International Journal of China Studies
Vol. 3, No. 3, December 2012, pp. 285-313

Social Justice, Democracy and the Politics of Development: The People's Republic of China in Global Perspective[+]

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Abstract

The PR China regime's repression of political dissent is the subject of daily reports in the media and ongoing discussion in academic research. Yet these reports and discussions are largely silent on the global context for the policies they criticize. The silence has two dimensions. First is the absence of any reference to the suppression of dissent globally, including in societies that flaunt their democratic commitments, that would draw attention to its pervasiveness not just as a Chinese but as a global problem. Second is silence over the complicity in this repression of outsiders from sports organizations and personages and musical and film celebrities anxious to enter the new entertainment market to educational institutions that serve willingly as vehicles for state guided propaganda through the so-called "Confucius Institutes", and mimic corporations in the joint educational enterprises they establish in PR China. These activities, entangled in shifts in global capitalism, serve as occasions for celebration rather than critically explored for their contributions to the legitimacy of the regime. Above all are transnational corporations that not only bank their futures on the China market but ideologically condone repression in their enthusiasm for the authoritarian "China model". As they scramble to meet the luxury needs of a political elite that has concentrated enormous wealth in its hands through corruption and plunder of public resources, they also benefit from the severe exploitation and abuse of labour guaranteed by the regime. The discussion below calls for closer attention to this global context of dissent and repression in PR China, and argues that while this complicity does not relieve the PR Chinese leadership of its responsibilities, it needs to be integral to any serious and thoroughgoing criticism of the regime.

Keywords: *protest, repression, inequality, corruption, "de-revolutionization", global capitalism, neo-liberal world-system, "socialism with Chinese characteristics", "China model", "alternative modernity", "global modernity", socialism*

JEL classification: *N35, P26, P36, Z13*

1. Introduction

Contemporary media reporting on questions of repression and dissent in the People's Republic of China (PRC), backed by expert voices of various kinds, is likely to yield a strong impression that at the heart of the problem is the continued hold on power of a dictatorial Communist Party riddled with factionalism and corruption. The diagnosis also casts a shadow on the revolutionary history that brought the Party to power. References to Mao Zedong 毛泽东's legacies target him as the ancestral source of contemporary problems. Given the Party's Leninist origins and constitution, however, the communism it claims as its guiding ideology – tinged with residual influences from the imperial past – must ultimately bear responsibility for its behaviour. It follows from this line of thinking that as the revolution fades with development within the parameters of the capitalist world-system, some of these problems will inevitably fade away. At the least, development will foster a new democratic constituency, often equated with a vaguely defined rising "middle" class, that will push the Communist Party toward more democratic ways of governing. In the meantime, dissidents within and forces of democracy abroad are gradually nudging the Communist Party in that direction.

Plausible as this narrative sounds in light of the ongoing struggle of Chinese intellectuals and working people for greater freedoms, democracy and justice, its teleological thrust is based on assumptions that call for closer scrutiny. Its plausibility rests, on the one hand, on the Party's repudiation of the "leftist" legacies of the revolution that led to unnecessary economic and social adventurism, and, on the other hand, its willingness to permit ideological and political discussion that would have been unimaginable during the heyday of revolution under Mao. Since 1978, the Party has sought to avoid repetition of the arbitrary exercise of leadership prerogatives during the Cultural Revolution by greater stress on rules, collective leadership and inner-Party democracy. At the same time, participation in the global economy has called for the establishment of a legal order that at least in theory is based on international norms. Development policies bank heavily internally on willing participation of the educated, reversing Cultural Revolution privileging of "redness" over expertise. The freedoms extended to society in order to secure such participation are very real indeed.

On the other hand, these changes have empowered dissidents to expand "the realm of freedom", and to hold the Party to its promise of a legal order, which is perhaps the most prominent theme of dissent in contemporary PRC. Dissent is further substantiated by the urban constituencies that have benefited from "reform and opening", who most likely would not object to the extension into the realm of politics of the freedom to consume that development has brought about – and is premised upon. There is no denying the ferment over these issues among the so-called "netizens". At least on the surface, the PRC shows every sign that with the deepening of development, it will follow the example of other authoritarian regimes, especially in Eastern Asia, in making the transition from dictatorship to democracy. At least on the surface, victory in the Cold War over socialism provides historical confirmation to the persuasiveness of this narrative.

And yet, it is not at all certain that these changes justify the teleological hopes invested in them, which call for closer scrutiny. This is the purpose of the discussion below. We take up three questions that seem to be of particular significance but seldom are raised in evaluations of change in the PRC. First is the relationship to the legacies of the revolution of the Party and the people at large, including many dissidents, which is hardly the one-dimensional relationship it is often assumed to be. Second is the relationship of questions of repression and dissent in the PRC to its structural context within global capitalism. The PRC presently suffers from severe economic and social inequality that may be sustained only by political repression. It is frequently overlooked, however, that economic and social inequality are products of the very development policies for which the PRC is widely admired. The ironic consequence is that criticism directed at the PRC for its democratic deficit is more than compensated for by pressures to keep up a pattern and pace of development that gives priority to its functioning within the global system over the economic and political welfare of the population. Indeed, the "China Model" has more than a few admirers who look to it with envy against the "inefficiencies" thrown up by popular pursuit of justice in democratic societies. Deepening inequality is a pervasive phenomenon of global neoliberalism, of which the PRC is an integral part. Around the globe the predicament of democracy has set off a dialectic of protest and repression that has further thrown its future into jeopardy in any but a formal sense. Within a global context in which democracy is at risk and human rights in shambles, what does it mean for the PRC to be moving toward a more democratic regime? This being the case, finally, is there a case to be made that the PRC is better off exploring socialist alternatives in economy, society and politics than emulating models whose future is very much in question, in which case critique should be directed at holding the Party to its promise

of socialism rather than its failures to live up to the examples of those who themselves are in retreat from democracy?

2. Protest and Repression

Before proceeding with an analysis of the questions above, it may be useful to summarize briefly the problem of repression and dissent in the PRC which is somewhat more complicated than appears at first sight. Indeed, these terms are insufficient to encompass fundamental aspects of the relationship of the Party-state to its citizens.[1]

The terms may serve well in reference to disagreements within the Communist Party, or even the cases of high-profile intellectuals and their associates and supporters. But they fall somewhat short of grasping the situation even in these cases in light of the display of lawless behaviour by the state authorities. Despite state pretensions to legality, the "crimes" for which intellectuals such as Ai Weiwei 艾未未, Chen Guangcheng 陈光诚 and Liu Xiaobo 刘晓波 have been harassed, condemned, incarcerated and tortured (sometimes to death, as in the recent case of Li Wangyang 李旺阳) do not go beyond testing the limits of restrictive laws and even greater restrictiveness in their application. Restrictions on speech supposedly guaranteed by the PRC's own constitution are routine practice. Unemployed peasant workers are employed by the authorities to provide round-the-clock surveillance of victims whose only crime is to transgress against what the authorities deem the limits of speech or to pursue justice in the courts. The Party does not hesitate to resort to thuggery in order to enforce arbitrary restrictions. It is little wonder that the internal security budget of the PRC is larger than its defense budget.

In the case of minority populations such as the Tibetans, Uighurs and Mongolians, it is more proper to speak of seething rebellion, which the Party-state counters with what may best be described as colonial policies, both violent and non-violent. Non-violent means include most prominently the actual physical colonization of Tibet and Xinjiang by Han ethnicities from the interior, compounded with slow but inexorable extinction of local cultures.[2] Violent means include erasure of physical and cultural legacies from the destruction of cities in the name of urban progress to prohibitions on religious practices which constitute the cultural fabric of these societies.[3] At the extreme, the state has responded with fatal physical violence and incarcerations to overt expressions of rebellion against its rule. These may also serve as warnings to those harbouring separatist sentiments in the neighbouring societies of Taiwan and Hong Kong. The PRC all along has responded to calls for Taiwan independence with threats of forceful occupation. In Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) ruled by and for business interests entangled in the PRC economy, the Beijing

government's silent invasion is most evident in the increasing self-censorship of the press. Still, the relationship is on occasion a tense one as Hong Kong'ers continue to struggle for the preservation of their local rights, as well as the restoration of those of their compatriots across the border.[4]

Possibly most fundamental in terms of the number of lives it touches and the structural inequalities it expresses is the disturbed relationship of the Party-state to the working, especially the agrarian working population. An urban vision against the earlier Maoist glorification of the peasantry and practical necessities of capital accumulation have combined in a development policy that owes much of its success to dispossession of the agrarian population and the exploitation of agrarian labour driven off agriculture – the so-called "peasant-workers" (*nongmingong* 农民工).[5] The exploitation of agrarian resources and labour was severe under Mao's leadership as well, but this time around the returns have been plundered by the ruling elite, mostly from the Party or with Party connections, that has produced one of the most unequal societies in the world. Conflicts over illegal or unjust confiscations of land by local cadres are at the source of the majority of the disturbances that numbered close to 200,000 last year. Villages have been emptied out of their young men and women, leaving behind the elderly and the very young, severely affecting family structures. The 150-200 million estimated migrant population of workers not only are treated like "illegal" migrants in being deprived of access to city amenities (including education and health), but are also a source of friction among the population because of ethnic and place differences.[6] Depending upon the constitution of the migrant workers at any one place, gender and ethnic tensions are added to the class oppression and exploitation that has been a motor force of the PRC's development over the last two decades. With rare exceptions such as the Wukan 乌坎 Uprising in Guangdong in 2011, the Party-State responds to expressions of popular unrest with further suppression and, when necessary, violence.

There are, of course, many satisfied with their improved lot since 1978. A recent study based on research conducted nearly a decade ago found that the majority were satisfied with the regime, and few harboured rebellious sentiments against it or the dominant urban class society over which it presides. The outstanding resentment was not of social difference but corrupt and ill-gotten gain.[7] On the other hand, it is equally evident that violence or the threat of it is integral to the political and ideological structure of Chinese society.

Equally importantly, the question of dissent covers a broad spectrum: from liberal aspirations to a democracy similar to those of other advanced societies to the defense of legal rights, intellectual freedom and the pursuit of justice (if not equality) within the existing system to anti-colonial struggles for autonomy among minority peoples, and the struggles for autonomy and democracy in Hong Kong. If these struggles share one thing in common, it

is the demand upon the Party-state for greater openness and respect or laws. Otherwise, they are also at odds with one another in their various causes with divisive consequences. It would be difficult if not impossible to find even on the left many who would condone greater autonomy to Tibet and Xinjiang, or letting go of Taiwan or Hong Kong.

It may be suggested that there is both too much criticism of the PRC, and too little. Criticism that focuses on the particularities of the PRC – the Communist regime – is more often than not off the mark in its Cold War style juxtaposition of communism and democracy (or liberalism), as well as smoothing over evidence that the two terms of the juxtaposition may carry different weight and ideological baggage from different perspectives that are not just cultural but deeply political. It is probably safe to say that most Chinese conceive of democracy differently than it is typically understood in mainstream European and North American thinking as a strictly political issue, insisting on the inclusion of economic rights in any serious practice of democracy. They also have a different relationship to communism as part of their history. The juxtaposition also ignores a world-wide surge of oppressive practices of surveillance and criminalization of populations that may reveal PRC practices to be less peculiar to a "socialist" regime than appears superficially.

On the other hand, criticism of the PRC seems perfunctory when compared to threats of embargoes and wars against comparable dictatorial regimes.[8] Power relations, economic interests, and a long standing culturalist fascination with China combine to set China apart from other such regimes. Indeed, there has been an ongoing celebration of the PRC's development under the leadership of the Communist Party that recalls memories of the *Chinoiserie* that took Europe by storm three centuries ago. There are even displays of willingness to complicity with the regime's pursuit of global hegemony, most notoriously through the so-called Confucius Institutes. Not only governments and business but even educational institutions supposedly dedicated to critical inquiry are anxious to court a regime which is by common acknowledgment suspicious of free inquiry beyond its control. Rarely is this contradiction questioned. Business is less than eager to jeopardize its chances in the "China market" in the name of human or political rights. There are suggestions of envy in praises of a "China model" that has "successfully" combined neoliberal economic policies with authoritarian politics and social policy. New York University may offer the blatant example of this contradiction in its offer of an educational home to the recently exiled dissident Chen Guangcheng even as it is in the process of building a campus in Shanghai.

Under the circumstances, it seems quite irrelevant to hold the Communist regime to its socialist promises and professions of Marxism. Critics are not

interested in those "dead" issues. They are also justifiably sceptical about the socialist professions of a communist party which better answers to the description of "red capitalist" than socialist in any serious sense of that term. These issues, however, are of the utmost significance to the regime and many of its subjects – especially the intellectuals – and they are also divisive for both the Party and dissidents aligned against it, who also dissent with one another over them. Dissent, in other words, is not just a matter of democracy and communism but shares in all the complexities of Chinese politics.

3. The Past in the Present

The legacies of the revolution and Bolshevik structure of the Communist Party are no doubt important elements in structuring Chinese politics. On the other hand, it needs to be kept in mind that what might be a necessity of revolutionary politics aimed at social transformation can easily degenerate into garden variety dictatorship designed to protect organizational and class interests. PRC politics presently partakes of both these elements. Increasingly, however, legitimation is located not in the necessities of developing toward some socialist vision but national goals of "wealth and power".

Critiques that presuppose the abandonment of the revolutionary past are in some ways widely off the mark.[9] To be sure, Mao is condemned for his part in the Cultural Revolution, and the Party remains wary of any leftward turn in politics, as is attested by the Bo Xilai 薄熙来 episode and the Chongqing experiment. Whether or not this means the abandonment or fading away of the revolution and Mao's legacies either for the Party or the population at large remains an open question. The Chongqing experiment was a far cry from the Cultural Revolution. It advocated closer political intervention in the economy to allocate a greater share of the returns to populist causes like affordable housing for the needy, especially for the rural population displaced by its own pursuit of development. It also revived some of the political and ideological themes of the Cultural Revolution that in theory were intended to alleviate some of the adverse social and cultural effects of capitalist development. But the experiment did not challenge immersion in global capitalism, which was a fundamental difference from the Cultural Revolution pursuit of nearly autarchic development. Aside from "gangsterism", its main target was to mitigate the class and urban-rural inequalities that are acknowledged by the Party leadership as fundamental problems. According to supporters on the left some of whom were directly involved in the experiment it was nevertheless a sufficient threat to the reigning neoliberal assumptions guiding the regime to invite quick suppression.[10] Ongoing conflicts over how best to steer economic development toward national and social ends seem to have been exacerbated in this case by personal and factional ambitions and animosities.

The suppression has hardly eliminated divisions within the Party over its relationship to its revolutionary past, as is indicated by recent calls for return to the policies of New Democracy, blending socialist and capitalist elements, that had brought the Party to power in 1949. The Cultural Revolution had been the negation of New Democracy. What they shared in common was a commitment to national ends.

It is often overlooked that what was repudiated after 1978 was neither the revolution nor Mao Zedong but Maoist policies of the Cultural Revolution from the mid-1950s to their reversal after 1978. In Party ideology, the essence of Mao Zedong Thought is identified as "making Marxism Chinese", of which the formulation of New Democracy in the 1940s was the foundational moment. Under Deng Xiaoping 邓小平's leadership after 1978, the Party reaffirmed the correctness of New Democracy policies, and portrayed "socialism with Chinese characteristics" as further development of Mao Zedong Thought under new national and global circumstances. Even the radical departures under Deng's successors (Jiang Zemin 江泽民 and Hu Jintao 胡锦涛) are portrayed in official ideology as the unfolding of Mao Zedong Thought. Mao Zedong Thought has been stripped of its social revolutionary implications, and rendered into an ideology of national development. Accordingly, the century long revolutionary process itself has been revised to read as the "road to [national] rejuvenation" (*fuxing zhi lu* 复兴之路) as in the exhibit at the newly reorganized National History Museum.

While the preservation of Maoist revolutionary legacy is of obvious importance to the reaffirmation of the Communist Party's legitimacy, its significance goes beyond this legitimating function. The official "de-revolutionization" of Mao does not rule out the possibility of the return of revolutionary policies if circumstances permit (or demand) it, which was the case with the Chongqing experiment. This possibility is not limited to the Party, or leftist intellectuals. Despite intense resentment in some quarters, Mao continues to command iconic status among the common people of China as a powerful symbol that can be mobilized against the turn the Party has taken. To the chagrin of the leadership, peasants in the 1990s built temples to Mao Zedong, surpassing his metaphorical deification during the Cultural Revolution – coincident with the "Mao fever" evoked by the hundredth anniversary of Mao's birth in 1993, but more importantly with the full scale turn to capitalism after 1992 which initiated a process of dispossessing the common people. While such displays were quickly suppressed, the themes associated with them remain alive even when they are not explicitly attached to Mao's person or invoke revolutionary precedents. Peasants may have longer memories stored in their stories than urban populations at the mercy of changing fashions.[11] If revolution even under Mao did not eliminate their exploitation, it at the very least empowered them politically in unprecedented

ways. Those memories have not disappeared. There is some evidence that protestors in the recent Wukan uprising in Guangdong invoked memories of the Hailufeng 海陆丰 Soviet established in the same location in 1927 by the Communist intellectual Peng Pai 彭湃.[12]

Criticism that focuses on the legacies of revolution and socialism are misleading most egregiously in ignoring that it is nationalism, not socialism, that accounts for the behaviour of the regime. After all, the Chinese Revolution was a national revolution for autonomous development against "semi-colonialism", with socialism as its vehicle. The vehicle gave the nationalism its particular flavour, but with the retreat from any operative vision of socialism, the latter seems more than ever merely a front for the national pursuit of wealth and power – under the leadership of the Communist Party. It is important to remember that most of the criticism directed against the PRC for its "socialist" failures overlooks the fundamental national interest that guides the Communist regime's domestic and foreign policies, including the repressive exploitation of its own population in the name of development and security.

Unless we take socialism to be the concentration of wealth and power in the Communist Party, there is little in "socialism with Chinese characteristics" that may be described as socialist in any strict sense of the term (we will return to this later). The legacies of revolution derive their vitality not from visions of socialism but from their roots in nationalism. For the population at large no less than the Communist Party as such, the revolution is inextricably entangled in the struggle for national autonomy and power. While the Communist Party has repudiated the radical social, economic and political policies of the Cultural Revolution, the militant nationalism that the Cultural Revolution espoused would become even more indispensable to the regime in filling the ideological vacuum left by the abandonment of the socialist project after 1978 in mobilizing popular support for its policies. The so-celled "new nationalism" after the 1990s owed much to the nationalist propaganda effort that accompanied the repudiation of militant socialism in the early 1980s, when nationalist literature addressed to various constituencies of the regime flooded the publishing market. Since then, the regime deliberately has fuelled nationalism by playing up the "national humiliation" inflicted upon the country by imperialism since the middle of the nineteenth century which was overcome only by Communist victory in 1949.[13] Overcoming national humiliation would seem to justify expansion over imagined "lost" areas, laying claims to territories or seas on the basis of manufactured historical and legal rights.[14]

If there is anything novel about the effort, it is the use of nationalism to cover up the retreat from socialism. Resentment of "national humiliation" has been a driving force of revolution for the past century. Among the legacies of

the Cultural Revolution is a militant nationalism that still lingers among the population at large. Indeed, over issues of national sovereignty, it is difficult to avoid the impression that it is public pressure on the Party that drives militancy than the other way around. Conflicts with neighbouring states over disputed island territories or the Southeast Asian Sea invariably provokes furious reactions among "netizens" and even thoughtful intellectuals. There was considerable resentment against Liu Xiaobo for his suggestion that China might have been better off if it had gone through a phase of colonial rule (as in Hong Kong). While economic interests of the Party corporate elite are not to be ignored in the discriminatory policies against foreign enterprises, they are consistent with the search for economic autonomy that has been a concern of reformers and revolutionaries since the beginning of the nineteenth century. The expectation from "reform and opening" after 1978 and "globalization" since the 1990s was not relinquishing control over the national economy but to utilize these "tools" to achieve the long-desired goal of autonomous development – which has made the PRC attractive especially to societies of the Global South.

Judging by the surge of nationalism since the 1990s, development seems to have reinforced national pride and close-mindedness despite the cultural opening to the outside world, accompanied by enthusiastic consumption of things foreign and the rush to educational institutions abroad of the offspring of the new economic elite. To hear some Chinese intellectuals argue these days, one would think that the PRC's phenomenal development since the 1980s owes nothing to do with forces from the outside, including Chinese Overseas (*haiwai huaren* 海外华人), but was the product of national virtues, often going past the revolution itself to "traditional" values of one kind or another – echoing without acknowledgment arguments of modernization discourse. Such arguments, accompanied by claims to an "alternative modernity" (the China Model), also ignore the extent to which the PRC has mimicked development in other capitalist society, especially the US, overtaking which seems to be a national obsession.[15] Contemporary China is a laboratory case in the study of the dynamics of "Sino-centrism".

More to the point here, there is little reason to expect that this nationalism will fade away anytime soon. The hope that with development the socialist legacy will vanish into the past is largely misplaced because the issue is not socialism but this militant nationalism that has appropriated socialist policies for its own. Indeed, this nationalism derives new energy from development, and bolsters the regime's claims to the inextricable links between national salvation and its own preservation. Whether over greater independence for the minorities, or Taiwan independence in foreign relations, opening markets in its economic relations, or greater freedom and democracy internally, it is national security as perceived by a Party that is not only the political ruler

of the country but increasingly the dominant social class as well that will determine future behaviour.

4. The PRC in the Neoliberal World System

The second set of issues that call for closer scrutiny pertains to the PRC's context within global capitalism. Both state repression and popular struggles against it are no doubt deeply marked by "Chinese characteristics".[16] Nevertheless, the most widespread causes of discontent – forceful expropriation of agricultural land, widespread dislocation of the population, severe exploitation of labour, social and spatial inequalities, corruption from the top to the bottom of the political structure, urban and rural pollution – are all entangled in the development policies that the PRC has pursued since the 1980s in its quest of "wealth and power" within the context of a neo-liberal global capitalism.[17] Indeed, isolating questions of social conflict and state repression in the PRC from these entanglements more often than not leads to tendentious readings that blame the problem on local cadres or the nature of the political system. On the other hand, it obviates the need to explore further how successful and rapid incorporation in global capitalism has come to shape the dynamics of the system and the behaviour of its various agents despite increasingly ineffective efforts on the part of the regime to shield society from the consequences of its own policies, which accounts for much of its repressive policies. It also renders opaque the part played by outsiders in Chinese politics, not just as agents of progress toward human rights and democracy, as some would naively believe, but also in their economic and ideological complicity with repressive policies.

The conversion of land into capital, the creation of a floating labour force available for this process, and the sale of cheap labour power to fuel an export-oriented economy are all aspects of capital accumulation within a globalized capitalist economy. If anything distinguishes the PRC, it is the presence of a sprawling organizational structure put in place by the revolution that has guaranteed the efficient performance of these processes, with coercion whenever necessary. This organization was created initially to achieve the twin tasks of economic development and social transformation in the creation of a socialist society, where in hindsight the task of social transformation inhibited full performance in the task of economic construction. Indeed, conflict between the two goals would lead to social tensions that exploded in the disastrous chaos of the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution and, in a much more limited scope, the Tiananmen 天安门 tragedy of 1989.

The removal of the inhibitions with the move to a "socialist market economy" after 1978 would unleash the full economic potential of this organizational structure, but at a price: The conversion of a revolutionary party

intended to pursue the cause of a just society into a "ruling party" representing the most advanced social forces, technologies and culture devoted to the relentless pursuit of "wealth and power".[18] This is not to suggest that a just society had been achieved before 1978. Even during the revolutionary years before 1976 "revolution" had been placed at the service of developmentalist goals of overtaking capitalist societies that justified the reorganization of society into more efficient units of production and the severe exploitation of labour under banners of revolution. Nevertheless, few would deny that these revolutionary slogans carried the weight they did because no one doubted the seriousness of the regime about the kind of society inscribed on the banners. This would change after the regime concluded from the Tiananmen upheaval, and Deng Xiaoping's personal testimonial to the success of the special economic zone in Shenzhen, that enrichment of the population was the best cure to excessive popular interest in politics. Incorporation in the global capitalist economy – without, however, compromising national sovereignty – was achieved under Deng's successors under the sign of "globalization".

There can be little question about the renewed dynamism these changes brought to the party and government organization, or the popular enterprise they stimulated – ironically, in hindsight, beginning with the agricultural population in the 1980s. The township enterprises flourishing from the late 1980s through the early 1990s represented successful efforts by local cadres who for a while were given considerable leeway in the pursuit of capital and the negotiation of development in their domains. "Globalization" of the economy from the late 1990s was accompanied by the re-centralization of decision-making, greater coordination of development, and the reassertion of the power over the economy of state-owned financial, energy and industrial enterprises.

Despite the ideological and organizational particularities of the PRC that are products of its revolutionary history, the accumulation of capital over the last three decades have been marked by class formations and relationships characteristic of the "primitive accumulation" of capital elsewhere. The distinction of the regime, derivative of its claims to socialism, is almost total control of resources, including labour, which under this "workers' state" is not allowed to represent itself because it is already represented by the "socialist" regime. One critic of the regime has ascribed China's rapid development to a "low human rights" regime.[19] Domestic accumulation has been achieved through the conversion of land into capital, in the process releasing huge amounts of cheap and controlled labour-power that then was put to use in the construction of cities, infrastructure projects, and industries. This labouring population also provided the workers and large numbers of women in export production financed by foreign and domestic capital that would make China into the "factory of the world", and a major depository of global capital.[20]

The PRC is an outstanding example of the private appropriation of public resources that David Harvey has described as "accumulation by dispossession".[21] The Party's claims to be *the public* has grown less convincing over the years with increasing evidence of the private disposal of the country's wealth through party control of the economy. The new Chinese economic elite working through or with the Party does not differ much from its counterparts elsewhere in the unprecedented accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small minority of the population. The "blood-line" faction which has received much attention recently in connection with the Bo Xilai affair, and the prospective Party Chairman, Xi Jinping 习近平, goes so far as to claim special privileges for descendants of revolutionary party leaders that smacks of a new aristocratic formation in the making.

Rapid economic development has created an urban middle class that may be proof of developmental success. The regime can also boast that for all the problems of development, it has managed successfully to feed its huge population. But these successes barely disguise the lop-sidedness of the PRC's development which is obviously a matter of great concern to the leadership itself. Commanding the second largest economy in the world, the PRC nevertheless ranks among the world's poorest countries in terms of per capita GDP. Most of the wealth is concentrated in the hands of the top 20 per cent of the population, but especially the top one per cent.[22] The rural population which is still the majority languishes as agriculture is commercialized, with increasing participation from agribusiness. In the meantime, the population is being crammed into "megacities" beset with problems of pollution, traffic, and the yet unpredictable toll on the population of life under such circumstances. The working population is still subject to abuse at the hands of domestic and foreign corporations. Workers fight back, needless to say, and the second generation of peasant-workers are less amenable to exploitation and prejudice than their parents.[23] Much of the repressive apparatus of the state is directed to keeping under control, with violence if necessary, protests against inequality, exploitation, unjust plunder of public resources, rights to land in particular, and environmental pollution. State terrorism against these protests includes incarceration, torture and outright murder of their leaders, with similar treatment meted out to intellectuals and lawyers who throw in their lot with popular protests. Little wonder, as the Communist Party is no longer just a political but also an economic class which has a direct interest in the accumulation of capital. It has so far been more successful than its predecessors in the twentieth century in convincing the population that its interests are also the national interest, but how long it can do so is anybody's case. One of the particularities of the PRC is that the organizational apparatus that has enabled its development is equally efficient as an instrument of repression so long as it retains its coherence, which it has done successfully so

far through the distribution of economic rewards and privileges throughout the organization. We should remember that the Communist Party and its auxiliary organizations make up around 20 per cent of the population.[24]

Viewed through the prism of the primitive accumulation of capital within the context of global capitalism, the PRC's developmental trajectory invites a more sociological approach to questions of social protest and political repression. We may ask, for instance, whether in the expropriation of land rights, the concentration of wealth, the exploitation and mistreatment of labour, immense class, gender, ethnic and racial differences, and violent suppression of challenges to the status quo, the contemporary PRC might compare favourably with the United States in the second half of the 19th century – without even referring to civil war and the colonial abjection of the native population? How does the PRC compare in these regards with other contemporary societies embarked on "primitive accumulation," from Brazil and South Africa, to Turkey, Russia and India? Is the excessive preoccupation with repression in the PRC a function not of its record as such as it is of the greater visibility it has acquired on the world scene by virtue of successful economic development? On the other hand, this comparison also raises the question of whether or not the PRC may be able to follow the same trajectory as the United States earlier moving toward a more egalitarian and just society once done with the business of "primitive accumulation?" If that was possible at an earlier time, is it still possible under conditions of global capitalism?

We are not likely anytime soon to see headlines such as "The Chinese are using a more spare version of our tactics in eliminating the Indians", or "Chinese torture internal dissidents while the US concentrates mainly on foreign terrorists", or "Inequality and corruption in China reach US levels", or yet still, "Is the US moving toward authoritarian capitalism?" Professional codes and ideological blinders combine to drive away any such temptation.

The point of such questions is not to abolish distinctions between democratic capitalist societies and an authoritarian capitalism directed by an all-powerful party-state that is also heir to revolutionary repression now placed in the service of a new status quo. Nor is it to absolve Chinese political leaders of their responsibility for abuses of the citizenry, or to deny China's particular historical legacies. It is rather to point to the broader social and historical context of individual or regime responsibility, and to relocate problems of repression and protest in the structural dynamics of China's development. It is also to suggest that given the structural links between contemporary societies and the common political, economic and cultural forces that shape their actions, comparable tendencies may be observed globally, subject to local variation due to differences in historical legacies, social alignments, and political and ideological dispositions in different societies. If China is having problems with democracy, inequality, political

legitimacy, transgressions against citizens' human rights, etc., so is the rest of the globe, including those who would claim universal values for their own.[25] Differences in the magnitude of the problems and the means and capacity to deal with them should not be allowed to disguise these commonalities. The recognition of commonality also calls for a more complicated understanding of responsibility for these problems, which may appear in different guises in different societies but also articulate the contradictions of a global capitalism to which no outside exists except in its interior.

It is not possible to delve further into these questions here. But in general they cast the question of social conflict and repression in the PRC in a different light than when it is viewed in isolation. The first question may seem irrelevant in the contemporary world, but it is at least a caution against over-zealous self-righteousness in condemnations of the PRC. As for the other questions that are more contemporary in their presuppositions, it seems that the PRC's problems are shared to varying degrees in comparable societies, even though they find different outlets of expression depending on the openness of each political system to popular political participation. None matches the efficient ruthlessness of development in the PRC with power concentrated in the hands of the Communist Party. The speedy development for which the PRC is justly admired was made possible by the equally speedy exploitation of natural and social resources, which in its rapidity and deep social consequences has attracted attention globally. But the concentration of wealth in ever fewer hands, increasing inequality, the impoverishment of the middle strata of society, increased use of surveillance and outright disregard for previously recognized rights, and the effective disenfranchisement of populations are pervasive phenomena of global neoliberal capitalism not only in developing countries but developed ones as well.

This context has a bearing on the future direction of the PRC as well. Whether or not the PRC will follow the example of developed countries in gradually overcoming the adverse social and ecological consequences of "primitive accumulation", achieved with unprecedented rapidity. This might have seemed possible in an earlier time when the teleology of modernization was still plausible. It seems much less certain within the context of a global capitalism when the so-called developed countries are in retreat from a century of achievements in social welfare and justice, as well as a range of citizenship rights. There has been some redistribution of wealth globally, but what has resulted is a far cry from the promise in modernization discourse of one big "middle class" around the world, with attendant progress in institutions that guarantee social justice and democracy.

In such an environment, there are no clear guides to the future, which finds expression presently in claims to "alternative modernities", more often than not based on modernized cultural claims that seek to roll back ideas of

social justice and democratic rights as they have been understood for two centuries under the regime of Euromodernity. There may be the promise here of a more cosmopolitan understanding of these ideas. It seems that more often than not, cultural claims serve as excuses for the perpetuation of authoritarian systems that accord with the interests of their hegemonic constituencies while denying to the people at large the political rights indispensable to the defense of their civil and social rights. This, too, has become a pervasive phenomenon of the contemporary world.

In other words, within the contemporary global system characterized by the concentration of wealth, the increased restriction of civil and social rights, cultural nationalist fragmentation, there is little reason for the leaders of the PRC to modify the repressiveness of the regime, except to correct the contradictions that obstruct further development.[26] The apparent regression in the so-called advanced countries may serve as a negative example, a warning not to follow in their wake. Indeed, ideas of "the China model" or "the Beijing Consensus" that have attracted quite a bit of attention in global corporate circles and many governments suggest an envy for the authoritarian efficiency of the Chinese Party-state, ready to part with citizens' and human rights as obstacles to the efficient conduct of business. Similarly, in the name of closer cultural and economic relations with the PRC, educational institutions around the world (the majority in the US) have invited into their midst the so-called Confucius Institutes where behind the façade of the *Hanban* 汉办 the Wizard of OZ resides in the Central Propaganda Department. It is remarkable that the many China specialists involved in these institutions should not wonder publicly why these institutes are named after a revered cultural and philosophical icon who remains suspect at home! Whatever the criticisms thrown at them from certain quarters, the PRC leadership has every reason to find vindication of its policies and legitimation of its developmental trajectory in its fetishization as a model, and the ready acquiescence of cultural institutions abroad with its propaganda goals.

5. A Socialist Regime?

At the root of problems of protest and repression is the frenetic development policies of the regime driven by multiple goals of advancing the power and standing of the nation, a genuine need to improve the lot of all Chinese, the interests of the Party-economic elite, popular demands of a moneyed class for more of the same, and global investors urging it on, not necessarily in that order. For all the talk about social reform and environmental regulation, cadres are evaluated for their economic performance, reinforcing local urges to plunder. Those closer to the centre seem to have accumulated enormous wealth, usually through family members with falsified names.[27] There is likely

little distinction in the minds of this ruling class between its class interests and the interests of the nation and the population.

If we shift attention from high-profile intellectuals to the people at large, most protest in numbers and magnitude in the PRC come from the people at large, even without including the minority peoples. These protests also draw in intellectuals as supporters or sympathizers and activist lawyers, as is evidenced in the cases Ai Weiwei and Chen Guangcheng, to mention only recent two that have made the headlines. The plight of the people inspired the recent Chongqing experiment, which also has revealed deep divisions within the Party on the best way to address it. The experiment has ended in failure due to a number of reasons, from personal failure, its own internal contradictions, and counter-pressures from neo-liberal forces in the Party. Despite the defeat, its revival of revolutionary themes should not be dismissed lightly. The Wukan case is another example, when the locals carried out a successful struggle against the expropriation of their land, at a location that nearly ninety years earlier had been home to China's first Soviet government. More recently, popular protest against environmental pollution has won victories in a number of locations.[28]

These protests are against the injustices that have accompanied "development". The distinguished sociologist Sun Liping 孙立平 has noted that of the estimated 180,000 grassroots protests of various magnitude that took place in 2011, sixty-five per cent had to do with land issues.[29] That does not mean that other issues are irrelevant. Strikes and other forms of protest have gained ground for urban labourers, and environmental protest is an ongoing presence. There have been protests against privilege, provoked by abusive and criminal behaviour on the part of the elite.[30] Despite some progress, however, the state still responds to these protests with repression.[31] In the meantime, the returns from development are concentrated in the hands of a small elite serviced by mostly foreign purveyors of luxury living, with foreign passports ready in hand in case development runs into trouble. Corruption oils the wheels of development.

It is important to call upon the PRC regime to respect human and citizens' rights, and live up to its own laws. It is even more important to recognize that at the most fundamental social level, such calls are bound to be limited in effectiveness. What breeds state lawlessness and repression is not just the greed and corruption of individuals but the imperatives of development, or more accurately, a developmentalism that is oblivious to social and environmental costs so long as it contributes to national power and the class interests of the Party-state elites.[32] It is also at this level that China's problems are inextricably entangled in global processes. To global corporations that benefit directly or indirectly from China's development the welfare of the Chinese population is at best a secondary concern. Educational

institutions that increasingly behave as corporate enterprises appear quite satisfied to serve as fronts for Chinese propaganda so long as it brings with it possibilities of campus expansion, increased student enrolments, and perhaps business connections. And last, but not least, consumers around the world who must share in the responsibility for the social and environmental havoc that the PRC's development has wrought.[33] Developmentalism itself is not a Chinese peculiarity but an ideological driving force of global capitalism. The accumulation of wealth and power in the hands of a small elite is not just a Chinese but a global problem, cutting across distinction of advanced/developing/and yet-to-develop societies. What distinguishes the PRC is the ruthless efficiency to achieve the speed with which it has been able to pursue development in the absence of democratic obstacles that have tempered the same tendencies in other "developing" societies. The ruthless elimination of popular opposition to its developmental policies is one of the foremost characteristics of "the China model" that has earned the PRC widespread admiration in corporate circles. To cite one recent example by the prominent US neo-liberal, Francis Fukuyama,

> The most important strength of the Chinese political system is its ability to make large, complex decisions quickly, and to make them relatively well, at least in economic policy. This is most evident in the area of infrastructure, where China has put into place airports, dams, high-speed rail, water and electricity systems to feed its growing industrial base. Contrast this with [democratic] India, where every new investment is subject to blockage by trade unions, lobby groups, peasant associations and courts … Nonetheless, the quality of Chinese government is higher than in Russia, Iran, or the other authoritarian regimes with which it is often lumped – precisely because Chinese rulers feel some degree of accountability towards their population. That accountability is not, of course, procedural; the authority of the Chinese Communist party is limited neither by a rule of law nor by democratic elections. But while its leaders limit public criticism, they do try to stay on top of popular discontents, and shift policy in response.[34]

What sustains the increasingly untenable political structure in the PRC is not just the resilience of the system put in place by the revolution but global capital that has come to have a large stake in this system.[35] If spokespeople for global capital are critical of the Chinese system, it is not because of its authoritarianism but because of its resistance to further opening its doors to capital (the Chinese, interestingly, also complain of reverse discrimination against *their* transnational corporations, which also happen to be owned by the state, further complicating matters). These corporations, including the universities that have become stakeholders in the Chinese economy or hope to do so, no doubt argue that more intense engagement will bring greater democracy and human rights China – for which there is scarce evidence in the

increasing vulnerability of human and citizens' rights in their home countries in Europe and North America in which corporations and the business conquest of higher education are important players.[36]

China needs a systemic shift, to be sure, but not of the kind proposed by global capital which in its accumulation of economic and political power has created the global class divisions that is at the source of these problems in China and elsewhere. The sociologist Sun Liping and his research team conclude that the concentration of economic and political power in the hands of the Party-state is responsible for the most fundamental ills of society, and is increasingly incapacitated by its interests in the system to do anything about the crisis.[37] This situation, too, has parallels elsewhere in the world. It should come as no surprise to those involved in "the Arab Spring" of 2011, and the global Occupy movements that have been going on for over a year now without any foreseeable resolution of the problems that gave rise to them.

What Sun calls "social" or "political" decay is also characteristic of the current global situation in other major world economies. While different political and cultural legacies guide the trajectories of dissent and repression, societies globally are torn with class inequalities that the entrenched political and ideological orthodoxy refuses to acknowledge, a first step in the search for alternatives. In this regard there is little difference between a United States where party politics no longer expresses a democratic will but has become a mask covering the betrayal of democracy and popular welfare in the service of corporate and financial interests, and a PRC where socialism no longer serves as a guide to creating a different kind of society but instead serves as a cover for an authoritarian corporate capitalism. Contrary to apologists for authoritarian politics, the struggles over power and policy in the Communist Party do not seem to be any the less contentious in its power and policy politics than the cantankerous multi-party conflicts in the US.[38] It is no doubt important that in an open society it is easier to bring problems out into the open if solutions are to be found, but so far immobility seems to characterize politics around the world as if there is a common reluctance to recognize the problems created by neoliberal globalization. It is not, therefore, very convincing that further opening China's doors to global capital will resolve the problems it faces. What is needed is another kind of change that shifts the focus from development that benefits global corporations and the global ruling class that controls them to a kind of development that can meet popular needs for welfare and justice and is attentive to ecological consequences – not in words but deeds.

Whether or not things fall apart before they take a turn for the better remains to be seen in China as elsewhere. The fact that the Chongqing experiment failed due to apparently personal and institutional reasons should not blind us to its larger significance: the continued importance of the

revolutionary past as a resource for solving contemporary problems. It is true that those resources have been compromised by their disastrous consequences in the past. But they retain considerable power in invoking a century of revolutionary quest for social justice and political sovereignty for the people at large that is yet to be fulfilled. The imagination of such a future presupposes breaking with an official vision that is postponed to a future so remote that it is meaningless. What makes a vision politically relevant is its immanence.

Is this a possibility in present-day China? Perhaps. Intensified repression over the past year has done little to stem protest activity which would seem to be on the rise, emboldened by a series of popular victories one after another in Wukan, Dalian 大连, and most recently, Shifang 什邡 and Qidong 启东.[39] But the obstacles are formidable. For the time being, the Chinese leadership has decided on suppression of dissent rather than pursue any radical shift in direction despite its recognition of deep-seated problems. Social and political "decay", Sun Liping *et al*. suggest, is a major source of indecision. The ruling class, with an efficient organization at its disposal, is resistant to change. Among the population at large, there is a considerable constituency that is satisfied with the system of which it is the product. For those who may not be happy with their lot, the promise of national progress and power is nevertheless a powerful substitute for personal fortunes, as likely to serve state purposes as to engage in social resistance to the state. Where issues of national sovereignty are concerned, popular nationalism is often more militant than that of the state. Indeed, recent cases where the word "traitor" has been bandied about suggest a readiness to foment a xenophobic nationalism against protests that draw upon "foreign" inspiration. The cultural nationalism that has been on the rise since the late 1980s has all the militant fervour of Mao-era nationalism against imperialism and global class divisions, but is directed now at cultural defiance of Euromodernity, stressing the particularity of Chinese identity even as China becomes an integral part of contemporary global capitalism and "Chinese culture" is dissolved into a consumer culture. For the left, it represents an effort to find an autonomous path of development. It is also a fertile breeding ground for xenophobic nativism.

Here, too, the PRC is at one with the world of global modernity which is the product of a fundamental contradiction between the globalization of capitalist modernity and the resurgence of cultural nationalism. One immediate consequence is the closer policing of culture, and those involved in cultural production. Cultural fragmentation also serves as an excuse for intensifying surveillance and police control in society, which are then extended across the breadth of society to turn into norms of everyday life. In the case of the PRC, there has been an intensification over the last two-three years of already quite intense practices (by world standards) of surveillance and repression.

One thing would seem to be certain: China's problems are the world's problems, and the world's problems are China's problems. Only if criticism takes this into account can it hope to point to solutions that go beyond surface phenomena to their systemic sources. Freedom and democracy are most important in opening the gates to exploration of problems of development and possible alternatives to global modernity.

Notes

+ The authors are grateful to Chris Connery, Victor Mair, Timothy Summers, QS Tong, Sebastian Veg, Wang Guo, Shaobo Xie for their helpful suggestions, comments, and encouragement. They bear no responsibility for the final product.

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1. The evidential basis for the discussion in this section is readily available in everyday headlines in the media, and will not be documented unless controversial.
2. The most recent move, remarkable for its insidious cynicism, is to build a Tibetan culture theme park in Tibet itself, containing a living society – or what is left of it – within a fake version of it designed by the rulers and available for consumption as well as "education". See, "China Plans £3bn Theme Park in Tibet", *The Guardian*, Friday, July 6, 2012 <*http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/06/china-plans-theme-park-tibet?newsfeed=true*>. For Mongolian herders' responses to the forced settling of nomads and the expropriation of their lands, see, "China: Traditional Herders Protest 'Five-Year Plan' to Extinguish Nomadic Cultures", *World War 4 Report*, July 13, 2012 <*http://www.ww4report.com/node/11268*>. The plight of the Muslim Uighurs in particular receives scarce coverage when compared to that of the Tibetans, who enjoy the benefits of long-standing "*shangri-la*" visions among Euro/Americans. Cultural swooning over Tibet does not necessarily translate into substantial political support. See, Palde

Gyal, "We Can't Go This Way", *Merabsarpa Journal*, July 29, 2012 <*http://www.merabsarpa.com/opinion/we-can%E2%80%99t-go-this-way*>. For a recent discussion of the Uighur plight by an exiled leader, see, Rebiya Kadeer, "Beijing Stirs Ethnic Hatred in Xinjiang", *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2012 <*http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304211804577502141575598740. html*>.

3. These critical comments should not be construed as endorsement of theocracy or any kind of religious politics to which the authors are opposed. They are intended rather to underline the importance of self-determination for the peoples involved, who ought to be allowed to work out their own problems within the context of a new global situation. The spurious claim that they are being rescued from their own backwardness, even when couched in terms of Marxist historical schemes, is reminiscent of racially informed colonial policies elsewhere, most importantly the notorious idea of "white man's burden" that served Euro/American colonialism as an excuse for cultural extinction, genocide and disorientation. The guise of "socialism" does not make colonial policies any the less colonial. It is ironic that the PRC regime should deny to its minority peoples their desire for self-determination when the struggle for self-determination and sovereignty has been a fundamental concern of the Chinese revolution for over a century. This is in fact another instance of the regime contravening its own constitutional order which recognizes at least some measure of autonomy to the officially recognized minority nationalities. For cultural transformation among Tibetans living abroad, see, Joseph Hooper, "Leaving Om: Buddhism's Lost Lamas", *Details*, August 2012 issue <*http://www.details.com/culture-trends/critical-eye/201208/leaving-om-new-buddhist-lifestyle?currentPage=1*>.
4. "Hong Kong Protest May Draw 100,000 People as New Leader Sworn In", *Bloomberg Businessweek*, June 28, 2012 <*http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-06-28/hongkong-protest-may-draw-100,000-people-as-new-leader-sworn-in*>. For a discussion of "civil society" activism and its "resonance" with mainland protest politics, see, Ho-fung Hung and Iam-chong Ip, "Hong Kong's Democratic Movement and the Making of China's Offshore Civil Society", *Asian Survey*, 52.3(2012): 504-527.
5. For two revealing studies of migrant workers, see, Yan Hairong, *New Masters, New Servants: Migration, Development, and Women Workers in China* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), and, Hsiao-hung Pai, *Scattered Sand: The Story of China's Rural Migrants* (London: Verso, 2012).
6. The most serious instance of ethnic conflict involving migrant workers was that between the Han population and Uighur workers in 2009. The conflict was most notable for triggering a near uprising in Xinjiang. Ethnic differences are not restricted to Han vs. minorities, but also include differences among the Han population from different areas. For a recent case involving locals and workers from Sichuan and Shaxi, Guangdong, see, "Migrant Workers Clash with Locals, Police, in China," *The Straits Times*, June 26, 2012 <*http://www.straitstimes.com/BreakingNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_815238.html*>.
7. Martin K. Whyte, *The Myth of the Social Volcano: Perceptions of Inequality and Distributive Justice in Contemporary China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

8. It is noteworthy in this context that while the PRC responds to even the mildest criticism as "interference" in its internal affairs, it also displays a foolhardy arrogance when it comes to the internal affairs of others. Its readiness to use political and economic blackmail against critics, seeking to mobilize governments against their own citizens – following their own internal practice – belies its professions of respect for "sovereignty" and cultural difference. For a recent example involving a US citizen of Taiwanese origin in the small town of Corvallis in Oregon, USA, see, "Mural Draws Fire from China", *Corvallis Gazette-Times*, September 9, 2012 <*http://www.gazettetimes.com/news/local/mural-draws-fire-from-china/article_22529ace-f94a-11e1-bf2a-0019bb2963f4.html*>. The Chinese officials involved in the attempt were rebuffed by the city officials, and have been roundly condemned by Oregon representatives in the US Congress for this blatant attempt to curtail the constitutional rights of a US citizen.
9. For a more elaborate discussion of the issues taken up here, see, Arif Dirlik, "Mao Zedong in Contemporary Chinese Official Discourse and History", *China Perspectives* #2(2012): 17-27. Readers may find interesting other essays in this special issue, "Mao Today: A Political Icon for an Age of Prosperity". See also Sebastian Heilman and Elizabeth J. Perry (eds), *Mao's Invisible Hand: The Politics of Adaptive Governance in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).
10. For an interpretation from the left, see, "The Rumour Machine: Wang Hui on the Dismissal of Bo Xilai", *London Review of Books*, 34.9 (10 May 2012): 13-14. While it may be reductionist to attribute opposition to the dominance of neo-liberalism alone, the promise of the experiment in improving livelihood for the population at large is recognized by a variety of observers. See, for an example based on close investigation, Philip C.C. Huang, "Chongqing: Equitable Development Driven by a 'Third Hand'?" *Modern China* 37.6 (2011): 569-622. Huang attributes most of Chongqing's developmental success not to Bo Xilai but the mayor of the municipality, Huang Qifan (no relation). For more recent assessment, see, Kevin Lu, "The Chongqing Model Worked: Bo Xilai Might Be a Crook, but He Was Actually Pretty Good at His Job", *Foreign Policy*, August 8, 2012 <*http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/08/08/the_chongqing_model_worked?page=0,0*>.
11. See, Roxann Prazniak, *Of Camel Kings and Other Things: Rural Rebels Against Modernity in Late Imperial China* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999).
12. In a symposium on Wukan convened at the Hong Kong University School of Law on 19 May 2012, "Wukan and Grassroots Democracy in China", Professor Guo Weiqing 郭巍青 of Zhongshan University 中山大学 presented a paper, "Xin Chuantong Zhuyide Kangzheng, Wukan Guancha 新传统主义的抗争，乌坎观察" [Neo-traditionalist resistance, investigation of Wukan], in which he noted that the protestors had planned one of their campaigns to coincide with a commemorative date of the Peng Pai uprising. The authors are grateful to Sebastian Veg for information on this paper.
13. William A. Callahan, *The Pessoptimist Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). For the surge of nationalism in the 1990s, see, Yongnian Zheng, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity, and*

International Relations (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999). See, also, "Chinese Nationalism and Its Future Prospects: An Interview withy Yingjie Guo," *The National Bureau of Asian Research <http://www.nbr.org/research/ activity.aspx?id=258>*.

14. Some caveats are necessary on this issue. Despite mostly localized expansionism, the PRC's behaviour in global relations is still far more benign than the continued imperial activity of the United States and its European allies. The PRC also has good reason to claim that it has been a victim of this imperialism for over a century, and that it is merely seeking to recover losses in sovereignty it has suffered at Euro/American hands. On the other hand, anti-imperialism easily turns into nationalist jingoism with consequent damages to societies that themselves suffered from colonialism and imperialism, as is the case with nearly all of PRC's neighbours. Rather than provide leadership in correcting past abuses that all these societies have suffered, the PRC is most notable presently for participating in imperial endeavours to assert its newfound power. For a discussion focusing specifically on India, see, Asif Ahmed, "Emerging Chinese Security Threats in Indian Context: Need for India To Review Security Strategy – Analysis", *Eurasia Review*, August 8, 2012 *<http://www.eurasiareview.com/08082012-emerging-chinese-security-threats-in-indian-context-need-for-india-to-review-security-strategy-analysis/?utm_source= feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28 Eurasia+Review%29>*.
15. For a more elaborate discussion of the "China Model", see, Arif Dirlik, "The Idea of a 'Chinese Model': A Critical Discussion", *China Information*, 26(3) (2012): 277-302.
16. Ho-fung Hung, *Protest with Chinese Characteristics: Demonstrations, Riots, and Petitions in the Mid-Qing Dynasty* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011). See Epilogue (pp. 194-201) for what Hung describes as "the past in the present".
17. Indeed, David Harvey has suggested that "reform and opening" after 1978 was itself a contributor in its own right to the legitimation of neo-liberalism. See, Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), esp. Chapter 5.
18. Reference here is to the turn under the leadership of Jiang Zemin and his "important thought of three represents". See, *Jiang Zemin on the "Three Represents"* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2002). Jiang was also responsible for bringing the new capitalists into the Party, and laying the basis for the integration of political and economic power.
19. Qin Hui, "China's Low Human Rights Advantage," *China Rights Forum*, #1 (2009): 85-89.
20. See the recent report by China Labor Watch, "Tragedies of Globalization: The Truth Behind Electronics Sweatshops" (July 2011) *<http://www.chinalaborwatch.org/pro/proshow-149.html>*.
21. David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2005), Chapter 4.
22. Depending on the source, in terms of GDP per capita China ranks somewhere between 110-130th place among all the countries in the world. For a discus-

sion of the problems created by the wealth gap, see, "China's unequal wealth distribution map causing social problems", *The China Post*, June 28, 2010 <*http://www.chinapost.com.tw/commentary/the-china-post/special-to-the-china-post/2010/06/28/262505/p3/China's-unequal.html*>. For a detailed examination, see, Zhao Zhenhua, *Dangdai Zhongguo Shehui Ge Jieceng Shouru Fenxi* 当代中国社会各阶层收入分析 [Analysis of the income of different strata in contemporary Chinese society] (Beijing: Central Party School Publishing House, 2008).

23. For an outstanding study of labour struggles, see, Ching Kwan Lee, *Against the Law: Labor Protests in China's Rustbelt and Sunbelt* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2007). See, also. Chris King-chi Chan and Pun Ngai, "The Making of a New Working Class? A Study of Collective Actions of Migrant Workers in South China", *The China Quarterly*, #198 (June 2009): 287-303, and, "Going it Alone: The Workers' Movement in China, 2007-2008", *China Labour Bulletin*, Research Reports, July 9, 2009 <*http://www.clb.org.hk*>.
24. This estimated figure includes, in addition to the eighty million members of the party, a nearly equal number in the Communist Youth League (*gongqing tuan* 共青团), plus membership in such organizations as the All-China Women's Federation, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, etc. It would be mistaken to assume homogeneity of political and ideological orientation between and within these organizations (including the Party itself), but they are part of the corporate structure of the PRC.
25. See, for example, David Lindorff, "America is a Democracy? Really?" *Nation of Change*, Saturday, August 4, 2012 <*http://www.nationofchange.org/america-democracy-really-1344092915*>. See, also, James Petras, "The Two Faces of A Police State: Sheltering Tax Evaders, Financial Swindlers And Money Launderers While Policing the Citizens", *Eurasia Review*, August 7, 2012 <*http://www.eurasiareview.com/07082012-the-two-faces-of-a-police-state-sheltering-tax-evaders-financial-swindlers-and-money-launderers-while-policing-the-citizens-oped/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+eurasiareview%2FVsnE+%28Eurasia+Review%29*>.
26. For a Chinese critique of "neoliberalism", and the need to resist it while improving upon "socialism with Chinese characteristics", see, Zhu Andong 朱安东, "Renqing Xifang Xin Ziyou Zhuyide Shiji 认清西方新自由主义的实质" [Clarifying the reality of Western neoliberalism], *Renmin Ribao* 人民日报 (*People's Daily*), 2012-07-11 <*http://paper.people.com.cn/rmrb/html/ 2012-07/11/nw.D110000renmrb_20120711_9-02.htm?div=-1*>. We are grateful to Timothy Summers for bringing this article to our attention.
27. See the Bloomberg report, quickly censored, discussed by Malcolm Moore, "China's Incoming President Xi Jinping's Family 'Has Wealth of Hundreds of Millions'", *The Telegraph*, Friday, July 6, 2012 <*http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/china/9365099/chinas-incoming-president-Xi-Jinpings-family-has-wealth-of-hundreds-of-millions.html*>. Even more devastating is the New York Times revelation, a remarkable example of investigative journalism, that alleges the enormous wealth accumulated by the family of the seemingly incorruptible prime minister Wen Jiabao. David Barboza, "Billions in Hidden Riches for Family of Chinese Leader", *New York Times*, October 26, 2012

<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/26/business/global/family-of-wen-jiabao-holds-a-hidden-fortune-in-china.html?pagewanted=all>. This report, too, has been subject to immediate censorship and even more agitated efforts at refutation. See, also, "China's Power Families", *Financial Times*, July 10, 2012 *<http://ft.com/s/2/6b983f7a-ca9e11e1-8872-00144feabdc0.html>*.

28. For brief discussions of recent protests, see, "Recent high-profile mass protests in China", BBCNews-China, July 3, 2012 *<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-18684903>*.
29. Sun Liping *et al*., "Report". See, "Critical Report Pulled from China's Web", by David Bandurski, 2012-01-12. A translation of this report for 2011 by the Social Development Task Group headed by the distinguished sociologist Sun Liping in the Tsinghua University Sociology Department has been translated by the China Media Project in Hong Kong *<http://cmp.hku.hk/ 2012/01/12/17967/>*.
30. The wealthy elite even hire people to serve their criminal sentences for them, a practice that goes back to the imperial period. See, Geoffrey Sant, "Double Jeopardy: in China, the Rich and Powerful Can Hire Body Doubles To Do Their Prison Time for Them", *Slate*, Thursday, August 2, 2012 *<http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/foreigners/2012/08/china's_wealthy and_influential_sometimes_hire_body_doubles_to_serve_their_prison_sentences.html>*.
31. See the discussions of the suppression of peasant protest in the special section on "peasant protests in rural China" of the *China Quarterly*, No. 193 (March 2008). The recent uprising against pollution in the town of Shifang, Sichuan, has dramatized loss of confidence in the credibility of the state. See, Ben Blanchard, "China Pollution Protest Ends, but Suspicion of Government High", Reuters, Sunday, July 8, 2012 *<http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/07/08/us-china-pollution-idUSBRE8670HP20120708>*.
32. For a more elaborate discussion, see, Arif Dirlik, "Developmentalism: A Critique", *Interventions* (forthcoming).
33. For a rare report that, however timidly, connects the dots between labour abuse in the PRC and the US consumer, see, Tom Lasseter, "Foxconn, Maker of iPads, Is Emblematic of China's Labor Market", *Bradenton Herald*, July 16, 2012 *<http://www.bradenton.com/2012/07/16/4116153/foxconn-maker-of-ipads-is-emblematic.html>*.
34. Francis Fukuyama, quoted in, "The End of the End of History", *The Economist*, January 18, 2011 *<http://www.economist.com/blogs/democracyinamerica/.../china_v_america>*. Interestingly, Fukuyama here echoes remarks by the Indian Home Minister, P. Chidambaram. In a speech he gave at Harvard University in 2007, "Poor Rich Countries", Chidambaram also pointed to the problems created for development by forces – from trade unions to land laws protecting the rural population – usually associated with democracy. For an excerpt, see, Arundhati Roy, *Broken Republic: Three Essays* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2011), pp. 168-170. Roy' passionate condemnation of the government-corporate alliance against the interests of the rural population, especially the indigenous people, should give pause to facile contrasts between democratic India and dictatorial China. Equally important is the fact that Maoists activity has been the most effective among the indigenous people, or the adivasis.

35. It would be a challenge to find a more eloquent testimonial to the concentration of wealth in China, and what it means to global financial industries, than the Bain (of Mitt Romney fame) "2011 China Wealth Report", subtitled "China's Private Banking Industry: Competition is Getting Fierce". According to this staggering report, "China's overall individual investable assets totaled RMB 62 trillion in 2010, a 19 percent increase from 2009/ By the end of 2010, there were 500,000 Chinese HNWIs [high net-worth individuals], with at least RMB 10 million in investable assets. Average investable assets per capita were approximately RMB 30 million. Aggregate investable assets for all HNWIs equaled RMB 15 trillion/…the number of Chinese HNWIs will rise to 590,000in 2011 – nearly twice as many as in 2008 – and their investable assets will reach RMB 18 trillion/ In 2010, 15 provinces/ municipalities had more than 10,000 HNWIs, increasing by four since 2008: Tianjin, Hunan, Hubei and Anhui. More than 50 percent of China's wealthy remain clustered in five provinces: Guangdong, Shanghai, Beijing, Zhejiang and Jiangsu." *<http://www.bain.com/Images/2011_ China_ wealth_management_report.pdf>*, p. 8 for the summary outline. Foreign capital's calculations on how to relieve Chinese consumers of their last penny often sounds obscene, if not self-deceptive. See a recent report, "Consumer Growth Could Buoy China's Slowed Economy", which is mostly about spending not in China but on foreign luxuries. *The New York Times*, August 13, 2012 *<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/08/14/business/global/ consumer-growth-could-buoy-chinas-slowed-economy.html?pagewanted=all>*.
36. For "the Chinese communist regime's penetration of the West", see the editorial by the Chinese émigré dissident, Yu Jie, "The Myth of China as a Harmless Tiger", *The Washington Post*, February 13, 2012 *<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-myth-of-china-as-a-harmless-tiger/2012/02/10/gIQAb7DxBR_ story.html>*. The adverse effects of the coddling of the PRC on minority peoples are discussed in Lobsang Sangay (prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile), "For Tibetans, No Other Way To Protest," July 13, 2012 *<http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/for-tibetans-no-other-way-to-protest/2012/07/13/gJQA13wniW_story.html>*, and, Rebiya Kadeer (Uighur leader in exile), "Beijing Stirs Ethnic Hatred in Xinjiang", *Wall Street Journal*, July 2, 2012 *<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304211804577502141575598740. html>*.
37. Sun, "Report". See also a discussion of the report in Malcolm Moore, "China's Reforms Stalled by 'Powerful Vested Interests'", *The Telegraph*, January 12, 2012 *<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/ news/worldnews/asia/china/9009915/chinas-reforms-stalled-by-powerful-vested-interests.html>*. See, also, Michael Wines, "As China Talks of Change, Fear Rises on the Risks", *The New York Times*, July 17, 2012 *<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/18/world/asia/as-china-talks-of-change-fear-rises-on-risks.html?pagewanted=all>*. The infection of the population by an authoritarian and corrupt power structure is eloquently discussed by the prominent and outspoken author, Murong Xuecun (penname), in A. Capella, Liz Carter and Michelle Li, "Translation: One Author's Plea for a Gentler China", *Tea Leaf Nation*, July 30, 2012 *<http://tealeafnation.com/2012/07/translation-one-authors-plea-for-a-gentler-china/>*. For the prevailing sense of hopelessness among the people, see, Gerard Lemos, *The End of the Chinese Dream: Why Chinese People*

Fear the Future (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012). It was rumoured recently that a Buddhist temple in Yunnan will guarantee rebirth in the United States for 500 yuan (approximately 75 US dollars)!

38. The superiority of the Party dictatorship in the PRC to democratic politics is apparently one of the lessons to be conveyed to Hong Kong students if the patriotic education push is put in place. See, Claire Lee, "Hong Kong Frets over 'China Model' Patriotic Education, Reuters, Wednesday, July 11, 2012 <*http://www.affectchanges.com/hong-kong-frets-over-china-model-patriotic-education/*>. For a culturally inspired elevation of authoritarian over democratic politics, see Jiang Qing and Daniel Bell, "A Confucian Constitution for China", *The New York Times*, July 10, 2012 <*http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/11/opinion/a-confucian-constitution-in-china.html*>. As is typical of this kind of argument, the authors base their conclusions on textual aspirations rather than the evidence of history. For a rejoinder, see, Michael Mazza, "A Look at China's 'Political Meritocracy'", *The American*, Tuesday, August 7, 2012 <*http://american.com/archive/2012/august/a-look-at-chinas-political-meritocracy*>.
39. "Strikes and Protests Surge in China", *China Digital Times* (October 11, 2011) <*http://chinadigitaltimes.net/2011/10/strikes-protests-surge-inp-china/*>. For Shifang (Sichuan), see, "Anti-Pollution Protestors Halt Construction of Copper Plant in China", *The Guardian*, July 3, 2012 <*http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jul/03/china-anti-pollution-protest-copper*>. For Qidong, near Shanghai, see, "Waste Project Is Abandoned Following Protests in China", *The New York Times*, July 28, 2012 <*http://www.nytimes.com/2012/07/29/world/asia/after-protests-in-qidong-china-plans-for-water-discharge-plant-are-abandoned.html?_r=1*>.