rapid urbanization. Wukan and the Party must now be profitable, and more profitable tomorrow than they are today. *This* is precisely the problem. Additionally, it is running out of ways to do so. From a 100% public property share in national wealth to 30%—there is only so much room left, and the Party will want to keep some things nationalized (e.g. most of the banks). China is well aware that it needs to move away from overreliance on all those factories and export zones alongside the big cities and coasts, but it is yet unclear as to what will or can take its place. For the countryside, the Party-state is pursuing urbanization—driven by property values—not any type of socialistic agricultural development in the countryside or seaside. This, the decline of agriculture as an economy and the countryside as a site for its own industry and development are well-known problems. China's diet may indeed be richer and more diverse than in the Mao era, but it has also now returned to a pre-Maoist fear of food security: not just the literal safety of the food it does grow but an ability to feed itself more or less by itself. The economy—the politics of it, the shifting from a communist state to a state tailing capitalism—may thus seem like an insurmountable problem, short of either collapse or revolution.

And yet it may prove surmountable in the long run, for there will be more Wukans in the future and more contradictions piling up within Chinese capitalism, not least around the environment and ever-growing social inequalities. If one Wukan has failed, then two, three, many Wukans may not. Much of what I am saying here echoes East China Normal University professor Lu Xinyu's comment, one of the prolific and accomplished new left professors. She writes:

> Wukan's true problem is the capitalization of rural land; but the media hyped it as a democracy question and ignored the real issue. The village committee does not have the ability to solve this problem. The development of urbanization is the root cause. And that is why such land conflicts are so intensive in Guangdong.[38]

The point here is not to keep the villagers tied to their villages (or boats) but instead to others. One, as noted earlier, common or publicly held land (individual and village allotments) can be and has been illegally ripped off in classic neo-liberal fashion. Given the same economic pressures on the

Party officialdom to accumulate, this is not going away soon, short of a major policy adjustment by the central committee. Such conflicts do not happen simply because China lacks liberal democracy or such like laws—it is clearly illegal, and Xi Jinping has been nothing if not an enthusiastic prosecutor against corruption. More protests and even local elections would certainly help, as opposed to hurt. But the larger problem is that the Party is increasingly captured by capital, on the verge of losing its capacity to regulate its capitalism or mode of accumulation.

The second, related point invoked by Lu Xinyu is that urbanization or the pushing of surplus rural labor into the ever-expanding cities and export processing zones is likewise reaching its limits. The chief limit being that this model of growth does nothing to actually develop the countryside, that is nothing to develop new towns and new industries (including agricultural) *in* the countryside. Those urban jobs done by millions of migrants workers—while far from the image of proto-slavery and destitution as would be dictated by a Sinophobic orientalism—still do not by and large pay an adequate wage for the laborers to stay. Even with increased wages in recent years, many more migrants are returning home. All of this is compounded by the well-known problem of the *hukou* or registration system, which essentially bestows second-class status and lack of housing, schooling, and other benefits for those same rural-to-urban workers. That system was rational and arguably fair and smart during the socialist or Mao period, since the state was then trying to restrict such labor flows and the creation of 'third world' or slum cities, in favor of developing the countryside more autonomously and locally via the communes and new towns. This rural vision of democratic development is precisely what needs revised and returned to. The lack of this is felt far more deeply and painfully than the lack of a 'classic' civil society as imagined by a European intellectual. As with the laws against 'counter-revolutionary subversion' during the *hot* Cold War, the hukou system is now quite broken and ill-fitting.

Put another way, at bottom the stakes here, conceptually for us but in also very real ways for those who live with them, are the political economy of China today and the class character of the state and all of which are on the verge of becoming fully capitalist.[39] This is precisely Lin Chun's argument in her recent, magisterial book on China and global capitalism, and the fate of the socialist revolution. There she also cites one of the new village leaders (Lin Zuluan) to this effect: 'This [return of stolen land] is the government responsibility. If the government acts as a mediator its role is mistaken.'[40] What Lin is very perceptively pointing to is that the state acts

like some officious but pathetic mid-level manager in a corporation, or like an arbitration attorney working at least in part—in large part—on getting a good financial deal for both sides. This is not what a nominally communist official or state should do, which in the line that runs from Sun Yat-Sen to Mao to the current CCP is supposed to be obsessed with people's livelihood if not social justice. It has clearly failed even in its own terms to make Wukan (or Lufeng area) prosperous—adequately or broadly prosperous—let alone just. Whether as a result of ideology or weakness in capacity, the Chinese state often abdicates such responsibilities. This is one reason why the Wukan strategy to reclaim the economic—to frame protest as being about this—is important, if also doomed to fail at a larger, permanent level, unless there are many more Wukans.

But the final point we need to register here is that this is indeed a problem of the political economy of China, and neither the village nor even county-level political machine is adequate to the task. Electing some other leaders in place of Lin Zuluan et al. is not likely to help, and what happened there is already a violation of the people's republican laws. What is needed—among other things but prominently among them—is a stronger state intervention into the economy and Party policies. One can call this a movement toward *economic democracy*, if the signifier 'democracy' has not been entirely spoiled by neo-liberalism. But it is also a movement against economism, against the subsumption of politics by economics, as we have been presenting it here. Growth and development and ever new sources of money are not the point, but in many ways are the problems. China, like most wealthy or large countries or even 'societies' like Hong Kong, has enough money, but too much economism. This is, paradoxically enough, one strange fruit of liberalism and its rise through and persistence after colonization and empire. The PRC will need to challenge its own powerful investment in liberalism, that is in the form of its strident economism and capitalistic developmentalism via the market principle. The holy words of growth and 'the economic' should appear to the Party-state, one should hope, as a far greater threat or challenge to people's livelihood and to state legitimacy than the comparatively weak powers and seductions of political liberalism or multi-party voting. The latter played little role in Wukan, just up the road from the colonial-liberal enclave of Hong Kong. At the same time we, on the outside, so to speak—and with all due allowances for the slipperiness of the inside/outside distinction—need necessarily think through and against the limits of political liberalism. It simply cannot serve as a useful template to understand phenomena like Wukan and the political in China and elsewhere.

Notes

1. This statement reflects my own response to the closing argument of Prasenjit Duara in his excellent chapter, 'Hong Kong as a Global Frontier: Interface of China, Asia, and the World,' in *Hong Kong in the Cold War*, eds. Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll (Hong Kong University Press, 2016).
2. The long essays of Perry Anderson in his *New Left Review* journal are important for capturing this sense of bleakness. But see as well the critical but generous review of the 'ultra' or 'libcom' Internet-based publishing group, *Endnotes* by Tim Barker, 'The Bleak Left' (*N+1* Issue Spring 28, 2017. https://nplusonemag.com/issue-28/reviews/the-bleak-left/). I discuss this issue of bleakness and political possibility (or its absence) in more detail in the final chapter.
3. See, for a recent example, Zi Yang's report, 'Rural China and the Asian Methamphetamine Trade: a Case Study of Lufeng,' from Japan, via the November 20, *Modern Tokyo Times*, via The Jamestown Foundation think tank in the USA.: http://moderntokyotimes.com/?p=6553. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
4. A basic timeline of the Wukan saga can be found in Hong Kong's *South China Morning Post* http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/2019006/symbol-chinas-rural-democracy-five-years-struggle-wukan. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
5. I am indebted to Laurence Dang's excellent M.A. thesis, 'Wuthering Wukan: Community Communication and Social Drama in Peasants' Mass Incidents in China,' supervised by Tim Simpson at Macau University for this and other insights.
6. Dang, 'Wuthering Wukan,' 42.
7. For an elaborate discussion, see Steve Hess, 'Foreign Media Coverage and Protest Outcomes in China: The case of the 2011 Wukan rebellion' (Modern Asian Studies 49.1 2015: 177–203).
8. Chen, 'The Example of Wukan.' The Chinese original of Chen's article can be found online at http://blog.qq.com/qzone/622007996/1327030504.htm. Accessed Jan. 7, 2015, An English translation by David Bandurski can be found at the China Media Project of HKU http://chinamediaproject.org/2012/01/30/the-legacy-of-wukan/. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
9. See Edward Wong, 'Canny Villagers Grasp Keys to Loosen China's Muzzle' in December 22, 2011, *The New York Times*. http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/23/world/asia/canny-wukan-villagers-grasp-keys-to-loosen-chinas-muzzle.html. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017. I should note that this article also makes note of the Wukan media savviness and self-awareness. It is an exceptionally smart report from Hong Kong, though it puts Hong Kong's influence in only positive terms for Guangdong.

10. The film was later expanded into six parts from four, after the most recent and perhaps final stage of the protests in 2016. (We'll broach the latest developments below). Not surprisingly, the last two parts are far more pessimistic but also based largely in the USA and outside of China (their access was blocked far more and they spoke to fewer villagers in Wukan). http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/specialseries/2017/04/wukan-china-democracy-experiment-170403074626458.html. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
11. Bo became the leader of Chongqing after Wang Yang's time there. His success, including in wiping out mafia and white collar crime, could be read by some as an indictment of Wang, just as the two of them were often read as being in a competition for the rise to the top (which at one level is merely common sense or banally true). Needless to say, Wang Yang won the long game, and is now a member of the Standing Committee of the Politbureau, thanks in part to Wukan being settled under his watch or guidance.
12. James Pomfret, 'Special Report: Freedom fizzles out in China's rebel town of Wukan' March 1, 2013, https://in.reuters.com/article/us-china-wukan/special-report-freedom-fizzles-out-in-chinas-rebel-town-of-wukan-idINBRE91R1J020130228. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
13. Xinhua report on March 14, 2014, *China Daily*, 'Wukan Village Deputy Head Detained.' https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2014-03/14/content_17348253.htm. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
14. See *China Daily* September 12, 2016, 'Lufeng makes progress on Wukan problem.' http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/regional/2016-09/12/content_26772987.htm. Accessed Nov. 17, 2017. There is enough detail in this particular report to make a persuasive case that the state did redress some of the injustices and took pains to alleviate the unhappiness in Wukan. That this was not enough for many of the people in 2016 is also clear.
15. According to one report by Michelle Wines in January 16, 2012, *The New York Times*, the villagers had claimed 6.8 square miles have been taken and sold, with Yang Semao claiming 'far more' may have been, but he had no way of knowing. 'Protester Made a Boss by the Party He Defied' http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/17/world/asia/protest-leader-becomes-party-boss-in-chinese-village-that-rebelled.html. Accessed Nov. 19, 2017.
16. As cited in a very useful essay by Johan Lagerkvist, 'The Wukan Uprising and Chinese State-Society Relations: Toward "Shadow Civil Society"?,' 346. (*International Journal of China Studies* 3.3 2012: 345–361.) The last phrase quoted here is from Prof. Sun, and the former from Prof Lagerkvist.
17. See Heilman and Perry, op cit. chapter 1.
18. See Ho Fung Hung's blog post on the Columbia University Press website, 'South China's Protests Are Not as Subversive as Many Think.' http://www.cupblog.org/?p=5224. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.

19. See Ching Kwan Lee and Yonghong Zhang, 'The Power of Instability: Unraveling the Microfoundations of Bargained Authoritarianism in China' (*American Journal of Sociology* 118.6 2013: 1475–1508). The functionalism or 'closed circles' in some such social science research is striking, though the empirical detail remains valuable.
20. Stanley Lubman, 'Wukan: New Election, Same Old Story' (March 27, 2014, *Wall Street Journal*). https://blogs.wsj.com/chinarealtime/2014/03/27/wukan-new-election-same-old-story/. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
21. See Yu Hua, 'In China, the Grievances Keep Coming' in *The New York Times* January 1, 2012. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/02/opinion/in-china-the-grievances-keep-coming.html. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
22. See Hess, 'Foreign Media Coverage,' 6–7.
23. See also Luigi Tomba, 'What Does Wukan Have to Do With Democracy?' *Made in China: A Quarterly on Chinese Labour, Civil Society, and Rights* (Issue 4, 2016). https://www.chinoiresie.info/what-does-wukan-have-to-do-with-democracy/. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017. Tomba asks a great question: does every protest in China have to be about some movement toward democracy? Clearly the answer is no.
24. See Tomba, Ibid.
25. Lagerkvist, Ibid., 355.
26. Lagerkvist, 357.
27. My point is that one would truly have to be in Wukan and closely associated with it to venture a confident, warranted analysis along these lines. Not possible for the present author, and not least due to lack of funding from the Hong Kong RGC. But the clan factor does indeed seem too important to leave out here or to banish to a footnote altogether, and the return to clan relations and clan politics in general has been noted by many others. I should note that I had one 'source' or Guangdong-rooted comrade who wanted to argue along these same lines, but for my own part I was unable to receive a grant from the HK UGC to fund such investigations/trips.
28. See, for example, the quasi-academic webzine 'Chuang,' volume 1, an American/Californian/West Coast view of 'the Chinese proletariat.' http://chuangcn.org/journal/one/. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
29. See James Pomfret, Ibid.
30. See again the always useful China Media Project at Hong Kong University, translation care of David Bandurski, 'Wukan official resigns from elected position.' http://cmp.hku.hk/2012/10/24/wukan-democracy-leader-resigns/. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.

31. See 'Interview: We Called on Trump For Justice in Wukan' at the Cold War news agency Radio Free Asia on December 16, 2016: http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/wukan-zhuang-12162016161546.html. Accessed Nov. 20, 2017.
32. See Dan Levin, April 1, 2014, *The New York Times*, 'Years After Revolt, Chinese Village Glumly Returns to Polls.' https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/01/world/asia/years-after-revolt-chinese-village-glumly-returns-to-polls.html. Accessed Nov. 21, 2017.
33. I am unable to find any evidence of an appeal by Yang Semao.
34. Dan Levin. Ibid.
35. The fate of their appeals is unknown as of the time of writing, but the repressive tactic is obvious enough.
36. Put another way, what offends in such an equation of Tibet with Hong Kong (or Xinjiang and even Taiwan) is that Hong Kong is not oppressed or dominated or subject to Han chauvinism; it is a perpetrator of the latter more than anything else, and has its own legacies of racism in regards to South and Southeast Asians living in the city, just as it exists in a position of great privilege in comparison to other places within China. Not all SARS are alike, and if Taiwan has been de facto independent for several generations, the same cannot be said of Hong Kong, which depends on China in numerous ways. For an example of such false and superficial equivalencies, see a blog by a couple China experts in the *Los Angeles Review of Books*: 'Could Hong Kong become Tibet 2.0?.' https://blog.lareviewofbooks.org/chinablog/hong-kong-become-tibet-2-0/. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017.
37. This figure taken from a recent study on Chinese inequality by Thomas Piketty, Li Yang, and Gabriel Zucman. They put the 1978 number at 70%. See their 'Capital Accumulation, Private Property and Rising Inequality in China, 1978–2015' at the National Bureau of Economic Research, *Working Paper No. 23368.* June 2017. http://www.nber.org/papers/w23368. Accessed Nov. 24, 2017.
38. Lu as quoted by Rachel Wang in her 2013 *Foreign Policy* article on Wukan, 'Setback for Chinese Democracy: Why Protest Leader Admits He "Regrets" Taking Charge of Wukan' (http://www.tealeafnation.com/2013/02/setback-for-chinese-democracy-why-protest-leader-admits-he-regrets-taking-charge-of-wukan). See also Prof. Lu Xinyu, at http://www.weibo.com/2569634794/zjaUnF5UC?type=comment. Accessed June 2014.
39. Many on the non-Chinese left would argue that China is already capitalist, just as the right or liberals would argue that alas it is not *truly* capitalist but a degraded, crony form of it. But all of this begs the question of what form or variety of capitalism, how to define this, and so on. It would generally

be admitted by those who actually study the PRC that if it is capitalist, it is radically different and novel form of it, for good and for ill. And at any rate, the PRC—the Party-state and those who take it seriously—sees itself as being socialist or socialistic. One needs to reckon with this claim and its truth effects and even validity before simply agreeing or disagreeing with it on principle.

40. Lin Chun, *China and Global Capitalism*, 73. See the entire chapter here for more.

CHAPTER 6

The Ills of Liberalism: Thinking Through the PRC and the Political

As we might all agree, China is clearly not-liberal and therefore in a sense 'illiberal' on semantic or etymological grounds alone (see the discussion in chapter 1). The present study has offered an examination of an 'illiberal' China, of the PRC as an allegedly illiberal political regime. This turn of phrase is common enough in the media and 'respectable' journalism. But it is also invoked in, and still more often assumed by academic writing as well—as when the PRC is framed as illiberal because it is authoritarian (which like all states, it is) and repressive (which like all states, it is). But is this merely a matter of degree, i.e., that it is more of these bad things than, say, the United States or India and it is this that makes it illiberal? Or is there more to this story about regimes and discourses and comparisons? China represents a threat or at least a *challenge* to liberal or liberal-democratic ideology. Elizabeth Perry aptly diagnosed this 'challenge' as early as 2012 in the academic literature, by framing the PRC as an *attentive* authoritarian regime: its contentious civil society and protest culture actually enhance Party-state rule, in part because the state attends to protest and problems and chooses to act or not act on them.[1] This can be said to compare favorably to 'real' democratic regimes where even massive anti-war protests or 'occupy' movements (e.g. Wall Street) are duly and entirely ignored. This illiberalness aka 'attentive authoritarianism' is, however, seen as a bad thing, even if a not-so hidden admiration can also be discerned in such framings of China as, for example, a '*perfect* dictatorship.'[2] It is framed as illiberal despite it having an undeniably active civil

D. F. Vukovich, *Illiberal China*, China in Transformation,
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society and public sphere, a long history and culture of contentious and serious, if also subtle and non-European style, political protests. It is framed as politically illiberal even though it has never particularly aspired to political liberalism for the last century, and even though its skyrocketing numbers of 'mass incidents'—brought about by a liberalization of the economy, it must be recalled—have at times won concessions from the state or forced it to address its failures. The argument in the present text is that the PRC's 'illiberalism' is fundamentally ambiguous, and neither simply negative and objectionable nor merely ripe for a perennial liberal debunking by China watchers and self-professed experts.

This illiberal challenge or threat, as perceived by foreigners, is not simply about a sentimental or otherwise psychologically motivated liberal concern for the oppressed or suffering Other, almost always to be found in the darker, foreign places of the world, so to speak. (Though this is a familiar enough phenomenon of Euro-American popular culture in its own right.) This is also not simply another manifestation of fear or war mongering over, for example, Chinese military and economic expansion in, say, the South Pacific or in Africa (and some of which certainly warrants proper concern from within Southeast Asia or Africa). While overtly orientalist statements and discourse, framing China as a formidable enemy to national security or to 'humanity,' have not gone away, these are not out concern in the present study. If under older, more classically orientalist conditions of knowledge production during the revolutionary years, the China threat was chiefly of the 'yellow peril' or Sinophobic variety, then in the current conjuncture it is all about the PRC refusing to become the same as the liberal universalist model or norm.

The specter of illiberal China is much more an ideological ghost, then, where the stability or rise or persistence of the communist PRC represents a threat to liberalism and the liberal world order of the last 30 or more years. At times China is merely lumped in with a more general rise of 'illiberalism,' as when the eminent British political philosopher John Gray invokes Xi Jinping and post-Mao China alongside the former Soviet Union, Brexit, and 'Romney-style [American] Republicans,' in a global synopsis of the 'dark forces' leading to the current 'strange death of liberal politics.'[3] At other points, the PRC is a clear and present danger to 'free markets and democratic liberalism,' as when two political scientists diagnose China's 'twin illiberalisms' of 'illiberal capitalism' and 'illiberal sovereignty' (the latter denotes doing business with non-democratic or bad regimes abroad, and the former is the usual neo-lib speak about free markets).[4] The fact that the PRC does not seek to export either revolution or authoritarianism—the

latter being well taken care of in most countries at any rate—does not lessen the ideological threat here. But it *is* a threat to the self-identity and veritable mirror stage of the occidental West more than to anything else.

This is also to say, in so many words, that to see the PRC as illiberal is to see it as abnormal or unfree and lacking: in comparison to implicitly Western and free, and 'advanced' liberal democracies, such as the United States and much of Western Europe and Scandinavia, or even to Hong Kong (an undoubted beneficiary of colonial liberalism in this sense). This attribution of lack and abnormality does, however, bring us back to the essential logic or force of classical orientalism. If the problems with such a comparison and framing are not immediately obvious in the current conjuncture, where Xi Jinping and the Party stand out as exemplars of free trade and globalization, and the United States is struck by racial unrest and violence it has not seen in decades, then it may help to again recall the etymology of the word 'illiberal': it has always been an insult more than a concept, a keyword for the rise of liberalism against its enemies in a political context rooted in the UK and Europe during the rise of the bourgeoisie.

While no one would deny that the Party-state can act in a baldly authoritarian and repressive manner, so, too, few well-informed observers would deny that the PRC has democratic aspects: not just those same protests and civil/public spheres but even the control of capital by the state, the punishment of corrupt abusers of capital and the law, and an ability to act, if belatedly and not always successfully, in the public interest. This is in addition to a demonstrated—and perceived—ability to make the economy grow and improve peoples' livelihood. (We return to the latter dimension below.) But there is more to the story of liberalism and illiberalism here; there is something beyond this 'balance' or combination of repression, empowerment, and protest at work, and which this study has tried to suggest. The PRC is in many ways engaged in a protracted resistance to, indeed, a struggle *against* liberalism. Even if it—that is, the leading forces within the Party—is no longer serious about continuing its Maoist/communist revolution or even pursuing any politics of radical equality, it is still struggling against liberalism and at the very least a perceived foreign imperialism. It attempts to ban liberalism, to a varying but palpable extent, from universities and social media, for example, and more generally tries to counter Western rhetoric or knowledge production about itself in other ways. This is the gist of its efforts to deploy soft power globally (e.g. through Confucius Institutes and student exchanges abroad, through a less imperious, more free-trade approach to investment in Africa, and so on) and to promulgate such patriotic or nationalistic tropes and ideas as

'the China dream.'[5] Joseph Nye, the pro-genitor of the so-called concept of 'soft power' has always found China to be lacking it (which is to say it lacks a civil society and political and cultural values attractive to 'us' non-Chinese, non-Russians, etc.).[6] But one could argue that China does exert soft power, certainly at home to its own enormous population and abroad, and through its economic 'performance legitimacy' and free-trade globalism.[7] The PRC carries out this struggle, an effort by no means guaranteed to succeed in the long term, even while championing the all-important economic base of liberalism: of a classical laissez-faire, global free-trade kind, and an equally if not more fateful deployment of markets, profit, and 'growth' within its own borders. This battle within and against market- and political liberalism is certainly complicated and protracted and a general mess. It may even be simply confused and somewhat desperate. While again, one wonders how long the 'statist' state can hold out against those who want to eliminate state control of the economy and the few decent jobs left (outside of the multinationals like Foxconn) when there are still assets and commons to be stripped. But it is also of interest for what it tells us not just about China and its relation to the West but about the nature of the political or politics today. It is in this sense that PRC illiberalism is *instructive*. If leftist or critical politics is in retreat in an age of neoliberalism, can China at least help us understand why, and where liberalism—always the dominant ideology and politics of modernity, now unchallenged by socialism or communism—has reached its limits?

Taking Stock

But we should first recap and survey the ground we have covered so far, before we return to the consequences or implications of an 'illiberal China' in an increasingly neo-liberal or politically degraded global conjuncture (a context posited here in the beginning chapter). The new left, broadly defined as focused on real as opposed to formal equality and on the legitimacy—and the reclaiming—of the state (as against the market principle) can in the current conjuncture only be seen as illiberal and 'statist' in some undefined but allegedly beyond-the-pale sense. This in itself—the new left's largely hostile reception by Chinese liberals and by foreign academics[8]—has much to say about the current intellectual political culture, globally and in China. For it to be controversial to argue for state capacity, for it to be 'statist' (a Hayekian pejorative) because one desires a redistributionist and pro-active mode of governance over and above market forces and the pursuit of private property, all of this illustrates

the 'truth' of the global rule of liberalism today. That side has won. One can even include certain 'radical,' leftish theoretical versions of anti-statism, or what Timothy Brennan memorably coined as 'the anarchist sublime,' within this global conjuncture or intellectual political culture.[9]

And yet what the new left suggests to us—in its illiberal 'statism' and its re-articulation and re-significations of the revolution and Maoist discourse, in its insistence on the positivity of the radical leftist past as well as of Chinese difference from 'Western' historiography and conceptual framings—is a counter-discourse to liberalism. It should be seen as an intellectual and discursive phenomenon, a movement away from the degradations and fetishism of liberalism and full-on globalization (that so preoccupied the 1980s). It may not last and it is certainly swimming against the tides in China and the world. But it is also one with—over time—the potential to make a political difference for China and thus perhaps elsewhere. While the new left (and old left) desires to speak to the state and influence it scandalizes some, the more interesting part of this is that sometimes the Chinese state listens, or at least tolerates the left voices critical of globalization and China since the 1980s. The state's ambivalence here can be seen in allowing leftist professors to exist (which it almost has to, given the Maoist or Marxist history of the PRC), in the first place. This is significant already at the level of academic or intellectual 'knowledge production.' Not only are there, for example, numerous Chinese intellectuals, professors, and authors working from a varied but palpable leftist (Marxist, social equality/justice) orientation, but the terrain of academic exchange has shifted. As Gregory Mahoney has noted, the hegemony of liberalism (a liberal Occidentalism[10]) and general Western adulation has been greatly weakened, even as Chinese academe and foreign exchanges have radically increased. The return or rebirth of leftist Chinese intellectuals and academics (again as opposed to more popular voices) coincides with, and helps drive, a writing back against a Western liberal universalism. Whether one is talking about the work of Wang Hui and Cui Zhiyuan, or Lu Xinyu and Cai Xiang, to take just four examples from across the humanistic and empirical fields, there is now a very substantial and considered response or body of knowledge from such intellectuals and academics. It is critical not just of capitalism and imperialism in general terms (and in China), but also of Western historiography and interpretations of China, and the orientalist 'mandate' that China must become like the US-West to be normal and free and so on. This would be easy to underestimate or to just dismiss as a by-product of Chinese

nationalism or patriotism (as if that were a singular and monolithic thing) or of being, as we saw in reference to new work of the Leap famine, a result of being on the state's payroll, that is being a willing or duped stooge. But anyone reading Wang, Cui, Cai Xiang, or others—theirs and others' works are increasingly published in English to boot—can tell that this is real academic, substantial work and cannot be cavalierly dismissed.

The new left's and other intellectuals' influence in terms of knowledge production and struggles over discourse (knowledge-power or hegemony) is certainly not major and does not claim to be; but it is still significant, not trivial, and can yet have long-term effects in 'liberating' knowledge of China. Certainly, it is responsible for helping keep Maoist or socialist discourse alive and re-articulated to the present era. Again the insistence on Chinese 'difference' from liberalism is key here, even if it means getting framed as illiberal or suspicious by outsiders and liberals everywhere. This influence or potential for it is especially true in a Party-state that takes ideas and ideologies seriously (perhaps too seriously), but applies virtually everywhere else. It would be foolish to argue that the US academy has had no role in fomenting and keeping alive a progressive and humane political discourse in the face of right-wing resurgence and liberal degradations under Clinton and beyond.

In more popular 'left' registers, the Utopia website, for example (more 'old' than 'new' leftist but these overlap), still exists and is allowed to. Interestingly, this site and others are sometimes freely available *inside* China but blocked for those *outside* the PRC, as if the state fears its leftist adherents are not for export, unfit for liberal 'foreign consumption.'[11] So in sum, left views are tolerated if not occasionally saluted by the Party-state (it shares after all an anti-imperialism and basic nationalism), especially in comparison to, say, ardent liberal or neo-liberal views. The appointment of Wang Hui of Tsinghua to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), an advisory body that informs the central government, is an obvious case in point.[12] The point here is that clearly some people in the Party-state, and even the apparatus itself, allow leftist voices and intellectuals to exist and to still be heard.[13] This is no doubt a minority affair; this may not weather the drive for de-politicization, the complete commodification of the state, and the increased policing of speech under Xi Jinping. This is a weak power for the intellectuals and for left-of-center, equalitarian or statist political ideology. But it is something. There is a potential there to not only have the responsibility to speak to the state, the nation, the state of the world—one version of the

intellectual's vocation—but to have the state listen to or recognize you, or at least allow you to do your own work as an intellectual and teacher. This would seem to compare favorably with many other, liberal countries and academies. Thus, the idea that the new (or 'old') left is complicit with the Party-state, or that it is merely a fantasy among its participants, itself comprehensively misses the significance of the movement after 1989.

The rise and fall and yet persistence of Chinese liberalism after Tiananmen and the occidental/cultural 'fever' of the 1980s can likewise help illuminate China and the world. I have argued that this is a dark illumination, and that it speaks to the shadow of cultural imperialism and the global hegemony of 'Western' intellectual political culture (as an ideal type or as the West's own, Occidentalist self-understanding.)[14] But this liberalism is genuinely neo-liberal not only in its anti-communism or anti-Maoism (which it normally has to euphemize since it implies risk) but also in its anti-statism and its enthusiastic embrace of free-market ideology, and of course in its Dengist embrace of capital and 'reform.' It is no accident that von Hayek and his ilk are the points of reference more than, say, J. S. Mill (who had his own elite limits indeed). It is tempting to conclude that it is the Chinese liberals—in their silence about the massive exploitation and proletarianization of Chinese labor, and of the theft of the commons formerly known as socialism and the iron rice bowl—who represent the illiberal—the vulgar and the beyond-the-pale—despite the occasional Voltaire-esque flourishes and Enlightenment postures. But liberalism is as liberalism does. This is what liberalism is now, despite any nostalgia one may have for one Enlightenment or another (Chinese, European, etc.). And what their persistence speaks to is not only the global rise of a certain mentality and political economy but the re-articulation of an older Cold War liberal anti-communism and 'political science' seeping into Chinese intellectual culture via the global academy, translations of, say, Sinology dons like Roderick MacFarquhar or Ezra Vogel, and so on.[15] That fateful, de-Maoifying Dengist turn to the market in the 1980s, a global- or Western-dominated market at that, also meant that liberalism came in or 'returned' from the pre-revolutionary, colonial past; while much weaker than in the 1980s, it is unlikely to be expunged given the place of liberalism in, or even *as* Western intellectual political culture. Liberalism, even its degraded form, somehow comes with the territory of capital and the world system, even if it is also true that China's and the CCP's power and sovereignty are no longer at stake. Deng Xiaoping, that utterly pragmatic Chinese nationalist, would probably care not at all.

Likewise the two most significant protest movements in China in recent years, Wukan's and Hong Kong's, form a diptych about liberalism, illiberalism, and democracy. The two protests and sets of protesters differ greatly, with one being illiberal in the sense of 'pro-Party-state' or pro-Beijing, at least tactically and perhaps genuinely, and the other being stridently liberal, proceduralist, and anti-communist/anti-Beijing to the point of self-defeat. But combined they show how the allegedly all-powerful Chinese state—even if confronted effectively via triangulating the media and using smart, rhetorical appeals to power, as in Wukan—seems to lack the capacity or at least the will to tackle the fundamental sources of inequality and disempowerment. The state can hold new elections as a result of popular, local demand, and despite the constant insults from the opposition, proposed a new version of this even to Hong Kong. And there is no good reason not to call this a democratic result (with 'Chinese characteristics' or limits). But the Party-state, including its representatives down in Hong Kong (e.g. the liaison office), either cannot or will not address the power of capital and fundamental class inequality in Wukan or in the SAR.[16] It is heretofore committed to a market-based economism and 'growth' or profit accumulation, perhaps in the mistaken belief that the Party's mission and legitimacy depend on a 'rising tide that lifts all boats.' If 'growth' rises then the whole populace's well-being and standard of living does too. Or at least the hope is that enough of this happens to preserve stability and offset any demographically significant class/privilege resentments and politics.

This gambit is thus far closer to Adam Smith than Karl Marx or Mao Zedong. But if one follows the perspective of Fernand Braudel, that markets are different than, and exist prior to, capitalism and that it is the latter which captures them and leads to the worst ill effects, then China may already be on a non-capitalist path or it at least can be. This argument is the late Giovanni Arrighi's, in his *Adam Smith in Beijing*, that generated no small amount of controversy among the Western left.[17] But then came the 'airpocalypse' in Beijing, and still more rising inequality and the ineffectual Hu Jintao—Wen Jiabao decade of leadership. It would be hard to find many—particularly in the West or outside of China—who still hold out hope for Arrighi's provocative (and strongly argued) optimism for a non-capitalist world market (or a Chinese one). And there remains the essential divide between the Braudelian or Smithian view of markets and those of a more radical, perhaps specifically Marxist-Leninist-Maoist persuasion. (One can generate a Marx to support either.) At the same

time, the longue durée view of world systems theory also means that the story of possible non-capitalist markets and global systemic shifts is far from over. The point (captured for world systems thought by the late Gunder Frank) about China's rise, for example, is almost universally accepted.[18]

The pro-market 'non-capitalist' view may well be what 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' amounts to, even if it is not often spelled out this way (as if it were to too political to say so), or at least is the best positive spin to the post-Mao Dengist turn. Later, we will further explore this as, alternatively, a mode of politics-as-economism. But it must be said immediately that it is not stupid and has been remarkably effective. The PRC is the last standing, at least nominally communist nation-state, and in 1949 was up against seemingly insurmountable odds of poverty, 'backwardness,' Cold War hostilities, imminent American wars in Asia, and even great nation chauvinism coming down from the ostensible Russian ally. Its Dengist economism is even 'mass democratic' in its own quasi-populist or 'people's livelihood' way. It at least evinces a consistent if perhaps primarily *rhetorical* concern with everyone's standard of living, and in a formerly poor, Third World country (which China still is in some of its interior and countryside places), this counts for something important. It is always worth recalling that while China is indeed the PRC as a modern and unified, centralized, stable political entity (the reality and positivity of the PRC system is something many wish to ignore in their political analyses), the worlds of the major cities and, say, Zhejiang province are not representative of all of the mainland. Many people are still poor, and there is stark inequality throughout the country, which may actually give the Party more, not less, legitimacy as a single and singular entity dedicated to (future) growth and prosperity.

But this mode of governance is also at least *capitalistic* if not capital*ism*, and produces not only inequalities but certain risks and contingencies under such conditions of globalization.[19] This is not only obvious now in terms of, say, looming environmental catastrophe and unsafe food. The mode is also failing because the economics behind it no longer works. This is also the lesson of Wukan, and even Hong Kong. Property speculation is no substitute for a real economy, nor is tourism. Chinese growth, while still strong compared to elsewhere, is markedly down and unsustainable at its 'normal' high rates in the long run, as the CCP is fully aware. Capital flight, falling profitability in the export industries, slack domestic demand, massive amounts of corruption, failing bank loans and 'excess' borrowing,

the admittedly, even deliberately less profitable state-owned industries, and so on, are all familiar to any follower of Chinese economic news.

The point here is that, for Wukan, the decline of agriculture and the limits of urbanization preclude not only the full redress of land thefts but also alternative livelihoods for the majority of rural people. Illiberalism or anti-liberal appeals to the state for redress, and at least getting some recompense, are more effective democratically speaking (for China at least) than trying to simulate 1989, Tahir Square (which also ended badly, it must be said), or Hong Kong's picturesque umbrellas (which have mostly had an impact on academic Hong Kong studies). Liberalism only fails politically in the current conjuncture. This is in part because it has been so degraded from its social democratic or Keynesian or 'belly liberalism' glory days of the 1960s and early 1970s. (There is no good reason, aside from Hayekian neo-lib and anti-communism, for protesters or commentators to sneer at the state; one could easily argue that this too is, or was, an old-fashioned liberal value.) It is no accident that the legalistic and Hayekian, free-market-uber-alles arguments and professionals win so few hearts and minds in the mainland compared to the so-called statists. In sum, Wukan worked, and failed, and the conclusion to draw would be that the only alternative is for more Wukans and more qualified successes/failures until there is a proper Chinese national reckoning with its own mode of development since Mao.

For Hong Kong the basic lesson of politics might in the long run be the same: Hong Kong's (and Beijing's) failure to move on from a tycoon-appeasing and self-professed 'capitalism' (of a very neo-liberal type) in the SAR. But this is well off into the future and for now the entrenched commitment on both sides to the document called the Basic Law—a non-enforceable text that unfortunately assumes autonomy is possible, let alone desirable—means that 'Beijing' has won the day. Again, excluding some sort of convergence/implosion of the mainland government (a religious belief indeed). Or unless there is some relatively major change of Party composition and direction, a reclaiming of the commanding heights of the economy, as they used to be called. But that rising tide isn't going to come to Hong Kong either, without that change in Party-state direction and stewardship of the economy, which is to say from greater, not lesser ties and connections to the mainland. Liberal economics is precisely the problem. Hong Kong simply lacks an economic base beyond finance and tourism (aka consumerism), and is overwhelmingly committed to a laissez-faire, not a social democratic society. It hoards money as opposed

to spending it, and even then the opposition is dedicated to filibustering virtually all spending initiatives, be they good or bad or something muddled together.[20] Again Beijing seems to have no real, pro-active plan other than waiting. For all the talk of 'mainlandization' and intrusions into the city's alleged autonomy, the larger story is that the mainland is very, even too patient. It awaits the rising tide of the mainland-cantered economy and for the opposition to die off or give up, all the while slowly pursuing neo-liberal policies that primarily benefit the tycoon, finance, and rentier classes. For that to change it will necessarily take protest and social movements in the streets and elsewhere, but directed at something other than instituting political liberalism. In this the Wukan villagers up the road in Guangdong had a more effective tactic, at least in 2011 and 2012.

What these two important protests show in their own way is also that—howsoever limited and partial—there is always the chance the state will respond in some fashion. Not just repressively (always a distinct danger and possibility) but pro-actively or positively. Even in the case of the latter, harshly illiberal, final crackdown of the Wukan protesters (i.e. jailing many), the state also responded with more funding of community initiatives. And yet to get a response from the illiberal state along the lines you would like, means using illiberal means. That is, one has to appeal to those parts of the Party-state that derive their legitimacy from 'serving the people' and that can recognize the tradition of 'righteous resistance' or more simply loyal opposition. Now my argument here may be immediately dismissed by committed liberals (including friends and colleagues in Hong Kong) or Occidentalists as either a call for Confucian submission (or a celebration of it), or for blindness as to the true, evil, or incompetent nature of the communist regime. But it is the anti-Confucians and liberals who denigrate such 'righteous' Chinese protests and appeals as submissive, as if the Chinese are in general submissive dupes, and their system a failure because it is abnormal or pre-modern.[21] And liberal Hong Kong, for example, continues its 'proud' and 'autonomous' decline into becoming a Monaco or capital-sink for connected mainlanders and home-grown property speculators. Clearly, the mainland and especially Hong Kong need more state, not less, and a movement or discourse against liberalism but coming from a leftist or egalitarian direction.

So if a productive response from the state is possible, then it stands as a clear, superior alternative to, for example, the Hong Kong opposition's intractable liberalism and desire for autonomy or freedom—if not in fact a de facto independence—*from* the mainland of which it is a part. One can

compare this actuality and capacity of the Chinese state favorably as well to protests elsewhere, from Occupy Wall Street (which made no demands and achieved the same amount) to anti-war efforts in London under the Blair administration, to the systemic failures and idiosyncrasies that led to the USA electing a deeply unpopular president and the UK leaving the EU. It is currently an unpopular opinion, but at some point—hopefully sooner than later, if peoples' livelihoods actually matter to liberals, democrats, and others—Hong Kong's politicians, civil society stalwarts, and citizens will have to start demanding positive freedoms *to* benefit from the mainland economy and the inseparable mainland political, legal, and social systems. This means this same demographic will have to let go of its professed desire for autonomy in these realms at least. One would think that Hong Kong could in theory retain nearly all of its cultural and ideological autonomy, even its mostly concealed contempt for much of the north, were it to 'let go' of at least the political autonomy ideal (which it does not quite have to begin with).

Much the same can be said for movements across the border just to the north, though the mainland political culture is clearly less state-phobic and more full of 'rightful resistance' to begin with. To clarify: the right to protest in any case is essential, regardless of the content or lack thereof. This applies to, say, the rather eccentric and cultish Falun Gong protesters in Hong Kong (or even the deeply xenophobic groups), just as much as to the far more serious protests over land thefts, laws, and quasi-constitutional documents. It is admittedly and unambiguously just this 'right' or all-important capacity of citizens and political societies that is imperiled by contemporary mainland illiberalism, and increasingly so under Xi Jinping to date. But this is not necessarily the fate of Chinese politics today on the mainland. Wukan's land thefts were addressed, if imperfectly and not to the original protest leaders' extent. Even as it squashes dissent in many quarters, especially in potentially explosive 'border' areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet, the Party-state takes pro-active actions in others: 'greening' the energy supply, expanding higher education, and so on. Again, if the point of the political is to satisfy one's demands and interests and well-being, including the need to politically participate in itself, then the Hong Kong-esque 'neo-liberal' anti-state or state-phobic politics—something arguably pioneered by the Americans after Reagan and the 1980s—is clearly a dead end. Even an illiberal or authoritarian system, if it acts positively in other ways and in response to protest and criticism and looming social problems, is better than a non-system or an anti-state or small, weak-state politics that more or less defines actually existing liberalism today.

Illiberalism and Livelihood as a (De-politicized) Politics and Refusal

The PRC, then, *is* illiberal in some sense, but in a complex way that deserves consideration and calls out for analysis, not dismissal and mere debunking.[22] If traditionally the (Maoist) communist revolution resisted liberalism—seen, rightfully, as complicit with capitalism, imperialism, and war, and of little use in either saving or re-building China—then in the post-Mao period, clearly 'capitalistic' if we can dispense with putting too fine a point on it, it is still engaged in this struggle. The opposition to liberalism (or 'neo-liberalism' in recent years) remains. One could argue that, politically speaking, and from the standpoint of the PRC state, the liberalism it fights is roughly similar to the earlier one in terms of its universalist pretensions, its anti-communism, and its desire to contain or constrain China. The West, which is to say the 'core' of a global capitalism centered in the USA and Western Europe, even including Norway and its Nobel Peace Prize, wants to advance its interests and normative worldview.

But aside from this one geo-political struggle against a liberal enemy, the composition of the now de-politicizing Party-state, purged of its original left, and even populists like Bo Xilai, as well as its mode of accumulation, are far different and decidedly un-communist by any measure. There is something very real yet bitterly ironic about a struggle between what are, in the end, clearly inegalitarian regimes despite all the socialist and democratic nomenclatures involved. And all of this exists in a radically different context than that of the 1970s and late Maoism (if ironically kick-started globally by that Sino-US rapprochement of 1972). A relative end or weakening, for Asia and China in particular, of Cold War liberal imperialism stemming from the West: the USA can only attempt, and mostly fail, at containing China's rise, and is in any case too close a business partner, and arguably even a partial 'friend' in the Schmittian sense, for any real hostilities to break out. Sanctions and boycotts against China should now seem like fairly ridiculous threats.

As I have argued earlier one can even say that the Party-state itself, and the new economy it brought into being in the 1980s, is fully liberal in the trade or market sense, and in the valorization of profit and wealth as the supreme good after the end of 'making revolution.' In fact the PRC is so adept at the practice and rhetoric of trade and globalization—the discourse of economic liberalism, if you will—that Xi Jinping's speeches at the Davos World Economic Forum in 2017 raised the very specter that liberals most

fear: that it is China and Xi, in the wake of US President Trump's shock victory, that may assume the mantle of liberal avatar for the new political-economic order.[23] That there is even a possibility of this, even as an imaginary, that is the PRC that may lead global free and fair, rule-based trade, gives the lie to the deep economism at the heart of liberalism: it is the market and exchange that subtend all the democratic talk of this and that. What is also exposed here, in the fear of China 'taking over' liberal world order leadership, is the old Western prerogative to lead and decide who can and should.

And yet, in China, that critique of liberalism and 'neo-liberalism' persists, despite its own economic practice, at least in terms of foreign trade. It persists in Chinese anti-imperialism and nationalism (which is multiple and varied), but also in the commitment to the state or state principle (and not only its own monopoly on rule). That state that so far refuses to privatize land or eliminate all state-owned industries. But there is another plank to the case for Chinese illiberalism that we must explore here. If in the previous era *revolutionary* 'illiberalism' spoke to a battle between socialism (which the Maoists and even the rightists were struggling to realize) and capitalism, radical and democratic equality and alternative modernity versus the true, formal freedom and individualism of liberalism, then the current era is about something else. Again one has to recall that, for the actually existing Marxist-Leninist revolutions, liberalism was seen as an 'enemy' or obstacle to be removed or precluded. In a sense this antipathy or what we might even call this 'path dependence' hasn't changed, and forms part of mainstream Chinese political intellectual culture today. It, and the rise of neo-liberalism, also makes it difficult to actualize something like 'liberal socialism' (in Cui Zhiyuan's phrase) in the PRC today.

What is this 'something else'? I will suggest that, and speaking to or from the Chinese side at any rate, and in addition to the state and national/imperial factors, the rational kernel within the Party's economism and illiberalism is its concern not simply with 'performance legitimacy' and 'abnormally staying in power' but with *livelihood*. Illiberal China or the Party-state system is concerned primarily with this—and not merely 'staying in power'—as the meaning or purpose of the state, and the point of deploying market-based or capitalistic economics. It is a vaguely communitarian or 'socialistic' ethic that clearly harkens back to the collective era (and Sun Yat-sen beforehand), as well as to a nebulous

but undeniable Confucian tradition. But it is also—and this is where the Dengist turn parallels the Schmittian analysis of liberal and economistic neutralization—a de-politicized ethic and mode of governance promulgated from above and through the market and consumer consumption as a way of life. We will return to the baleful de-politicizing dimension in the following section. (Abroad, this 'Chinese socialism' can have different meanings and functions, as when China's growth, industrial capacity, and 'rise' are often invoked in, say, South Asia and Africa and elsewhere as something to aspire to.)[24] Suffice it to say that it is decidedly anti-Maoist given the Chairman's penchant for mass mobilization (participation) as well as the high inequality within Chinese society due to that same over-deployment of markets and the profit motive.

But protestations that this isn't really socialism (often by Western Marxists who never had time for Maoism anyway)—while understandable in their own terms—tend to assume an ideal, universal type of that 'ism' or thing, and categorically miss the significance of China's rise and those raised living standards. The post-Mao drives toward de-politicization are indeed 'baleful enhancements' of the Communist Party. But even that and not just the economic rise of China must be reckoned with. It is a so-far brilliantly effective mode of governance, and is, if nothing else, a major historical or sociological 'fact' of the world today. It can also be seen as an act of post-colonial resistance or affirmation of 'difference' or particularity against liberalism and—pick your favorite term here—the Western or modern or global or imperial mandate and propaganda to follow the Euro-American ('universal') path to normalcy. China (the state but also many of its people), as has not escaped anyone's attention, is deeply ambivalent about such a road or such a notion of modern normalcy.

This refusal and alternative mode can indeed be connected in a general way with the Confucian/traditional heritage, and in terms of any proper intellectual history this has to be noted. But the danger in this—perhaps especially, but not exclusively, for those of us writing outside of China—is not only that it lends itself to orientalist stereotype but that that modern break is decisive. Today is not Confucius' Confucianism or even that of the early 1900s, and even calling it neo-Confucian may cede too much. One might then better begin with Guomindang founder (and socialist as well as arch-nationalist) Sun Yat-Sen, who, it may be recalled, put 'the people's livelihood' (民生主義, Mínshēng Zhǔyì) as the third cardinal 'principle of the people.' (The other two are typically translated as nationalism and democracy.)

This same, fundamentally welfarist principle was radicalized by the Communists (Sun admired Russia but stopped short of embracing Marxism or communism), and degraded by the reactionary Chiang Kai-shek within the Guomindang. By the time of Maoism-in-power, after the Party's virtual elimination before the re-groupment in Yan'an, the Marxist and uniquely Maoist rhetoric and discourse (rural, radically egalitarian, guerrilla-flexible) displace the essentially nationalist or 'soft' socialism of Sun.[25] Deng Xiaoping, decades later, then undoes Maoism despite his 'Seventy percent great, thirty percent bad' evaluation of the late Chairman. But even Deng, as has been argued by others, may have seen himself as something of a socialist who was simply hell-bent on developing the productive forces and freeing up capital—unconcerned with inequality but 'for' people's livelihood in the sense of 'getting rich is glorious.' And it would indeed be impossible to argue that China's standards of living—from access to consumer goods of all kinds through a better and more varied diet, as well as an expanding higher education system—have radically improved since the past three decades. This is not necessarily the rebuke of the Mao decades as it is often framed to be, as there is no reason to assume China would not have kept developing under a more Mao-socialist aligned economy and development strategy. As Chris Bramall, among others, has argued, Maoist state planning led to an impressive urban and manufacturing base given where China started, and 'late Maoist' developmental strategies succeeded in raising rural living standards and education to a remarkable degree.[26] The famine subtending the collapse of the Great Leap Forward and especially the violence of the early Cultural Revolution have—understandably, if nonetheless unfortunately—obscured the economic achievements of the collective period. This is also a common new left argument.

But for our purposes, the point here is that in all of these instances, from Sun onward, liberalism as a political or other philosophy was rejected, one can even say 'resisted' and fought against given that they were associated with Western imperialism and war, and the West's own great inequalities and iniquities of the time, such as racism (World War I through the Cold War and era of de-colonization). One may note that even in the current Xi Jinping era, as we have seen with 'Document 9,' the demonized term is liberal or neo-liberalism, *not* democracy (which China claims it practices and has in its own way). And of course not nationalism. Livelihood is a common refrain in the speeches of Xi Jinping in particular, aimed at domestic and foreign audiences. At the US embassy in Beijing, Xi follows

past practice in remarking that '[Given] China's huge population, considerable regional diversity, and uneven development, we're still faced with many challenges in improving people's livelihood and advancing human rights.'[27] This has always been an effective retort to American and other reports condemning China's 'human rights' abuses. Since Nixon and the early 1970s, engaging and benefitting from (and perhaps even partially taking credit for) the Sino-US rapprochement and Chinese economic 'miracle' has also been a Western 'liberal capitalist' pastime. It is hard to hoist the flag of moral superiority and China-as-enemy when one is busy doing business with the evil empire and buying its cheap commodities. American and other national human rights abuses don't hurt the Chinese case either. The high horse has left the barn.

In perennially unhappy and troubled Hong Kong, Xi douses another fire and makes another case for 'livelihood' as the real basis of society: 'It is important to put people first, help them overcome difficulties, especially address prominent economic and livelihood issues that people are concerned with, and truly increase their sense of contentment and happiness.' Now these are not magical words that can and will 'fix' Hong Kong or any other Chinese city in the near future. And neither the city's establishment nor its opposition seems overly concerned with livelihood as opposed to 'suffrage' and the merely legal. Yet *were* Hong Kong and other beleaguered Chinese places to become better off materially (and 'free' Hong Kong compares poorly to the big cities of China in many ways), through redistribution or some type of needed, useful development (which the Party-state fails and succeeds at), there is no doubt that discontent would decrease. This happens in most places in such scenarios; people get on with their jobs, families, personal aspirations. This may not happen, and it is becoming harder for China to 'grow' and develop its national economy as it faces new challenges at a global level as well as a looming environmental crisis of polluted air and poisoned earth.

But this 'livelihood' rhetoric nonetheless speaks directly to a deeply rooted Chinese (but not only Chinese) ethic or value (livelihood/security/contentment is also that). It will play in Hong Kong. It moreover speaks to very real, very capitalist problems and fears: that of 'precarity' and risk and uncertainty and scarcity. Again, it is no accident that the working class in Hong Kong votes strongly for pro-Beijing or pro-future-prosperity parties. And the PRC has—in admittedly 'capitalist' or modernist-consumerist terms—succeeded brilliantly in generating wealth and in promulgating its responsibility for that, even as it has also de-politicized politics as best

it can since the death of Mao and the bitter end of the Cultural Revolution. So the Hong Kong working class, too, is not stupid but knows what it knows.

It is, in sum, one thing to speak of 'human rights' and 'universal suffrage' and even 'democracy' and 'freedom' or 'rule of law' as abstract universals that mean something, or a number of things, to some people. It is another to not have enough money to have a better, happier, more empowered life, or to even think about 'freedom' outside of class, power, and money. This difference is tapped into by Xi and Chinese livelihood rhetoric, which is never 'mere' rhetoric masking an underlying reality (of 'totalitarianism' or whatnot according to conventional political science wisdom). All the liberal mainstream media reports and area studies or political science articles about China's lack of 'real' democracy and 'freedom' (or an equally interrogated notion of 'civil society') are not going to change this.[28] Domestically, Xi's use of 'livelihood' in speeches and other documents is so ubiquitous as to have become his own 'theoretical' contribution to the Party-state. After the recent Party Congress, something called 'Xi Jinping Thought' is slated for enshrinement into the state Constitution, but what specifically constitutes this 'thought' remains somewhat ambiguous and will likely remain that way for some time. His three-hour speech invoked livelihood, green development, national security, technology, the state sector alongside free markets, and so on. One can hope that, in the event, the redistributive elements come to the fore. At any rate, under Xi there is a clear emphasis on finding some type of additional ideological legitimacy to the Party-state, even connecting it to the revolutionary legacy by a more pronounced populism and thus turning it away from the Dengist embrace of wealth and growth for their own sake. One Chinese academic enthusiastically refers to Xi's 'People's Livelihood Thought' as marking new progress in the PRC's development of a 'moderately prosperous society in all respects' and that 'fulfils the best combination of the fundamental interests of the party and the masses of the people.'[29] For this to materialize it will entail nothing less than an expansion, more than a mere retention, of state control, of capital, and of capitalists within China.

'People's Livelihood Thought' and the creation of a moderately (as opposed to wealthily) prosperous society as the *summum bonum* for the Party-state certainly imply a social contract between leaders and led, and arguably a certain reciprocity and accountability. But this 'thought' also

conveys a separation, a difference, between the Party's interests and those of the masses; it is referred to as a 'combination' after all. This is precisely the issue at stake today: what Wang Hui calls the failing 'representativeness' of all the representative parties in the current conjuncture.[30] Even Maoism had to face this problem, although in contrast to the Party after the Chairman's death, it, from beginning to end, clearly and desperately wanted to overcome that separation through a strident egalitarianism and a grassroots, participatory 'authoritarianism.' This gap or separation is the very heart of the liberal critique of the PRC as a single, illiberal Party-state: not just that it does bad, repressive things to its own people, but that the Party does not and cannot represent its people unless it has multi-party, competitive elections and all that entails. There is no recall power; corrupt and abusive acts of power can easily go unchecked; the people have no voice, and so on. All of these drawbacks are to a greater or lesser degree accurate, and the standard liberal catechism about elections is nothing if not logical and rational. But that catechism is too simple, and like prayer, works only in the utterance and on individual souls. The actual, worldly state of liberal democracy, including the degradation of liberalism into the 'neo' or laissez-faire variety as well as the more or less complete capture of the political system and state by the interests and powers of capital and its lobbyists, gives the lie to this essentially religious liberal catechism.

All representative parties, be they vanguard or populist or merely bourgeois in orientation, must assume this same gap between themselves and the people they must 'produce' and represent. And it is the failure of contemporary parties to adequately represent 'the masses' or their citizens that has been at issue in the current global conjuncture, from Wukan and Hong Kong to Tahir Square to the USA and the UK. This has led to what the political economist Mark Blythe has termed Trumpism, which includes parallel reactionary strains in the UK (Brexit), and arguably in Hong Kong (the xenophobic localists) and elsewhere.[31] Underpinning all of this has been the massive transfer of wealth from the poor and the middle to the upper echelons and power elite of society.[32] This global frame, as opposed to seeing this as merely a Chinese versus Western phenomenon, is what makes Wang Hui's point about a crisis of representativeness particularly useful. But if all these states exist on a continuum, it may well be the PRC that has the better claim to actually representing its people in the name of livelihood: no other state, be it 'advanced' or of the former Third World, has on this score outperformed the PRC since its inception in 1949.

None of this livelihood rhetoric and success may warrant calling China socialist, even of the 'soft' Sun Yat-sen era variety, let alone, say, of Mao or what were the strong social democracies of Western Europe. (Though to be fair the latter never had to deal with Third World conditions, but were more often involved in creating those abroad.) The inequalities are simply too high and the clawbacks or countermovements away from pure capital accumulation and from class bifurcation—correcting market failures, improving welfare for the worst off, and so on—too weak and small scale to date.[33] Socialism—whether or not it was to be seen as a stage before communism or simply as something decent people and societies should aspire to—has always turned on equality as its guiding principle, beyond the control of capital and the necessity of rational state planning.

At the same time, with China as with everything else, we cannot dismiss such rhetoric as *mere* rhetoric when we know that there is no non-rhetorical language. Rhetoric is inseparable from discourse and knowledge-power and thus has a certain positivity and 'reality effect' even if we choose not to believe.[34] Just as we know that, regardless of the human and environmental cost, the Chinese 'miracle' has indeed thrust millions of people into middle- and upper classes and improved a general standard of living in terms of food and other commodities as well as 'opportunities' like education, travel, and so on. Again, recall that the aggrieved protesters of Wukan were not poor peasants or workers of even the 1960s and 1970s, let alone of the pre-PRC era. Put another way, 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' may sometimes seem—for good reason—faintly ridiculous in an era of Foxconn, gross consumerist materialism, and thick toxic air. But it must be said that to at least some Chinese—including but not only Party members—it is not mere rhetoric or sloganeering. Surely there are those citizens of an untold number who put the emphasis on the characteristics part: that it is, for better or worse, their own version of socialism or government and not a liberal democracy in the Western sense.

But if 'China and socialism' is at best an awkward or uneasy equation, by the same token it is hard to see how China can be easily called *capitalist* other than its mode of production being aimed at profit. That much is accurate, but according to the playbook of mainstream political science (or, in other words, conventional thought), real capitalism is supposed to be liberal-democratic market capitalism, with at least two or more parties competing to rule in the name of the people, and which again, according to the prevailing discourse about markets, is not supposed to have nationalized, state-owned industries at all, let alone ambitious five-years

plans and—to the foreigners and liberals—controversial attempts at 'social engineering.' As always, a conventional Marxist account of capitalism, that is commodity production on the basis of profit and the extraction of surplus value, promises a much better fit. And it is no secret that China possesses what can easily be called a proletariat and reserve army of labor.

But even this sensible 'plain Marxism' leaves out the facts of state planning and ownership, and that state-owned enterprises are not fully justified or rationalized by capital accumulation; their losses, when they do occur, have to an extent been tolerated by the Party-state as a cost of sovereignty. Moreover, the economic focus tells us little about the social, cultural, and political spheres of the society (always something of a blind spot within conventional Marxist theory). None of which, aside perhaps from 'bourgeois consumerism,' would seem to obviously map on to 'capitalist' in the case of the PRC today. One could go on to have a long discussion of what we mean today by socialism or capitalism—or varieties of the same—as concepts and social realities.[35]

Economism: The Main Enemy

And yet, one cannot forget politics and the political, because in the end these realms of human experience and endeavor never forget us.[36] This production of forgetting, a clear and powerful and in many ways successful attempt at de-politicization in the name of wealth and stability, is precisely what the post-Mao 'regime' is predicated upon, including within the alleged 'people's livelihood thought' attributed to the Xi Jinping era, decades after Deng and Tiananmen, 1989. While Badiou has argued that politics is universal (or at least the 'subject of politics' is), one can admit this and nonetheless still retain the post-colonial insight that universals like liberalism are precisely the problem and enemy of left politics in history. If political-ideological struggle and conflict—or simply 'power' if one wishes—are universal, these only manifest in specific forms and contexts. This is something that liberalism and orientalism, and even some forms of Marxism, all as forms of universalism, both deny, just as the former have also been complicit with colonialism.[37]

As argued earlier in the analysis of the rise and fall and persistence of latter day Chinese liberalism, there is a way in which both Mao and Carl Schmitt not only share a Marxist-Leninist notion of the political as fundamentally dyadic and inevitably rooted in real social antagonisms, but also an analysis of liberalism, as well as economism, as the paramount

forces of de-politicization. Indeed what is remarkable about Mao's short polemic, 'Combat Liberalism' is that he equates it with economism and in so many words with de-politicization (what might later be called 'revisionism' in various Cultural Revolution polemics from the left wing of the Party). The point here is not just that Mao was a profoundly political thinker along the lines of Lenin and Schmitt (as the notion of continuous revolution always suggested) and not the power-mad Stalinist or despot of stereotype. It is also that the PRC—too—follows a certain logic of the political, a narrative of de-politicization and Schmittian 'neutralization' leading to the present conjuncture of a global 'neo-liberalism' and the decline of viable left-wing and substantively democratic politics.

One can, in short, trace a certain intellectual political history through the post-1949 regime and the struggles, mobilizations, and conflicts during that attempted socialist transition. This is in many ways precisely what the old, late Maoist rhetoric about two-line struggles captured in all its excessive affect and extremity. One road pointed toward full, perhaps even total, politicization in the name of equality and the communist horizon,[38]and the other led toward stability, the development of productive forces over politics, and what the late Allen Ginsburg may have termed 'whole Chinese families shopping luxury goods at night.'[39] Alessandro Russo, a remarkable and original scholar of the Cultural Revolution and social theory, has made a powerful case for a final non-debate—a deep political struggle—between Mao and Deng in 1975.[40] This was in effect settled by Deng, due to Mao's death soon thereafter, as well as by the Cultural Revolution's own 'failure' to institutionalize or consolidate its changes and moreover to win over enough of the remaining Party officials brought back into the fold after so much struggle and chaos.

Mao had sought a debate and overall evaluation (within the Party, for the state) on what worked or was of value and what failed in the Cultural Revolution in the pursuit of that communist horizon. Of chief importance was the relationship between the 'working class' and the Party-state, and how to politicize or 'proletarianize' the factories and *danwei* (work units).[41] In this reading by Russo, the Chairman was well aware of the problems and failures of the Cultural Revolution, not least its eruption into violence and factionalism, just as he was aware (as admitted in interviews) that many in the Party were unhappy with the movement. Despite or perhaps because of this he wanted an evaluation of it so as to move on. Yet Deng, with time on his side as well as what he must have known was a sizable number of officials (what Russo calls a Thermadorean

coalition), simply refused to engage and respond, seeking to wait it out and not wanting to selectively but only, totally negate the Cultural Revolution (including its experiments in greater worker representation and organization within the state and the factories). Deng wished to stabilize (de-politicize) the state and greatly feared the disorder of the period. In the event, he succeeds and, as Russo puts it, in effect launches in China what would become a global neo-liberal movement.[42] Russo's argument is bold and provocative, against the grain, but also convincing.

With the unleashing of 'market forces' by Deng and the evisceration of the Maoist danwei and 'workerist' systems, this two-line struggle, at once deeply visionary and ideological yet also about the institutions of the state or the lack thereof, is not simply the victory of the Dengists over the left. It is also a triumph of de-politicization and, even as we recall that it was Pinochet's Chile that can better be said to launch neo-liberalism, would become a global phenomenon. Johan Lagerkvist has for his part recently argued that after 1989 it is China that has helped spur neo-liberalism globally and helped spread authoritarian politics everywhere (as in radically increased police surveillance in the USA).[43] Lagerkvist may attribute too much to a Chinese-induced spread of the latter, as if foreign regimes were influenced in this way by the success of the later, and as if there aren't indigenous authoritarian traditions worldwide. But one can more easily agree with the hypothesis about economic ideology, where China is indeed assumed to be a spectacularly successful neo-liberal economy, and not without reason. And after 1989, the economism, that is, the subsumption of the political to the economic and sheer growth and profit, indeed escalates. Ironically, however, China has by no means prospered due to actual neo-liberal doctrine: it has, admittedly, robbed and smashed the Maoist iron rice bowl of social security and welfare, greatly increased the exploitation of labor, installed the profit motive, and shifted wealth from the public or commons to a specific capitalist and elite class. This is all textbook neo-liberalism. But the state retains 'the plan' and 'the commanding heights' of the economy, including basic state control of capital, to a far greater degree than what neo-liberal diktat and the International Monetary Fund require. Add the 'human capital' and industrial infrastructure achieved during the Mao era, as well as the complete lack of debt and China's independence from the IMF, the US economy, and so on, and one sees the difference. In this sense, something like 'state capitalism' is more apt than 'neo-liberal' as a moniker for the Chinese economy; but as noted earlier, this too begs a lot of questions

about each term. It is arguably enough to say that the PRC is *both* capitalistic *and* socialistic. Nonetheless, the triumph of the Dengist 'line' is also a triumph of an authoritarianism and state violence, the capacity for both, without any revolutionary justification; but this is also to say, the triumph of a 'normal' state in the end, albeit of the single Party-state form. This normality, this stability is precisely the problem. And it may not prove to be so stable under conditions of globalization and the market capturing the Party-state and not just the spirit of the revolution.

The main cost, in short, is a complete, effective de-politicization, in so far as this is possible. That it is not entirely possible is a different matter that we need to attend to in conclusion. But is this worth the gift of a massive accumulation of wealth and a bona fide world-historical raising of living standards? There is no question that this is what the last 30 years of 'reform' has amounted to. For Deng it certainly was, even if it required not only a betrayal or denigration of the actual communist cause (and for workers) but an outright reactionary, non-revolutionary authoritarianism. (One must recall that the 1989 crackdown bears his clear, bolded signature, as does the ascent of decidedly anti-communist dissidents like Liu Xiaobo.) This gift is what the rise of China poses to political thought today (and to China's own citizens). Instant liberal and 'leftish' catechisms aside—all of which assume that 'democracy' is sacred and that China exceptionally lacks freedom—this is in fact not an easy question to answer. How important, existentially or experientially speaking, is 'being political' to people, let alone being 'radical' or 'democratic'? And what does it mean when this need or desire has greatly shrunk and yet 'the people' seem much better off materially than they were in previous eras? And better off, it may be said, by the same modern and capitalist standards of the liberal countries and polities. Note that we are not speaking here of the clear and tragic victims of neo-liberalism, of an immiserated or degraded populace. That this does happen in China is undeniable—perhaps most horrifically in the case of the suicides at Foxconn, the Taiwanese manufacturer of IPhones and similar products, in 2010 and 2011. (The company responded by placing netting around the base of some of its factories and dorms.) Such exploitation is not an accident but is inseparable from the same mode of capital accumulation that has benefitted others in China and out (e.g. cheap consumer goods for the West). But one has to reckon as well with the somewhat apocryphal but nonetheless real millions who have been 'lifted out of poverty' or done even better than that. David Goodman's important work on the middle class in China (which he estimates at about

12% of the population), and how it is unlikely to produce liberal democracy according to Western expectations, is highly pertinent here.[44] But it is also fair to say that many workers and migrant workers are in some sense better off materially or in terms of purchasing power, diet, and so on than they were when the reforms began. (Of course, this too presupposes capitalist standards that would make no sense in the Maoist free-supply and work-point system.)

Livelihood and living standards, even measured in the gross materialist terms as economists are wont to do, are arguably the most fundamental human need, the veritable 'base' to the superstructure of culture and politics. There are also undeniable pleasures tied to consumption and prosperity, just as these are also social powers in their own right. This is precisely the dangers of what I am calling economism: it works. Money and the dream of more money make the world go around, not least because they are a salve against economic precarity and insecurity. That this is something of a humanistic cliché does not make it any less true, for Shakespeare or Buddha or the young Marx, or for us. Whither the political then?

It may be precisely nowhere. Two recent diagnostic essays on the state of the global politics—which according to this nonetheless valuable genre begins from the Western left's standpoint—return us to a bleak, but admirably forthright sense of political possibilities today, which is to say an *impasse* from a non-liberal or left perspective. Perry Anderson offers a recent summation of the current conjuncture in the English language world at any rate:

> The upshot is the unbalanced balance of partisan forces at which commentators wring their hands today. The neo-liberal order has become a political no-man's land, in which no organic formula of rule is now in sight.[45]

The impasse here is that while the neo-liberal mode of accumulation proceeds apace—but is in crisis—there have been no electoral sweeps or any clear politics (forms of rule) since the 1990s. The Third Way regimes of Blair and Clinton (and Obama) were but weak simulations of the Reagan and Thatcherite turns of the 1980s (i.e. neo-liberalism) and their rules were 'weightless hegemonies' with little staying power or direction.[46] So the economic—which is to say *livelihood*—crisis remains, a crisis not simply of accumulation but of living for those lives and families degraded by the neo-liberal turn. One might say that this is precisely because the political has been subsumed within or by the economic mode of accumulation:

what Schmitt or Mao would call neutralization by economism and liberalism. There is no dyadic, friend/enemy politics at work since all sides agree on the feed and care of the economic machine or mode.

To adopt Nancy Fraser's felicitous phrase, what remains is a power and ideological struggle between a 'progressive neo-liberalism' and a more reactionary neo-liberalism.[47] Economically and politically—and as has been true since Bill Clinton completed the neo-liberal Reagan Revolution in the 1990s—democratic or humane political prospects are dim indeed.[48] While there are indeed important social, ethical (justice-based), and other differences between these 'camps,' there cannot be said to be a major economic one, or arguably even a political one in the Schmittian sense.[49] Fraser's reference is the Democratic and Republican parties in the USA and the 2017 election, but the split yet commonality around the economy would apply more broadly around the world. What distinguishes China in this regard is not the single-Party system but the attempt, greatly enhanced under Xi Jinping, to remove any such splits or 'factions' within the Party elite while retaining state management of at least some capital and overall control of the rest (and of the capitalists). The anti-corruption campaign for which Xi is famous, including measures taken against capital flight out of the country, is of a piece with this.

Tim Barker, in a review essay on the US-UK-based, libertarian-communist *Endnotes* collective (who publish volumes of radical 'theory'), notes the hopeful return of the term 'socialism' to relative acceptability in American political discourse, in the wake of Bernie Sanders' surprisingly successful run for president in 2016. But at the same time the present conjecture remains bleak in that, despite the continued existence, if not expansion, of the working class and theoretically greater connectedness via globalization, there is simply no foreseeable *agency* or agents to carry out a transition away from the awful neo-liberal politics (or, again, the lack of actual politics) of the last three decades. Barker generously yet persuasively dispenses with the glib and dreamy, anarchist-workerist idealizations of *Endnotes* that point to a 'communization' current implicit to human society, yet find it virtually absent in all actually existing leftist history, including today's various struggles around the world. But Barker goes beyond this to ask a question for those of us who think realism (and institutions, and transitions, and Parties, and centralized states, and so on) has something to do with politics: Where are *our* resources of hope, and where can agency and agents be found? This also returns us to the failure of 'representativeness' of the political parties, the great majority of whom

may be said to represent capital more than 'the masses' or laobaixing. Whither is the realist yet leftist politics? For the foreseeable future, the liberal core of the world system may be a bleak house indeed.

When we say that politics is in retreat, or has been neutralized, or is simply weak, or fails at representativeness, what we mean is not only the absence of a 'left' or socialist movement or force. We mean that liberalism, too, has in some sense 'died' or been degraded to the point of becoming a neo-liberalism that is in effect just an economism. Given liberalism's actually existing, sordid history vis-à-vis the Asian and Southern parts of the world, and from a Marxist standpoint its deep historical and functional roots in capitalist development and exploitation, it may be tempting to some to wish it good riddance. Or one may instead wish to see it return to its 'original' or 'authentic' form of, say, Keynesianism and decent, redistributionist welfare regimes, secular cosmopolitan humanism, and a firm respect for Civil Rights, but now somehow without the imperialist part. But this type of 'good' liberalism also lacks agency and agents. And as with the case for insurrectionary Maoism (aside perhaps from Nepal in a sense), Third Worldism, Black Power, and so on, the social and historical conditions for such a return would appear to be lacking. The problem is not just the degradation of the liberal parties. Repressive and surveillance state power has increased exponentially; real wages and union strength have plummeted; civil societies have very little power to effect change (paradoxically, less so in China); and, alternatively, economism and developmentalism—a certain fetishism of the market in terms of ideology and life expectations and not just business practice—are the order of the day. This is all familiar already. The great structure has become a minor, bleak house. And this is not simply due to a failure of imagination or one ideology (neo-lib) besting another one.

The neutralization of politics, its capture by the economic, may ultimately have to do not with liberalism's *failures* so much as its *successes*. One has to recall that, well before the triumph of the 'neo-,' liberalism always stood in opposition to a much more 'statist' and economically interventionist politics, namely, that of socialism or even Marxism-Leninism, that is the actual successful revolutions of the last century. Those politics and forms of economics are also in retreat, at best. What won hegemony over them, or kept them out of the West entirely, was liberalism: it was always markets over states, and therefore polities and politics (you correct 'market failures' only after they have had their full run); labor was to be held in check via a 'corporate contract' between unions and capital; economic

democracy was never on the agenda outside of a few meetings at the United Nations and the like. What is more, if David Harvey, Robert Brenner, and many others are correct that the success of Keynesianism actually led to a crisis of accumulation and profitability by the 1970s, leading to the rise of finance capital and neo-liberalism, then the dream of a return to this era may indeed be nothing but a failure of the imagination.[50] Put yet another way, liberalism led organically to illiberalisms like Trumpism or Brexit or contemporary Russia, say, and of course to neo-liberalism as a temporary and 'spatial' fix of an accumulation crisis. This is not an argument about societies spending too much on welfare or being 'statist' (in fact, the neo-liberal or libertarian view), but it is to say something more along the lines of the impossibility of full employment, of class-leveling, and of actually equal opportunities in the so-called advanced societies, under the current form of capitalism and the class basis of those states and parties.

Toward a Progressive Illiberalism? A Realist Reprise?

And yet, and yet. The PRC—in many ways smartly 'illiberal' or anti-liberal in its refusal of total privatization, its wariness of the West, its debunkings of liberal universality—may in this sense be less far gone. And at any rate, it is operating under a quantitatively and qualitatively different set of circumstances and conditions. Its resistance to liberalism may, in short, have spared it from becoming fully neo-liberal. There is not only an approximately 20% share of state-owned economy but a rhetoric and legitimacy dedicated to actual growth and 'livelihood' or common prosperity.

Neo-liberals promise money and freedom (of the individual, entrepreneurial kind) too. And China, since Deng's victory, is dedicated to an economism, an unprincipled peace through markets and materiality and a suppression of politics: not just through police power and censorship, but just as importantly through the removal of fundamental political-ideological disagreements and diversity within the Party-state, especially at the upper echelons. In so far as dialogue and disagreement are actually important drivers of smart policy and planning, this is a definite risk and does no one any favors. It led under Deng and through the 1990s to 'reform and opening up' and 'some must get rich first' becoming not just propaganda but a new, blindly followed religion to replace revolutionary enthusiasm.

The PRC at the top is run by 'red engineers' (in Joel Andreas' apt phrase) or, in other words, patriotic and economy-and-nation-building technocrats.[51] This is perhaps best captured by Xi's directive that one must not use the last 30 years of reform to negate the first 30, Maoist years, and vice versa. This does not leave much room for debate about Chinese politics, outside of the mandate for stability and 'China dreams' and making or spending money. On the other hand, Xi et al. will *necessarily* have to lean one way or the other in terms of managing the economy—either state control of capital and development, managing and micro-managing the private and state markets, or letting the market sort it out 'for themselves' in true liberal or Hayekian fashion. Through the first five years of the Xi reign, the state sector has if anything been expanded and consolidated.[52] In point of fact, it is hard to imagine the Party-state ever abdicating this managerial role, as it is precisely its main reason for existence and the basis of its power beyond the capacity for violence. It is also how it inherits the revolution (and even imperial 'tradition') and the legitimacy provided thereby. This is illiberal, one supposes, but it is socially valid, coherent, and not irrational. Thus, the PRC may indeed appear confused or wanting to have and to eat both its liberal (markets and global capital) and 'statist' cakes at the same time. It has somehow been pulling this off, and there is really no longer any real concern about the Party-state actually collapsing or becoming like North Korea.

But now China faces an inevitably slowing economy, great disparities in wealth, and grave ecological crises, among other problems. Even the economism is imperiled, in that the Party-state has been promising since the Hu Jintao era (2002–2012) to alleviate inequality, redistribute wealth, improve welfare, and so on: the same mandate that Xi Jinping now pledges to finally take up effectively in the name of livelihood, common if modest prosperity, and so on. Will this be done, and can it be done? Can one further 'open' or 'liberalize' the Chinese economy through private capital and marketization, while also redistributing wealth, reducing the great inequalities, and so on? Can one engage and cooperate with the liberal powers as a fellow great nation, and yet resist their modern, normative, political forms of 'democracy' and 'flows' of liberalization?

Put another way, despite the Dengist line's desire to quash the great disorder of the Cultural Revolution (which was arguably not that great by the mid-1970s), underneath the surface of unanimity, China is now in a situation of genuine disorder and great uncertainty alongside—even explaining—the increased ideological repression or censorship under Xi.[53]

But as Bertolt Brecht once said, in the contradiction lies the hope. There is a fundamental contradiction between the need to retain the centralized, managing state and achieve that 'socialism' or 'modest prosperity' for all, on the one hand, and to 'use' global capitalism and private capital without being overtaken by them on the other hand. This can in turn be framed as a contradiction between illiberalism and liberalism, and between re-politicization (of the Party-state) and de-politicization. The Party-state remains 'statist' and rather than seeing this as the bane of liberalism, it may be better to see it as containing some resources of hope—for China and by extension for politics generally.

This presupposes something of a paradigm shift within the Party, and it being effectively pushed by protest and social movements as much as by genuine concern for 'people's livelihood.' China has still been growing enough—producing enough of that Adam Smithian tide, it seems—to stave off the streets. There is no compelling reason for 'the masses' or some sizable portion thereof to be attracted to, let alone demand, some type of liberal discourse or political example—such as the USA, Europe, India, Japan. Maoism as an insurrectionary movement, or as a fully planned non-profit economy, is likewise unlikely, even though it, unlike liberalism, retains a certain force within the reservoir of images and rhetoric and values within the Chinese political culture. It is high time to see this stability and actuality or positivity of the Chinese regime as 'normal' and not ascribe to this a 'lack' that is based in deception, censorship, totalitarianism, and the absence of 'freedom.' The Party's actual commitment and moreover ability to produce greater 'livelihood' in other ways remain unknown, however. It may end up a failure, *a la* the Hu Jintao period's professed desire to alleviate inequality. So 'optimism of the will' has its limits that one needs to be honest about, just as one needs to avoid a cynical or definitively pessimistic analysis of political presents and futures. History may or may not follow certain logics of the political and the economic, but in its occasional ruptures and discontinuities it most assuredly surprises and exceeds our most confident assumptions and expectations. Such confidence in regard to Chinese politics is especially misplaced, when the Party-state controls political information quite well and moreover almost never airs conflicts and fundamental disagreements in its own publications and mouthpieces.[54] A shift into what might be termed a 'progressive illiberalism' is, then, by no means bound to happen but also by no means destined *not* to happen. There is little question that the Party wants to achieve not only national rejuvenation but also that

'peoples' livelihood,' 'harmonious society,' and 'socialism' that it has been variously talking about since the millennium, and that it is aware that it needs to do so.

Despite the neutralization of the political in China due to the well-nigh world-historical magnitude of its growth, and to the concerted effort by the state and numerous intellectuals, we must never forget that de-politicization can never be complete. As Schmitt argues, and as most political theorists would agree, the logic of the political always comes back or re-asserts itself into dyadic, 'friend/enemy,' us/them distinctions and antagonisms. The post-Mao Party-state's attempt at de-politicization, even if we prefer to root it in the late Cultural Revolution, has after all been *a politically interested de-politicization of the culture, society, and state*. It has clearly benefited not only a wealthy capitalist class but a certain power elite within and outside the Party. To an extent one can say—as the Party has been doing for years—that this de-politicization has benefited those who have been 'lifted out of poverty': the economistic regime has delivered in some fundamental and 'modern' or global capitalist ways. While invocations of the 'Chinese miracle' are clearly full of hype, so too are the notions that the rise of China is just some type of 'boom' that will inevitably go 'bust' even though there is no evidence for it being fake, for its rise actually being overstated by actual analysts, for it being gravely imperiled, or for it being a crypto-fascist peril or 'North Korea Lite.'[55] What the political or social scientists cannot fathom, in their strident liberalism and empiricism, is that the PRC's wealth, cities, rich, or least better off consumers—China's epochal growth in recent decades—simply aren't going away. As for its de-politicized politics, the catastrophe is that it keeps going on like this (to invoke a phrase from Walter Benjamin).

But at the same time, as Wukan, the new left, and the articulation of Chinese liberalism to neo-liberal economics all show, there is a dawning sense that all those 'reforms' and the 'rise' could and should have been handled better, should and could have happened without the de-politicization and silencing of political speech, without smashing the iron rice bowl, and so on. And that that rise—the Faustian bargain of riches versus politics—may have reached its limits. There will not be a 'going back,' as if by time machine, to either the late Mao period or the 1980s. But there may be a reckoning to come. Deng Xiaoping's mess must be cleaned up. This is already one way to understand the rapid rise and successes of Xi Jinping (who has also removed Deng's term limits for the presidency). The rise and fall of the remarkably populist and perhaps

neo-Maoist Bo Xilai, discussed earlier, shows how there is *a logic of the political, of an 'us' versus 'them,' always already lurking*. Some grounds for a return of the political within the state: while 'lifting' the proverbial millions, the Party-state has also held down or displaced millions, has created out of its peasantry or 'rural surplus labor' a floating army of hundreds of millions of migrant workers with second-class status. It has taken away the right or ability to act politically in the old Maoist style of mobilization and 'mass participation' in developmental projects (Bo's populism didn't reach this level). It has repressed or demonized or pathologized the very act or idea of thinking politically, in terms of fundamental ideological, class, or power differences and antagonisms. Of course it also has not and cannot remove the 'right to rebel,' and there are not only numerous protests but no doubt countless instances of individual rebellion or resistance to various and sundry injustices and grievances and so on. But the point is, or was, whether or not any of this is allowed to be named political action or part of a political movement, whether this can be framed as proper and just, and whether or not the state or system allows or discourages such acts. Deng's gambit was to kill off or at least enfeeble the desire for politics.[56]

Or at least all of this *was* the dominant scenario; the rise of nationalism and what is referred to as 'cultural self-awakening' has also been unmistakable in recent years. Nationalism itself can easily foment an antagonism against the Party-state, and some of the old and new left criticisms of state policy clearly fit into this mold, just as they draw on the figure of Mao as well. And while it may be said to lack class-consciousness as a whole, the Chinese working class is going to be by definition and size a political specter for generations.

In sum, then, social and political antagonisms and differences do not actually go away. The thousands of yearly 'mass incidents' reveal this plainly, even if there is no actual 'social volcano.' Nor do peoples' grievances simply disappear (as they did not in Wukan). Nor does the need to participate and be involved with communities and something larger than one's self and everyday life disappear. The current regime is at least aware of the latter, and is why it promotes nationalism, patriotism, or simply pride. The need for something cohesive to replace 'continuing the revolution' and even 'opening up' is clear, and even informs the recent, 19th Party Congress speech by Xi Jinping. There he claims that:

> The principal contradiction facing Chinese society in the new era is that between unbalanced and inadequate development and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life. It stresses the people-centered philosophy of

> development, and well-rounded human development and common prosperity for everyone.[57]

And in the same speech earlier Xi noted:

> China has seen the basic needs of over a billion people met, has basically made it possible for people to live decent lives, and will soon bring the building of a moderately prosperous society to a successful completion. The needs to be met for the people to live a better life are increasingly broad. Not only have their material and cultural needs grown; their demands for democracy, rule of law, fairness and justice, security, and a better environment are increasing.

What is striking in these remarks is the inescapably *political* nature of some of the terms: demands for 'democracy' (later defined as '*consultation*' a la Hong Kong), justice and fairness, and so on. One is tempted to see an 'admission' or indication that the CCP knows it cannot (try to) de-politicize politics forever, even if it wants to. There is also a strong sense of a break or transition to a new phase of Party-rule and development, a new 'new China,' as if the feed and care and growth of the economy and marketization/liberalization are now less important than the 'livelihood' itself.[58] This is precisely what the liberals and pundits fear, that marketization will take the back seat to other concerns. The era of 'reform and opening up' is coming to an end, finally.

Agency is still a question here. Who will foment a progressive illiberalism? Again one does not know if redistribution of all that wealth will happen, if a new mode of accumulation can develop, if urbanization will work humanely, if the now seemingly unified Party will allow more political speech and innovation from within the system *a la* Chongqing, and so on. But we do know who or what will try, and what has the capacity to effect such change. What China does have is the one thing the liberals correctly hate as their political-ideological enemy as opposed to their friend. This is the single Party, or Party-state, not yet entirely captured by capital, with a massive organizational capacity in comparison to most other nation-states: to the tune of about 89 million members. To tackle some of its problems like the environment, the massive inequalities, the second-class status of migrant workers—to be sure, problems greatly exacerbated by the same Party-state over the last 30 years of 'reform'—it will need exactly that type of capacity and mobilization. It may thus seem—or be—circular reasoning and a bitter historical irony to suggest that Party-state is the only means to such a cure or redress. Be that as it may, the state and the economy are two

(or more) separate things, and it is only neo-liberal dogma or anarchist claptrap that says the state can do no good unless it is somehow 'small but beautiful' or generated spontaneously by autonomous worker collectives who enjoy meetings. All of this presupposes the streets—that is, protest and 'voice' in a mass-participatory, populist way that Chinese and other liberalisms have often been leery of themselves, and a frank acknowledgment, a nod in the direction of Mao, that politics are not simply chaos and the political cannot be eliminated entirely.

The fact that the PRC—and arguably the general political culture of China, not just the Party elite—remains what the liberals call 'statist' or committed to a centralized and unified state as the very site of politics, is important, indeed necessary, for the redistribution of wealth and expansion of welfare. It is also indispensable for meeting the higher, political 'needs and demands' mentioned by Xi Jinping himself on the road to 'people's livelihood' or 'socialism with Chinese characteristics.'

My argument here 'for' the Party-state, planning, capital controls, and so on (i.e. against the free-market principle) stems from *real politik* and a logic of necessity. But if politics is not practical and concrete, or unmindful of historical context—if they are not realist—then they tend to be heavy on the merely performative and the narcissistic (in the case of at least some of Hong Kong's democratic players) or merely academic in the pejorative sense. A historical realism is a necessary beginning. The Party is the only entity and agency that could conceivably address the very real problems subtending China's rise (and even Hong Kong's decline after colonialism). It is for this reason, as well as on account of the organizational capacities of the 'Leninist' or one-Party-state form, that one can heretically argue for more, not less, state in Chinese politics. This is the argument here, and it is also a common point of the 'old' and 'new' left in China. It departs from the anti-state 'radicalism' of much of the Western left just as much from the progressive and regressive neo-liberals running most major parties there. It is important to recall that the legitimacy of the Chinese state among most or at least 'many' of its people—a large, sheer number in any case—is palpable, the point in noting this is that there is no apparent desire for 'regime-change' coming from within China itself.[59] A recent Guardian article notes, to the author's own chagrin, that Xi Jinping has so far been proven to be popular, especially among the ordinary (*laobaixing*) people.[60] There is plenty of protest, critique, distance from propaganda, creative use of media and the Internet, and so on, but all of this just makes the PRC a normal, modern, flawed, horrible, wonderful, contemporary state. One

does not need to celebrate or congratulate the Chinese state on this achievement any more than one needs to disparage its people for failing to aspire to liberal democracy. One needs only recognize the validity in what Martin King Whyte has referred to as 'the *myth* of the social volcano'—that is, despite the massive inequality in China since the 1980s and the equally massive amount of protests, the perceptions of injustice have not led the PRC to the brink of instability.[61] If the state can recognize this better, as again Xi promises to do when he invokes the demand for justice and democracy, it can also redress them more effectively and approach protest less harshly.[62] My point is not that Xi necessarily will, or even *can*, follow up on his promises—he is a mere head of state like others—but that his own rhetoric and analyses are on point. The Chinese Party-state is a lot of things, some of them draconian and bureaucratic to an extreme, but it is not often stupid.

Dismissing the points here—of legitimacy and not just the lack of but the *disinterest* in 'true' political liberalism or regime-change—as a result of sheer authoritarianism or 'brainwashing' or the notion of self-censorship, *a la* most mainstream framings, is fairly useless.[63] Also worth recalling: it is also liberalism that has been degraded as much as Maoist socialism (Mao as commodity in mainstream Chinese culture). Global neo-liberalism and contemporary imperialism in Afghanistan and the Middle East have failed even more spectacularly. In short, for better and worse, the Party-state is here to stay and it is worth thinking through this or for its consequences for politics and theory. It is worth taking not just the old, past Maoist Chinese revolution seriously—as many of us have been arguing, against the tide, for years—but also the actuality of the contemporary Chinese state. One can always go back to rehearsing the liberal catechisms later.

But there is also the argument that the central contradiction facing the PRC—and perhaps by extension neo-liberal polities everywhere—is that sooner or later it has to choose between having its liberal free-market 'growth-is-good' cake and its statist 'people's livelihood' state. In this the legions of liberal critics who want the state out of the economic and social engineering business and those who want it to be more aggressive in tackling inequality agree: there is a choice to be made, and for purely economic reasons, the limits of the previous economic liberalization model, the choice is nigh. It seems clear that the Party-state or at least its current leader sees the PRC as entering a new era and a new crossroad. If Xi's aforementioned notion of the 'principal contradiction' above (about 'imbalanced development and peoples' needs') actually corresponds to the next phase, or to the above point about capital and the state, then there

can be an exit from the bleak house. The path before China, and perhaps for others, diverges between a leftward and rightward illiberalism. The liberal road is the utopia or non-place, at best. What is least likely is some convergence into 'true' democratic liberalism via the market, via Party-state failure or collapse or abdication, or through some magical convergence. A leftward illiberalism will have to acknowledge rather than attempt to snuff out the political. It will again need to see—to admit—the political as an inevitable site of antagonisms and conflicts and enmity, and it will need to allow more political participation, even protest or 'voice' as forms of this. The Chairman may or may not have approved.

Notes

1. See the Introduction for further discussion. I should perhaps note that it is I and not Perry who presents this as a specifically *ideological* challenge.
2. My emphasis here. The book in question is Stein Ringen's, *The Perfect Dictatorship* (Hong Kong University Press, 2016). One can detect a similar almost-admiring or appreciative sentiment within another, more academic and area studies text on the successes and systematicity of the post-Mao propaganda system. See Anne-Marie Brady, *Marketing Dictatorship: Propaganda and Thought Work in Contemporary China* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008).
3. John Gray 'The strange death of liberal politics' *New Statesman* July 5, 2016, https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/07/strange-death-liberal-politics. Accessed Nov. 14, 2017.
4. Nazneen Barma and Ely Ratner, 'China's Illiberal Challenge: The real threat posed by China isn't economic or military it's ideological' (*Democracy: A Journal of Ideas*, 2, Fall 2006). https://democracyjournal.org/magazine/2/chinas-illiberal-challenge/. Accessed Nov. 14, 2017.
5. See William Callahan *China Dreams: 20 Vision of the Future* (Oxford University Press, 2015) and Arif Dirlik, *Complicities* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2017).
6. J.S. Nye. *Soft power: The means to success in world politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).
7. These can even be described as 'liberal' virtues or techniques (wealth and markets and globalization), but this does not negate the other, ideological struggle against Western liberalism as an ideology or terrain of neo- or post-imperial struggle.
8. A good example of the liberal and occidentalist reception (which ranges from pathologization to plain misrecognition) can be found via Hong Kong (as well various places on the internet of course), as in Ip Iam-

chong's. 'Agony over National-Imperial Identity: Interpreting the Coloniality of the Chinese New Lef.'(*Cultural Dynamics* 27.2 2015: 241–252).

9. The Internet site called 'Libcom'—short for the oxymoronic 'libertarian communist'—that hosts 'activist' discussion forums and an archive of obscure writers and texts, chiefly anarchist, is in my view a case in point https://libcom.org/
10. Chen Xiaomei's *Occidentalism* remains the best place to begin with this term, especially for the first two post-Mao decades.
11. This was precisely the logic of expunging all Red, let alone 'Maoist,' images or references in the grand opening ceremony of the Beijing 2008 Olympics.
12. See the 2016 post by Chris Connery, 'The Chinese Left: Contexts and Strategies,' at a Nottingham, UK policy institute blog, where he notes Wang's advocacies of welfare, rural education, and so on. https://cpianalysis.org/2016/10/21/the-chinese-left-contexts-and-strategies/. Accessed June 9, 2017.
13. Other prominent intellectuals of the left who have had some success in advising or working with the government include Wang Shaoguang, Hu Angang, and Cui Zhiyuan.
14. It is worth noting again a certain paradox that Chinese liberals are typically those intellectuals who have the least experience outside of China, including the least English language capability, whereas many, though not all, of the new left intellectuals received extensive education in the West or are readers of specifically 'Western' intellectual traditions such as Marxism and post-structuralism. This is *not* meant as a criticism of either camp in itself: the new left embraces cosmopolitanism and internationalism, and Chinese liberals would see certain Western values and texts like von Hayek's as speaking to universal truths. But it does point to one of Chinese liberalism's conditions of possibility as a discourse—inadequate experience with, or understanding of, the limits and realities of 'advanced' Western societies, or a conscious disavowal of them. Of course, the flows of liberal China experts from abroad into China tend to—or tended, in the past sense—to exacerbate the cathexis of liberalism.
15. See, for example, the voluminous work of Roderick MacFarquhar (e.g. *The Origins of the Cultural Revolution* series) or Ezra Vogel's recent, glowing, hagiographic biography, *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China* (Harvard UP, 2013).
16. Again this is a question of the state's capacity, or whether or not it has been captured by capital. The new left's view, that it can and should reclaim more such capacity to correct the market and the direction of the state in general, is if nothing else the less politically quietest, more practical position as compared to those who call for the state to be entirely subsumed by the market.

17. Giovanni Arrighi, *Adam Smith in Beijing: Lineages of the 21st Century* (London: Verso, 2009).
18. Andre Gunder Frank. *ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (University of California Press, 1998).
19. On this see, for example, Guo Changgang, Debin Liu, and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, eds., *China's Contingencies and Globalization* (London: Routledge, 2017).
20. This surfaced as recently as later 2017 when the new CE, Carrie Lam, proposed a major increase in the public educational budget, but which the pan-democrats had to 'debate' accepting and passing or not, apparently just on the principle that the CE must always be opposed, no matter how good the plan or bill is.
21. See, for example, Hung, *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), 196.
22. The present study freely 'admits' that the PRC can and does also act as an illiberal state in the unambiguously bad senses of repressive intolerance (of non-hateful speech or actions), the harsh, even inhumane policing of those dissenters or protesters it deems to be enemies, which is to say by those willfully subversive of state power. This latter maldevelopment clearly stems from the revolutionary era, especially Maoism and the Cold War, when there were indeed at least some actual enemies of the people, and a struggle for life and death of the new state, during and even after the revolution. Maoism had offered a classic Bolshevik or Leninist justification for revolutionary violence, and it is always worth recalling that it was Mao who was the most open or tolerant of dissent and 'contradictions among the people.' But the Maoist attempt at continuing the revolution nonetheless failed by the time of, or shortly after, his own death, and the problem of dissent, even specifically of the new intellectual class as well as the new political class, was never resolved by the end of the Cultural Revolution.
23. See, for example, Thomas Kellog, 'Xi's Davos Speech: Is China the New Champion for the Liberal International Order?' in the January 24, 2017, The Diplomat, (http://thediplomat.com/2017/01/xis-davos-speech-is-china-the-new-champion-for-the-liberal-international-order/); Emily Rauhala, 'China's president—a new kind of 'Davos man' for a new, less-liberal, era' in the January 16, 2017, *Washington Post* (https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/16/chinas-president-a-new-kind-of-davos-man-for-a-new-less-liberal-era/?utm_term=.c88a2650ef98) as well as D. Bulloch's 'Xi Jinping's Davos Speech Defends Globalization But Does China Really Mean It?' https://www.forbes.com/sites/douglasbulloch/2017/01/18/xi-jinpings-davos-speech-defends-globalisation-but-does-china-really-mean-it/. All links accessed Nov. 15, 2017.

24. See, for example, 'US and China serve as economic models for India' from an undated issue of *The National*, an Abu Dhabi magazine/paper. https://www.thenational.ae/business/us-and-china-serve-as-economic-models-for-india-1.320264. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
25. The best concise account of Maoism proper remains the chapter on Yan'an in Maurice Meisner's *Mao's China and After* (New York: Free Press, 1999). While the Party was certainly nationalist during this revolutionary era, to great effect in helping defeat Japan and thence the Nationalists, it was also committed to an internationalism that is all too easily forgotten today when the Party primarily pushes a nationalistic patriotism more than anything else.
26. See, for example, Chris Bramall's massive *Chinese Economic Development*, which surveys the Chinese political economy form 1940 through 2007 (London: Routledge, 2009).
27. See the official Chinese (extracted) report here: https://geopolicraticus.wordpress.com/2012/07/16/the-chinese-conception-of-human-rights/. The full transcript is no longer available at the embassy website.
28. For a recent critique of the civil society template—as an under or non-theorized concept—see Taru Salmenkari, *Civil Society in China and Taiwan: Agency, Class and Boundaries* (New York: Routledge, 2017).
29. Wan Zhiang, 'On Xi Jinping's Thought Regarding People's Livelihood' (*Chinese Studies* 4.2015: 50–55). Accessed Nov. 14, 2017, https://file.scirp.org/pdf/ChnStd_2015041715283338.pdf
30. See Wang Hui, 'The Crisis of Representativeness and Post-Party Politics' (*Modern China* 40.2 2014: 214–239).
31. See Mark Blyth, 'Global Trumpism: Why Trump's Victory Was 30 Years in the Making and Why It Won't Stop Here' in *Foreign Affairs*, November 15, 2016. https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/2016-11-15/global-trumpism. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
32. A basic point of neo-liberal studies. See David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-liberalism* (London: Oxford UP, 2007).
33. See Wang Shaoguang for the notion of counter-movement, as cited in Chap. 2.
34. On this topic, the work of Kenneth Burke still shines forth brightly, not least because it anticipated so much of the later 'French' or Foucaultian waves. See, for example, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (University of California Press, 1969).
35. This is beyond the scope of the present study but is something that calls for more theoretical as well as empirical work. For a critique of the 'varieties of capitalism' argument and subfield, see Jan Nederveen Pieterse, 'Rethinking modernity and capitalism: Add context and stir' (*Sociopedia.isa* 2014 1–11). http://www.sagepub.net/isa/resources/pdf/1st%20Coll%20Rethinking%20Modernity%20and%20Capitalism.pdf. Accessed Nov. 14, 2017.

36. The 'main enemy'—from this section's title—was a favorite expression of Frederick Engels and thence into Marxism ever since. But I also use it to signify the salience of the Schmittian analysis of the essence of 'the political' as dyadic and antagonistic.
37. Even Edward Said—an avowed humanist—insisted that liberal humanism, from the orientalists to Orwell, was fully a part of orientalism and colonialism. See *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978). For the critique of liberalism, see Losurdo. For a self-identified Marxist and universalist case, see Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (New York: Verso, 2013).
38. I take this phrase from the political theorist Jodi Dean. See her provocative, sharp book of the same title.
39. See Ginsberg's 1955 poem, 'A Supermarket in California.' https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47660/a-supermarket-in-california
40. Alessandro Russo, 'How Did the Cultural Revolution End? The Last Dispute between Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping, 1975' (*Modern China* 39.3 2013: 239–279).
41. Russo 270.
42. Russo, 271.
43. Johan Lagerkvist, *Tiananmen Redux: The Hard Truth about the Expanded Neoliberal World Order* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2016).
44. See most recently Goodman and Chen Minglu, Eds., *Middle Class China: Identity and Behaviour* (London: Edwin Elgar, 2013).
45. Anderson, 32. (2013).
46. The weightless phrase is actually Susan Watkins', as cited in Anderson 32.
47. Nancy Fraser, 'The End of Progressive Neoliberalism,' January 2, 2017. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017. https://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/progressive-neoliberalism-reactionary-populism-nancy-fraser. Fraser's reference is the Democratic and Republican parties in the USA, but the split and commonalities would apply more broadly.
48. See Michael Allen Meeropool, *Surrender: How the Clinton Administration Completed the Reagan Revolution* (University of Michigan Press, 2000).
49. This point is, again, also mine in regard to the later stages of the 'umbrella movement' as a distinctly social and cultural event, as opposed to a directly political one that confronts 'Beijing' over an issue of law and voting. I should also add that this understanding of the political does not imply that there are therefore no important differences between, say, pro- and anti-Brexit votes, or between candidates and platforms of, say, democrats or republicans in the USA, or between localists versus the 'establishment,' or racist versus 'civic' localists, and so on. But it is important to retain stronger senses of the political, which is one negative lesson from cultural studies.

50. Harvey, *Neo-liberalism*; Robert Brenner, *The Economics of Global Turbulence: The Advanced Capitalist Economies from Long Boom to Long Downturn, 1945–2005* (New York: Verso, 2006); Michael Hudson, *The Bubble and Beyond* (Islet Press, 2012. Ebook edition); Monica Prassad, *The Politics of Free Markets: The Rise of Neoliberal Economic Polities in Britain, France, Germany, and the United States* (University of Chicago Press, 2006); and Gretta Kippner, C*apitalizing on Crisis: The Political Origins of the Rise of Finance* (Harvard University Press, 2012).
51. For the 'new class' analysis of red engineers after Mao, see Joel Andreas *Rise of the Red Engineers: The Cultural Revolution and the Origins of China's New Class* (Stanford University Press, 2009).
52. See, for example, the report by Lingling Wei in a recent Wall Street journal report, 'China's Xi Approaches a New Term With a Souring Taste for Markets' https://www.wsj.com/articles/chinas-xi-approaches-a-new-term-with-a-souring-taste-for-markets-1508173889. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
53. This is, again, Russo's crucial insight about the transition from Mao to Deng at the end of the Cultural Revolution.
54. This is a point refreshingly made by no less than two former state department academics, Jessica Batke and Oliver Melton, in *The ChinaFile* website: 'Why Do We Keep Writing About Chinese Politics As if We Know More Than We Do?' http://www.chinafile.com/reporting-opinion/viewpoint/why-do-we-keep-writing-about-chinese-politics-if-we-know-more-we-do. They note that in the Mao and even Deng eras, it was easy enough to glean major conflicts and interest-group splits within speeches published in, for example, *The People's Daily*.
55. Hung, *The China Boom* (Columbia University Press, 2015), does not quite argue for China's imminent collapse but does see its post-Mao growth and development as a 'boom' in the pejorative Gold Rush-esque sense that definitely could burst soon. For his doomsday scenario making the PRC under Xi akin to North Korea, see the blog at https://punditfromanotherplanet.com/2015/03/14/is-chinas-communist-party-doomed/. Accessed Nov. 22, 2017.
56. If one has taught a number of students from the mainland, for example, one will immediately recognize the general antipathy or distaste for talking about politics. This is by no means a specifically mainland issue, but it *is* pronounced and striking coming from a former revolutionary and—globally speaking—always politically controversial society. At the same time, the attractions of liberalism and the West and 'Occidentalism' are clearly, in my observation, weaker among them since 2006 in my own case.
57. China.org has a complete transcript online at: http://live.china.org.cn/2017/10/17/opening-ceremony-of-the-19th-cpc-national-congress/. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.

58. Xi's three-hour long Congress speech also foregrounds sovereignty/territory issues (Taiwan, Hong Kong), technology, national rejuvenation, and so on, as is standard fare for post-Mao communist speeches. But he also signifies the need for the state to act environmentally and to ensure people can participate politically and consult, oversee, and so on. See section VI of his 2017 19th National Congress Speech. Again we are dealing with rhetoric here but this is not without importance.
59. As discussed earlier, this is what I take to be the point of Anthony Saich's work on Chinese citizens' attitudes toward their own government.
60. See Tom Philips in the perfectly liberal *The Guardian* newspaper after Xi's recent Party Congress speech, who cannot resist the dumb Trump comparison, 'Chairman Xi crushes dissent but poor believe he's making China great' https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/14/xi-jinping-crushes-dissent-but-making-china-great-again. Accessed Nov. 15, 2017.
61. See White, *Myth of the Social Volcano: Perceptions of Inequality and Distributive Injustice in Contemporary China* (Stanford University Press, 2010).
62. I should note that my point is not that Xi will or even *can* follow up on all his promises—he is a mere head of state like others—but that his own rhetoric and analyses are on point.
63. For examples relating to Hong Kong and Liu Xiaobo, see recent pieces in *Dissent*, an American 'liberal socialism' magazine dating from the Cold War left: https://www.dissentmagazine.org/blog/hong-kong-new-normal-joshua-wong-student-leaders-prison

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D. F. Vukovich, *Illiberal China*, China in Transformation,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-13-0541-2

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