Explaining the paradox of market reform in communist China: the uneven and combined development of the Chinese Revolution and the search for 'national salvation'

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the paradox of capitalist market reform being introduced by a politically undefeated communist state in China. It does so by developing an historical account of the Chinese polity's relationship with the modern world. Chapter one offers a critique of existing explanations; these tend to focus narrowly on the immediate circumstances surrounding the decision to reform and thereby eschew analysis of the specific dynamics of the Chinese Revolution. In so doing, they also ignore its origins within the welter of contradictions arising from the process of capitalist internationalization, giving no causal efficacy to 'the international' in explaining this dramatic social transformation. In response to this neglect, chapter two invokes Leon Trotsky's 'theory of uneven and combined development' as an alternative approach to the study of social contradictions within and amongst societies across the longue durée. This approach is then applied to the Chinese case in three steps, which consider, successively, the impact of British colonialism on the Qing dynasty, the emergence of a Chinese nationalism, and the specificities of Maoism.

Chapter three shows how British imperialism integrated Qing China into the capitalist world by revolutionising global finance and imposing 'free trade' through military force. This capitalist penetration of a tributary state created a unique amalgam of social relations that inhibited China's ability to 'catch up' with the advanced capitalist powers. Focusing on how these processes and pressures fostered a transformation in social consciousness, chapter four then outlines the emergence of a 'national imagination' amongst a new stratum of intellectuals outside of the traditional scholar-gentry ruling class. These layers turned to anti-imperialism, but also found their own country deficient in the face of colonialism and longed for a mythical restoration of 'lost' Chinese power. The Russian Revolution dramatically raised the horizons of these new, modern Chinese, but also exposed a deep tension between internationalist and nationalist responses to the crisis of colonial capitalism. Chapter five outlines the role of national patriotism in the authoritarian decay of the communist project, arguing that Maoism represented a complementary amalgam of Soviet Stalinism with Chinese nationalism. This nationalism, however, resulted in tense relations with the Soviet Union after 1949 as China's elite rejected its tutelage. Chinese communists desired 'national salvation' and, once Soviet-style planning failed to achieve it, they took the 'capitalist road' to build a strong nation-state.

Existing explanations of Chinese economic reform overlook this concatenation of local and global processes across the *longue durée*. The thesis shows, however, that this 'methodological nationalism' results in a failure to give sufficient weight to the real-world political nationalism that underpinned market reform. The theory of uneven and combined development answers this absence by placing Chinese development in the global setting. Its dialectical account of history rejects the view that sees 'cultural analysis' as an alternative to class based explanation, but rather treats nation, culture, ideology and class as essential moments in the uneven and combined reproduction of the world system.

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Statement

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another university for the award of any other degree. The thesis draws on primary and secondary source material, and a full bibliography is attached. The thesis is wholly my own original work and has not been produced in collaboration with others.

Signature:

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Introduction

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importation and development of capitalism and
viewing the main danger of peaceful evolution as
coming from the economic field are leftist
manifestations
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As we can see now in retrospect, the strength of
the global socialist challenge to capitalism was
that of the weakness of its opponent
Eric Hobsbawm

Having survived into the second decade of the twenty-first century, China's 'state socialism' has an enigmatic quality. Its one-party political system – with social organisations that penetrate deep into the fabric of mass society, and a political culture which utilises the aesthetic of socialism and class struggle as a source of ideological legitimacy – recalls a bygone era. It awakens thoughts of a time when Marxist-Leninist regimes contested the Pax-Americana by putting vast geographical regions and entire peoples outside the reaches of the international capitalist system. However, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) made its final peace with the global market place in the early 1990s after the decisive intervention of Deng Xiaoping. In the now famous 'Southern Inspection Tour', where he visited China's geographically enclosed experiments in capitalist markets, the 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZs), Deng heaped praise on the reform effort. Drawing on one of Mao's favourite allegories to claim the mantle of Chinese communism for his efforts, he insisted reform must not be 'like a woman with bound feet', but should 'stride boldly forward' for several decades to come (cited in Baum 1996, 342). Deng had come out of retirement to mount this aggressive intervention into the party, which concluded with the agreement to dismantle the country's central planning infrastructure at the Fourteenth Party Congress in October 1992. Supporting this new course was made a *condition* of entering the leadership and dissidents were duly purged. This was nothing less than a bold attack on the conservative faction of the ruling party that had been invigorated by the crushing of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Indeed, the general crisis of 'state socialism' loomed large over the CCP's radical turn. After the failed August Coup and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Deng insisted that only the introduction of aggressive capitalist measures could save the CCP from suffering the fate of the Russian party (Zhao 1993, 742 – 743). For China, however, the decision to dismantle planning was

also the culmination of a longer process of development. Deng was urging the CCP to *continue* and *deepen* the country's existing experiment with 'market socialism' – indeed, to fully embrace the logic of the policies they had pioneered. The contradictory unity between, on the one hand, the hope and aspiration that the post-Mao reform era had encouraged, and, on the other, the economic antagonisms that it had opened up, was in fact a critical motor of the Tiananmen protests. The crackdown only momentarily strengthened opponents of economic reform, because ultimately command planning could not achieve the party's national development goals. It was, therefore, only on the political level that the status quo properly endured.

Deng's individual personality has become identified with the post-Mao reform era with some justification. He was, after all, attacked by the party radicals of the 1960s as an 'arch-unrepentant capitalist-roader' (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 379) due to his preparedness to countenance market reform. However, he was only one amongst a group that drafted market-based proposals for China's economic reconstruction after the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward.[1] For his efforts, he was purged from the leadership of the CCP, along with numerous other party leaders and officials, during the hysteria of the Cultural Revolution. As China's most senior political figure, Deng was rehabilitated after Mao's death to usher in a new course in the country's history. The Third Plenum of the Central Committee in December 1978 is held in high esteem in today's China. For it is seen as a great turning point, equivalent to 1911 or 1949, where the nation decisively set upon a new course: decollectivizing agriculture, establishing 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZs) with rules of governance favourable to private enterprise and investment, opening up to foreign trade, and loosening central control of small industries to generate competition (Goodman 2002, 90, 92 – 94). The effect of these changes was to create two over-lapping economies existing in a contradictory inter-relationship; one was based on the central planning apparatus, the other responded to the imperatives of profit and loss in the new market economy (Main and Hughes 2012, 422 – 428). The decision to dismantle the former in favour of the latter, was hastened by the global conjuncture, but also reflected the economic dynamism that capitalist markets had introduced into the sclerotic command economy. The experience of China's near abroad also provided a further source of legitimacy and impetus for the turn to capitalist development. On the 'Southern Tour', Deng expressed the hope that

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[1] These included veterans, such as Chen Yun, Bo Yibo, Peng Zhen and Li Xiannian, and a younger generation of leaders, Zhao Ziyang, Hu Yaobang and Wan Li (Goodman 2002, 91).

Guangdong province would soon catch up with the 'Four Little Dragons' of East Asia: Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and Hong Kong (Baum 1996, 342). Speaking in more theoretical terms, in 1988, he had similarly endorsed the model of 'neo-authoritarian' capitalist development, i.e. with a dictatorial state overseeing a private enterprise economy (MacFarquhar 1997b, 505) – a position consistent with his support for the repression of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. Even at the foundation of reform, in November 1978, Deng visited Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, just weeks before announcing his new economic order. Lee Kuan Yew, the 'founding father' of Singapore, would later reflect on the historic significance of Deng's visit to his country. He argued that it represented the moment the leader of the world's most populous 'socialist country' realised that the communist project had failed:

> Deng Xiaoping started this in 1978. He visited Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore in November 1978. I think that visit shocked him because he expected three backward cities. Instead he saw three modern cities and he knew that communism – the politics of the iron rice bowl – did not work. So, at the end of December, he announced his open door policy. He started free trade zones and from there, they extended it and extended it. Now they have joined the WTO and the whole country is a free trade zone (cited in Lorenz and Hoyng 2005).

Lee's comments on the evolution of Deng's thinking away from communism may well hold true, but the nature of political discourse within the PRC makes this difficult to judge with certainty. Debates always took place within clearly defined parameters for *legitimate* discussion, and all policy had to be cloaked in the language of Marxist-Leninism. The fact that Deng never renounced the goal of communism and denied the capitalist logic of market reform illustrates this. 'Market reforms need not be surnamed capitalism', he insisted in 1992, 'socialism has markets too. Plans and markets are stepping stones… to universal prosperity and richness' (cited in Baum 1996, 342). Yet the position that Deng and others took throughout the reform period had an ideological cohesiveness. A shared set of assumptions was operating beneath the formal, 'discursive' justifications for policy evolution in both the pre and post-Mao eras. These motivations, however, did not necessarily imply either a conscious desire to 'take the capitalist road' or a real conviction in socialist transformation. To illustrate this, consider how the foremost figure amongst Deng's opponents in 1992 was Chen Yun, a fellow veteran of the Long March and, as such, part of China's Maoist aristocracy. Having declined Deng's invitation to join the tour of the SEZs (Baum 1996, 340), he and thirty-five other senior party members urged the party to rein in market reform in

February, arguing the party should 'correct promptly the direction of development that has deviated from the socialist path' (Zhao 1993, 754 – 755). Leaving aside the Marxist-Leninist language – which all leaders of the CCP drew upon when a question was disputed – Chen had no history as a radical leftist within the party. He was a key figure that pushed for Deng's rehabilitation after Mao's death and supported the market reform programme launched in 1978. Moreover, Chen had not only been one of the advocates of market reform in the aftermath of the Great Leap Forward, he had also *successfully won* the Eighth Congress of the CCP to this perspective in 1956 (Solinger 1993, 13 – 26). It was only the personal intervention of Mao that actually aborted this early attempt at market reform. Chen's own political history therefore brings to light some of the complexity surrounding *why* the CCP elite turned from command planning to capitalist development. It poses the need for a critical enquiry into the goals of the Chinese Revolution; to appraise the question of what the Chinese communists really stood for, what needs their goals were formed in response to, and how they intended to deliver these aims once in power. It is normally argued, in both official histories and in much of the scholarly literature, that 'the opening' or *kaifang* was a pragmatic adaption to reality after the traumatic experience of the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. The aborted decision of the CCP to embark on market reform in 1956, however, problematizes this assumption. For it appears to show that after the trauma of 'two lost decades' of Maoist development, the party, in some respects, simply returned to *what they were planning to do* had it not been for the personal intervention of the preeminent leader.

Once market reform is recognised as the restoration of an earlier strategy, then one has to ask whether the Maoist programme in the Great Leap Forward was seeking to achieve a different goal to the 1956 reform agenda, or merely proposed different methods in pursuit of the same goal. I believe a strong case can be made that a common goal has underpinned the actions of CCP leaders throughout both the Maoist (1956-1976) and reform (post-1978) eras. Policy-making in the PRC has been consistently founded on the basic desire to make China a strong and powerful nation and, in this way, to recover the prestige and standing of the people after the 'century of humiliation'. The split within the CCP is therefore arguably best understood as involving two varieties of nationalism: a messianic, millenarian nationalist ideology, and a cautious, pragmatic, and paternalistic one. To explain why the leaders of an undefeated communist party pursued a course of capitalist market reform, one therefore

needs to understand what made the search for the country's 'national salvation', i.e. the quest to restore the polity to a position of wealth and prestige in the international system, so absolutely paramount for the Chinese communists. In short, what made 'nationalism trump socialism' as the aim of their state-building efforts? To answer this question, I propose extending the scope of the analysis beyond the normal confines of sociological explanations for Chinese market reform. Existing theoretical approaches overwhelmingly focus their attention on the internal workings and dynamics of the People's Republic of China (PRC). This inevitably neglects (i) the global contradictions out of which Chinese nationalism emerged imbued with a particular militancy, and (ii) the long-maturing properties of Chinese society that were conducive to Maoism. As an alternative framework, I apply Leon Trotsky's 'theory of uneven and combined development' as an approach to the study of social contradictions within and amongst societies across *la longue durée* (Trotsky 1924; 1967a; 1974; 1978; 2005). With this framework one can locate the causes of the Chinese Revolution as lying in the same wrenching crisis of colonial capitalism that spawned the Russian Revolution, and show how Maoism adopted the political and organisational form of Soviet Stalinism yet also assimilated it to its native nationalism.

The thesis develops its argument across the following stages. Chapter one offers a critique of existing explanations, arguing these tend to focus narrowly on the immediate circumstances surrounding the decision to reform. This, in turn, eschews analysis of the Chinese Revolution and its long-term 'conditioning effect' on the country's cultural, social, political and economic development after 1949. Chapter two outlines Trotsky's 'theory of uneven and combined development'. I locate this sociological approach within the tradition of *longue durée* historiography and show how – by treating social change as an outcome of concrete, intersecting 'local' and 'global' processes – it pushes the scholar to uncover the specific properties of social development that produce change. Chapter three shows how British imperialism integrated Qing China into the capitalist world by revolutionising global finance and imposing 'free trade' through military force. This capitalist penetration of a tributary state created a unique amalgam of social relations that inhibited China's ability to 'catch up' with the advanced capitalist powers. 'Combined development' therefore took the form of a semi-colonial enslavement that made China quite different from the 'late modernising' powers of Eurasia, Russia and Japan. Focusing on how these processes and pressures fostered a transformation in social consciousness, chapter four then

outlines the emergence of a 'national imagination' amongst a new stratum of intellectuals. Significantly, this layer was outside of the traditional scholar-gentry ruling class and attacked their failure to modernise the country. The 'new Chinese' were militantly anti-imperialist, but also considered their country badly deficient vis-à-vis the West and imagined a future restoration of China's 'lost' power. Imperial China's decline soon pushed them to radical conclusions. The Russian Revolution dramatically raised the horizons of these modern Chinese, but also exposed a deep tension between internationalist and nationalist responses to the crisis of colonial capitalism. Chapter five outlines the role of national patriotism in the authoritarian decay of the communist project, arguing that Maoism represented a complementary amalgam of Soviet Stalinism with Chinese nationalism. This nationalism, however, resulted in tense relations with the Soviet Union after 1949 as China's elite rejected its tutelage. China's communists all desired 'national salvation', but they found themselves divided between the messianic and pragmatic traditions of the country's nationalism. After the experiments with a Maoist form of statist development, they made the pragmatic turn to state-capitalism in order to build a strong *nation*-state.

The thesis contributes to debates in International Relations and International Historical Sociology on the role of 'the international' in social transformation, and builds upon Marxist attempts to incorporate a theory of international processes into historical materialism. It advances critical theoretical approaches to Chinese studies through engagement with these debates and complements existing attempts to develop non-eurocentric accounts of modern Asian development.

Broadening horizons? Tracing global lineages of development in China's turn to 'market socialism'

> What do people want from the Communist Party?
> First to be liberated, and second to be made rich
> *Deng Xiaoping*
>
> If today we still do not set about the task of improving the
> socialist system, people will ask why it cannot solve problems
> that its capitalist counterpart can
> *Deng Xiaoping*

1.1 Deng Xiaoping in historical perspective

The quotes from Deng Xiaoping above have become immortalised utterances in modern day China. For scholars, they encapsulate the political ethos of the reform era, and for China's citizenry they have been absorbed into the popular imagination as the modern day justification for one-party rule. The significance attached to these comments is justified; by deconstructing and contextualising them, they tell us something about the line of reasoning that pushed China's leaders towards the development of a capitalist, free market economy. First, we have the central legitimising narrative of the Chinese Revolution: that it was a struggle to *liberate* China from the repeated, humiliating incursions on its independence made by colonial powers, and that this would, in turn, create the institutional conditions, in the form of a strong state, capable of delivering economic prosperity. Second, one can see the developmental pressure that came to be felt by the leaders of the 'state socialist' economies in the 1970s and 1980s.[2] Deng was acutely aware that the 'socialist countries' had not been able to deliver the levels of development that were being achieved in the capitalist world. Yet, the Chinese people expected the PRC to 'solve the problems that its capitalist counterparts can'. In both comments there is an anterior assumption taken for granted; that these tasks fell to the *Chinese nation* – i.e. it is absolutely assumed that the *national community* is the principal agency of social development. This brief excursus into how the CCP leadership legitimised the reform programme is useful to undertake before we analyse the sociological explanations of *kaifang*. It helps us to establish more precisely exactly what we need to explain. Arguably, to understand Deng's vision and motives we need to trace their sociological origins in China's past:

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[2] The second quote is from August 1980. See appendix for sources of beginning-of-chapter quotes.

- How did China's relationship with the global capitalist system condition the motives and forces of significance in its revolutions of 1911 and 1949? And what significance did this have for the legitimising narratives of the PRC?

- What form did the emergence of Chinese 'nation-ness' take and why has the search for national dignity been so central for China's aspiring modernisers?

- What fuelled the turn to 'state socialism', how did it relate to the rising tide of nationalism and anti-colonial struggle, and why did it prove to be an unviable instrument for the national modernisation that post-colonial states desired?

Each of these questions poses an extension of analysis outwards – to develop an understanding of the complex ways that capitalist modernity has shaped the world –, and backwards, towards uncovering the long-maturing lineages of development that have fashioned modern-day China. Posing the question in these terms almost *ipso facto* opens up a difference of approach to the existing literature, which tends to focus narrowly on the post-1949 PRC state and its domestic properties. To say so, is not to disparage the contribution that Sinologists have made to our understanding of the reform era, which, as we will see, has been rich in empirical detail and wide-ranging in its intellectual scope, but rather to emphasise the explanatory potential of looking at China's reforms in 'the longer view'. This *temporal* extension of the analysis also extends the scope of the *spatial* analysis too. Prior to 1979 the PRC had a highly autarchic economy and its political and cultural life was kept equally well hidden by the borders of the authoritarian party state. There is therefore a degree of logic in limiting analysis of the global arena to a purely geopolitical terrain, if one only looks at the post-1949 era. However, the cultural and sociological process through which Maoism crystalized as a distinct current eminently involved a concatenation of local and global processes. If its distinctive history and ideological tapestry is significant to the decisions of CCP leaders to turn to capitalism, then one can see the way in which existing analyses can be built upon and developed by this alternative theoretical approach.

In this chapter, I critique existing explanations of China's reform era. I begin however by reflecting upon the impact of the Sino-Soviet split on Western scholarly analyses of the PRC. It led to a break with the Cold War inspired notion of the 'Marxist-Leninist regime' in favour of more empirically sensitive accounts. I then move through each of the existing explanations of market reform: policy-analyst approaches, power-

based theorisations, and institutional analyses. I argue that these approaches fail to locate elite discourses within the social and class conditions of Chinese society and are blighted by 'methodological internalism'. The next section shows how the rise of mainstream International Political Economy (IPE) studies of China has been unable to address this as it lacks the conceptual tools to explain international processes amongst autarchic economies. A further section of the chapter looks at the contribution Chalmers Johnson (Johnson 1962) made to conceptualising Maoism as a form of Chinese nationalism. I argue that the neglect of the social and cultural qualities of the international milieu results in a failure to emphasise the fundamentally nationalist underpinning to PRC policy. By reconceptualising the 'the international' as 'a lateral field of interactive difference and multiplicity' (Rosenberg 2006, 328), the theory of uneven and combined development answers this affliction. In the final part, I locate the critique of existing theories within the overall argument of the thesis.

1. 2 The traditional view of the Marxist-Leninist regime and its negation

In the 1950s and 1960s accounts of the Chinese state in the Western academic literature had achieved a 'broad consensus' (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988, 4). The PRC was characterised as a typical 'Marxist-Leninist regime' that formed one part of the monolithic Soviet Empire in Eurasia (ibid). This view was heavily influenced by the backdrop of the Cold War and, thus, lacked the sociological 'distance' from ideological controversies of the Sinology literature that emerged in its wake. However, despite being shaped in its core assumptions by this political context, there was more than an element of truth in the conception of the 'Eastern states' it offered. A Marxist-Leninist regime was defined as a coercive, one-party state with a command economy that was founded on the principle of state ownership of the means of production (Barnett 1967; Cohen 1968; Lewis 1966; Schurmann 1966). These were all undisputable features of these systems. The problem emerged once it came to explaining the social physiognomy of the Stalinist countries; of understanding, for example, why states leaders chose the course they did and the contradictions and tensions these societies contained. For example, this group of scholars held the Marxist-Leninist regime to be *ideologically driven,* with a specific emphasis on the assumptions of Leninist orthodoxy. By assuming an unmediated relationship between communist doctrine and the political life of these states, this approach was left unable to capture the way in which leaders used the discursive repertoires of Marxist-Leninism instrumentally to give legitimacy to

actions that had undeclared motivations. This traditional, 'Marxist-Leninist regime' approach explained the Cold War as lying in the intransigence of Leninist ideology, the expansionism of the USSR, and the 'madness of Stalin' (Schlesinger 1967, 22 – 23), which was similarly one-sided rather than wholly wrong. Its ideological element, however, can be seen in how it excused American superpower imperialism from any responsibility for the sharpened geopolitical conflicts that emerged after 1945. In addition, the failure to critically appraise the power relations of the colonial capitalist order in the south and east meant it was unable to explain why communism was gaining such a wide hearing in the post-colonial world. Amongst critical scholars, the new global context was forcing writers that identified with the left to reappraise the hitherto dominant conception of the Soviet Union as a progressive power. Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (Arendt 1951), James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution; what is happening to the world?* (Burnham 1972), and George Orwell's fictional, but highly political, *1984* (Orwell 1983), were all attempts to come to terms with the significance of 'left authoritarianism' for the progressive project, but were all too easily co-opted by ideologues of the Cold War (Brzezinski 1956; Friedrich 1954; Wittfogel 1957, 137 – 148, 423 – 427; Wolfe 1956). As writers that sympathised with the project of the left broadly defined, Arendt *et al* differed from the mainstream by not assuming an unmediated relationship between Marxist doctrine and Soviet Stalinism. Yet, their sociological accounts suffered, nonetheless, from a similar conceptual problem. These scholars tended to eschew analysis of the social contradictions, within and amongst these societies, which represented sources of instability out of which change could occur. Despite Arendt, for example, holding these states to be in a perpetual state of upheaval, change and ideological ferment – with Soviet industrialisation and the Great Purges seen as the consummate examples of this -, these aspects were assumed to be instrumental to the *stability* of totalitarianism (Arendt 1951).

China's experience thereby confirmed the general problem with these approaches that they did not anticipate change, let alone a move to a market economy. In the mainstream scholarship, the Chinese Revolution was labelled another example of Soviet imperialism. The PRC was cast as a puppet state that would act as a base of operations for further expansion of the Soviet Empire into Asia. The outbreak of the Korean War in a matter of months after the communist seizure of power in China appeared to confirm this overall narrative and expectation (Feis 1957; McNeill and

Affairs 1953; Rees 1988). Contradiction was, therefore, seen as running along a single line, i.e. between Western democracy and Soviet communism. Ideological conflict is therefore seen as the source of geopolitical tensions. The tensions within the Eastern bloc, and internally within these still socially stratified societies, were consequently excluded from the analysis. This narrative effectively pushed the agency of the Chinese people to one side; as the question of why, and under what conditions, they flocked to the banner of communism was left badly occluded. In contrast, Arendt's more critical disposition could be seen in her reaction to Mao's rise to power. Publication of *The Origins of Totalitarianism* directly coincided with the Chinese Revolution, but she was actually cautious about ascribing the 'totalitarian' label to the regime, seeing in aspects of Mao's writings a reticence to impose a completely monolithic, totalitarian order (Baehr 2010, 268 – 271). Contemporary writers have pointed out the poor empirical grounds that underpinned this assessment (Baehr 2010, 271) and even resuscitated the notion of totalitarianism to cover the fully Maoist era, i.e. the Great Leap Forward to the Cultural Revolution (Baehr 2010, 274 – 281). However, the peculiarities of these two, distinctively Maoist, moments in China's history, illustrate the inherent problems with Arendt's concept, which entirely failed to address *specificities* in social development. Arendt even argued that India and China were both ripe for totalitarianism due to their vast populations and cultural history (Baehr 2010, 269). '…The chances of totalitarian rule are frighteningly good', she wrote, 'in the lands of traditional Oriental despotism' with 'inexhaustible material to feed the power accumulating and man-destroying machinery of total domination' (cited in ibid). This illiberal formula was not derived from Cold War ideology, but, nonetheless, used an overtly eurocentric reasoning that exhibited the same tendency to deny the ability of the Chinese people to found a progressive state.

It was this failure to see peculiarities in development as a feature of a complex and diverse world order, which was pregnant with potential conflict and instability, that left this intellectual paradigm in scholarship vulnerable to refutation by the tensions in the Eastern bloc seen in the late 1950s. There was, first of all, the Hungarian Revolution of 1956 that returned ousted communist party leader, Imre Nagy, to power. His threat to pull the country out of the Warsaw Pact led to a Soviet invasion and the crushing the mass movement. This illustrated the potential tensions between Marxist-Leninist regimes that considered themselves nationally sovereign and the colonial-style of rule that was practiced by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. These potential national

antagonisms had also come to light during the Tito-Stalin split in 1948, but they did not feature in the traditional theoretical paradigm in the Western scholarship, which held the Eastern bloc to be monolithically pro-Soviet and, thus, geopolitically stable. Regimes, like those governed by Tito and Mao, where communists had come to power in revolutions and *created* a one-party system, rather than have it imposed by Soviet tanks, were always likely to be more defensive of their sovereign independence – not only in military and political terms, but also in their choice of economic policy. This was confirmed in the second major crisis of the late 1950s, the Sino-Soviet split, which grew so serious that the Soviet Union withdrew economic aid in 1960 (see Whiting 1987). Given the two regimes were run by dictatorial elites whose power depended on their own nation-state – or, in the case of the Soviet Union, a Russian-dominated supra-national state –, then their 'internationalism' was necessarily limited to the episodic geopolitical arrangements of 'realism' in international relations. To account for these tensions a concrete analysis of these nationally specific regimes was needed. In contrast, the traditional paradigm the 'Marxist-Leninist' features were assumed to render unimportant subtle divergences from the 'norm'. This meant the model was simultaneously *static in time*, as it did not anticipate change, and *static in space*, for it did not recognise difference. This obscured the social and historical unevenness of the Eastern bloc and also brings into question the overall account of global development on which it was methodologically predicated. For just as there was no explanation for why communist ideology appeared to hold a considerable allure in the south and east, neither was any account ventured for the flowering of the nationalities that gave impetus to political nationalism. If the latter was important in the Sino-Soviet split, and played a role in CCP policy making *per se*, then one needs a *general account* of its relationship to Stalinism. In other words, we need to ask whether 'state socialism' was simply 'nationalism in disguise' with the supranational forms that it took essentially colonial.

This is familiar territory for the discipline of International Relations (IR). As is well known, its dominant paradigm, realism, argues that self-interested nations are the building blocs of the world order. Consequently, the Sino-Soviet split led scholars to retrench into mainstream realist theory. However, the new turn required a great deal of intellectual acrobatics from those who had once held the unity of the communist bloc to be *basically immutable.* Now the same scholars, pointing empirically to tensions that emerged between the Soviet Union and PRC during the Korean War in the early 1950s, suddenly held the breakdown of Sino-Soviet relations to have been *inevitable and*

predictable (Floyd 1964; Gittings 1968; Griffith 1964; Strong 1965). As Benjamin Schwartz pointed out at the time this transformation in intellectual positions involved a 'fraudulent' use of 'hindsight':

> To maintain that it should have been obvious that [the] ideological authority of Moscow was not real and would not endure is to engage in what might be called fraudulent hindsight. To be sure, some of those who insisted most fanatically on the monolithic solidity of the bloc were prepared to say that 'some day' this solidity might collapse, but they were equally insistent that this some day was so far off that it should not be allowed to intrude as a real consideration (Schwartz 1968, 33).

In this way, the Sino-Soviet split led to mainstream IR retreating to a position that was much more accustomed to orthodox realist theorising (Brar 1986). In both its classical (Morgenthau and Thompson 1985) and neo- realist (Waltz 1954; Waltz 1979; Waltz 1986) incarnations, realism sees international politics as an arena in which force, and the threat of force, provides the organising logic for the competing states. Neither sees ideological influences and class structures as relevant to international relations. Waltz specifically saw incorporating these dimensions as 'reductionism' and attempted to theorise the specifically geopolitical impulses on state decision making (Waltz 1979). The Sino-Soviet split involved considerable 'doctrinal' argument over Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and realist analysis had the merit of recognising that this was purely instrumental to a power struggle amongst nations (Gittings 1968; Griffith 1964; Floyd 1964; H. Schwartz 1964). Some scholars took the rejection of 'reductionism' to a particular extreme, arguing that the PRC and Soviet Union both constituted power-seeking empires occupying a geopolitical space that made them historically continuous with their dynastic, imperial antecedents (H. Schwartz 1964, 236; Strong 1965, 42). There were several problems with this approach that inhibited the ability of realists to understand the Cold War and its 'sudden' end in 1989. Firstly, by excluding socio-economic structure from any causally significant role in international relations, this omitted from analysis the basic economic antagonism between 'East' and 'West': the simple fact that global capital was excluded from the bureaucratically planned and autarchic economies of the Soviet states (Saull 2001; Saull 2007). Secondly, it was inferred from the military balance of forces within Europe that the Soviet Union would not voluntarily withdraw from a position of bi-polarity, making Gorbachev's abandonment of the 'Brezhnev doctrine' simply inexplicable within the assumptions of the theory (Koslowski and Kratochwil 1994). Thirdly, and most significantly for this

thesis, the reification of the historically specific, modern properties of international relations – anarchy and sovereign nationhood – into timeless properties of development (Rosenberg 1994) naturalised into a supposed 'essence' the very phenomenon that needed to be sociologically explained. To put it more concretely, if the Sino-Soviet split was *inevitable* due to *timeless* national antagonisms, then no *historical explanation* of Chinese nationalism, or the various forms that it took in different phases of PRC policy, was necessary.

Taken together these points underscore how impoverishing for sociological analysis it is, to erect an insurmountable barrier between 'domestic' and 'international' aspects of social transformation. The way in which China's 'local' development choices during the Great Leap Forward immediately undermined *both* theoretical accounts of Eastern bloc international relations *and* the prevalent understanding of the domestic regime illustrates this. It had been assumed that the combination of a fanatical ideology, a strict social hierarchy, police terror, extreme centralisation, and the near-universal replication of these features amongst all the Eastern states, engendered stability; not only in the relationship between rulers and ruled, but also in the bloc's international solidity. However, the chaos seen in China from 1956 to 1976 showed that the relationship between 'leaders, beliefs and institutions in a Marxist-Leninist regime' could become 'crisis-ridden' (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988, 6). The Sino-Soviet split confirmed the organic connectivity between global patterns of change – e.g. socio-economic competition, the cross-fertilisation of productive techniques and ideologies, and the realm of geopolitical statecraft – and the responses to these conditions within individual communities. The latter then feedback into the wider-system to reconstitute the overall structure of 'combined development' and thereby establish new conditions for other actors. The Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution, i.e. the 'Maoist phase' of China's development, exemplify this 'differential connectivity' of intersocietal relations, for they illustrate how the PRC had been shaped by the Russian Revolution, but was using a Stalinist state structure for a novel development strategy. This suggests an approach that sees how actors utilise the variety of resources – intellectual as well as material – provided by the global political economy as an immanent part of their own historically specific attempts at social development. Sinologists from the 1960s onwards saw the traditional concept of the 'Marxist-Leninist' regime as an obfuscating categorisation. Instead they developed empirically sensitive accounts of China's history and modern-day development (Johnson 1962; Pye

1968; Schurmann 1966; Solomon 1971). However, in reaction to the way that 'the international' had previously served to obscure the historically specific, this came at the expense of abandoning the global element in social change. Rather than see international processes as constitutive of the peculiar development trajectories undertaken by nation-states, it was largely dropped from analyses. Theoretical explanations of market reform exemplified this tendency to 'methodological internalism' and left behind the global element of social change. Let us now consider each of them in turn.

1.3 Explaining Chinese economic reform: (i) a process driven by ideology?

One group of scholars illustrated the general turn to empirical sensitivity by focusing on the policy process and the contested ideological assumptions in which its debates were ground. Given this focus, before proceeding any further, it is useful to delineate the different phases of PRC economic policy: (i) the period of economic recovery after the seizure of power that involved a new united front with the patriotic bourgeoisie, and thus upheld some private property rights, from 1949 to 1953; (ii) Soviet emulation and the creation of a command planning infrastructure during the First Five Year Plan, from 1953 to 1957; (iii) the 'overtly Maoist phase',[3] involving the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward of 1958 to 1961, the period of reconstruction in its aftermath, and the political crisis of the Cultural Revolution that finally concluded in 1976; (iv) the turn to market economic reform in December 1978; and, finally, (v) the decision to completely dismantle the planning infrastructure following Deng's 'Southern Tour' in October 1992. 'Policy-analyst' scholars have correctly understood these stages to be *rationalize-able* and involving logically coherent choices that were rooted in shared, as well as contested, intellectual assumptions (Barnett 1967; Harding 1981; Lewis 1966; Solinger 1984). Amongst these scholars was Dorothy Solinger, who brought to light the abortive market reforms proposals drafted by Chen Yun and approved by the party in 1956 (Solinger 1993, 13 – 26) that I discussed in the introduction (see pp. 8 – 9). The Great Leap Forward led to the abandonment of these measures and would prove to be an economic and social catastrophe for the Chinese people. Put in terms of the evolution of these positions over time, then one can see why this group of scholars understood the

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[3] The turn to rural collectivization from 1956 to 1958, culminating in the creation of vast 'communes', overlaps the transition from soviet industrialization to the Great Leap Forward. It was Mao's personal project and his alternative to the use of market incentives in agriculture that had been agreed by the CCP in 1956.

process in ideological terms; explaining the dispute in terms of a 'two-line struggle' over CCP policy, one favouring market reform, the other advocating a Maoist policy. To appraise whether these scholars were right to do so, requires a brief summary of the so-called Great Leap Forward, and its ideological assumptions, which I will return to in more detail in chapter five.

The Great Leap saw the central planning apparatus effectively dismantled and power decentralised to local bureaucracies, most important of which – given the overwhelmingly rural nature of the economy – were the new elite of the agricultural 'communes'. This layer was instructed to use traditional methods, which did not depend upon capital investment, to meet absurdly unrealistic targets for industrial output and undertake large-scale irrigation projects. Chaos ensued as projects were pursued with little input from engineers, as the planning ministries were made impotent. Such a sharp reduction in the labour-inputs available to agriculture had a catastrophic result, as one of the most serious manmade famines in human history plagued rural China. The policies were under-pinned by the view that the mass mobilisation of unskilled labour could deliver rapid economic progress through fanatical appeals to sacrifice that would raise the absolute rate of exploitation. It might appear difficult to reconcile the bleak outcome with seeing the policy process as explicable in rational terms. However, to say that one can understand it, i.e. explain it, within certain conditions and traditions of thought, does not imply giving any normative value to the policy. Its messianic elements were rooted in the political outlook and vocabularies of the New Culture Movement radicals (see chapter five). Technocratic expertise was spurned in favour of mobilisation, giving the policy a patently cultish sensibility. However, it might have been possible to apply some of the principles of the Great Leap in a way that did not result in economic catastrophe. Had it not been for the absurd target setting and the attack on planning, it is plausible to argue that the use of labour-intensive methods may have generated a sufficient rural surplus to fund industrial investment. Indeed, both sides of the policy debate in the PRC recognised that the simple importation of Soviet command planning in the Chinese context was highly problematic because its rural hardship was so severe there was little surplus for the state to appropriate. It was in this context that Chen argued for providing material, market incentives for the peasants to increase rural productivity, but Mao rejected this in favour of 'ideological' incentives, i.e. exhorting the people to sacrifice for the 'common good' of the nation. By identifying this schism, the 'policy-analyst' approach advanced the scholarly understanding of Chinese reform

by bringing to light these empirical nuances and shifts in implementation. It drew out the real issues in a debate that on occasion defied all rational discourse.

The approach is less convincing, however, as a sociological explanation of market reform. 'Policy-analyst' scholars accounted for change in economic policy by simply treating them as ideological choices, expressing different visions of the future (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988, 12). Solinger argued 'the controversy' was rooted in 'conflicting ideals within the philosophy of Marxism' that resulted in different positions on the use of state and markets to deliver social change (Solinger 1984, 6). She identified three axes of policy preference in the CCP, those who sought to preserve equity, those who wanted stability, and those who were productivity-orientated (Solinger 1984, 6).[4] Despite the considerable empirical insights of this literature, this had a number of serious weaknesses as a theoretical account. Firstly, this approach largely took at face value the arguments made by the different trends in the CCP. For instance, it was accepted that valuing an equitable division of resources was an operative part of policy formulation for a section of the CCP leadership. This ignored how the centralisation of political and economic power by the party-state created an *inequitable* division of resources based on bureaucratic privilege. All CCP leaders accepted the monopoly on power claimed by the party without which this type of economic structure could not exist. It therefore seems implausible to argue that equity was *primary* in their political reasoning. Secondly, and related to the need to analyse the economic structure, the approach offered no account of the relationship between the ideological trends cited and the material history and conditions of Chinese society. This would involve illustrating how these ideas related to the bureaucracy of command planning, i.e. whether there was a social constituency within society favourable to one or other perspective. Thirdly, there was no historical account of Marxism – which was treated as a abstract and generic philosophy and set of values that politicians might choose to draw on, rather than a diverse body of thought, often defined by its *national*

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[4] The rise of institutional theory, which I will come onto below, did push 'ideology' based analysts to revise aspects of their approach in recognition of this need to sociologically contextualise the doctrinal disputes. Exemplifying this shift, Solinger revised her argument in the 1990s, linking the 'three-lines' to divergent 'ideological bases, social interests, power resources, incentives, and motivations of the concerned parties' (Solinger 1993, 226). This led her to identify the three categories afresh: as 'marketer-prone economic actors' and politicians that were benefiting materially from reform; 'the bureaucratic line or tendency' that values stability and have vested, rentier interests within the state; and the 'leftist' orthodox Maoist critiques of market reform *per se* (ibid). This emphasis on the sociological conditions for political decision-making represented a substantial improvement on a purely ideological approach.

traditions (Russian Marxism, Austro-Marxism, etc.). As such, the core ideas of distinctively Chinese communism, and its origins within the global post-1917 radical left, were not appraised. Fourthly, the competitive pressures on CCP leaders were also excluded, perhaps because they were taken for granted. Leaders of the PRC were conscious of the nation's underdevelopment and desired to 'catch up' with the more advanced economic powers, such as the Soviet Union and the richest capitalist nations. For example, speaking at the Supreme State Conference in January 1958, Mao argued, 'I see this nation of ours has a great future… we shall catch up with Britain in about fifteen years… now our enthusiasm had been aroused. Ours is an ardent nation now swept by a burning tide' (cited in Scott 2007, 38). These remarks reveal shared assumptions across both 'lines' that were not recognised by 'policy analyst' scholars: namely, that (i) a geopolitical pressure for industrial progress existed in spite of the autarchic nature of the economy, and (ii) elite political discourse within the PRC had an overt nationalist underpinning. For, while the means were disputed, a clear consensus existed over the goal: to make China a strong and powerful nation within a competitive international system of nation-states. Taken together these criticisms point to the need for a materialist account of Chinese economic reform that locates the origins of the country's political nationalism in the differential properties of capitalist internationalisation, incorporating economic structure, geopolitical compulsions, and the diffusion of cultural and political traditions, into a single analytical framework.

1.4 Explaining Chinese economic reform: (ii) was Mao-in-Command?
Policy-analyst scholars were right to uncover the cohesiveness and explicability of the shifts in economic strategy, but failed to locate them within the structural conditions confronted by the political process. As a result of this neglect, they were left open to the criticism that they saw Chinese leaders' differing views as the source of the ideological conflict. This might have been plausible were it not for the pronounced tendency of most CCP leaders to zigzag between sides. Scholars that emphasised this policy inconsistency of Chinese leaders advanced an alternative theoretical framework for market reform that saw the struggle for power as primary. Grounding this approach empirically, they succeeded in undermining the view that there were two clearly opposed, consistent trends with alternative visions for the Chinese nation. As such, it took aim at the official explanation of the Cultural Revolution, which sees it as a two-line struggle between 'rightists', around Liu Shaoqi, and 'leftists' headed by Mao and

the Cultural Revolution Group, and policy-analyst approaches that mirrored these formulations and looked for consistency in policy. Instead the tribal-like factions formed around personal-ties, the use of intra-bureaucratic political-machines and a special role for Mao as the dominant leader, were, they argued, the principal features of political life in the PRC (P. H. Chang 1978; MacFarquhar 1974; 1983; 1997a; 2011; Pye 1968; 1981; Teiwes 1984). The Cultural Revolution was central to this set of claims, for it saw Mao engage in an aggressive purge of opponents within the party, and it is therefore useful to briefly digress the political background to this split within the core leadership.

After the Great Leap, a section of the CCP leadership recognised that a more technically competent approach was needed that restored central oversight and reintroduced material incentives for output. Liu and Deng introduced measures that weakened the commune system by reducing work team sizes to more manageable units and prioritising agrarian output above all else. In some areas the famine was so severe the state permitted an impromptu return to family farming (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 411). At a CCP Central Work Conference to discuss rural policy in March 1961, Deng came armed with statistical surveys that showed the dash to collectivisation had been undertaken too quickly and without sufficient preparation (Goodman 2002, 66). Mao actually accepted these findings. However, his prestige was seriously damaged by the failure of the Great Leap Forward, and the sense that opponents within the leadership were pursuing an alternative agenda fuelled his slide into the paranoid purges of the Cultural Revolution. A Central Work Conference in February 1962 failed to agree proposals of prior commissions that had been organised by Deng and Liu (Goodman 2002, 68). This is not surprising given that they were entirely antithetical to the Great Leap strategy:

> Economics not politics was emphasized as the motor of development. Modern technology, if necessary from abroad, was to be a new driving force; and gradual, capital-led investment was to replace mass mobilization. Communes were to be made smaller, with the basic accounting unit reverting to the production team—the equivalent of the small co-operatives established (for the most part) in the second half of 1955. Education was to reemphasize quality, and expertise was to be valued once again (Goodman 2002, 66 – 67).

Not only does this suggest that the political differences were genuine, it also illustrates how policy evolution took the form of 'crisis management', responding to the economic consequences of the Great Leap in conditions of extreme underdevelopment and

bureaucratic autarky. However, this is not to understate the extent of the inconsistencies and shifts in position amongst the elite. Mao was especially prone to shift eclectically, as illustrated by his acceptance of the partial retrenchment of the commune system. The 'two-line struggle' formula does imply that both sides were engaged in *principled* disputes with 'elite politics understood as a struggle between two clearly opposed conceptions of society and related policy programmes' (Teiwes 1984: 5). This is difficult to square with the seemingly incoherent nature of much elite discourse. During the Great Leap Forward, for example, after the new, poorly educated local bureaucratic elite had led the initial 'mass movement' in the countryside, a debate erupted within the party over whether communism could be achieved in a matter of years, with Chen Boda, who would become a member of the Cultural Revolution Group, even arguing for the immediate abolition of money (Teiwes and Sun 1999, 127 – 129). Mao took a middle position of 'fifteen years' but, at this stage in the Great Leap when it was beginning to run out of control, he erred to 'the right' and declined to make this official policy (ibid). Despite the time expended on these kinds of 'theoretical' controversies, they were plainly not aligned to the substantive political aims and goals of these leaders, but were about legitimising power and control.

The empirical analyses that 'power-analyst' scholars have made lead us to question the real and practical commitment that Chinese leaders had to one or other of the 'two lines'. The evidence for this position was always strong, and it has grown more so since Roderick MacFarquhar completed his exhaustive trilogy on the origins of the Cultural Revolution (MacFarquhar 1974; 1983; 1997a). He showed that very few leaders remained committed to either one of the so-called 'two lines', suggesting that their positions were conditional on non-ideological factional interests, and often used instrumentally to gain short-term leverage over rivals:

> …The Cultural Revolution is…[normally considered] a long-term struggle between two lines… But a careful examination of the evidence suggests that neither Mao nor Liu was consistent; that Mao and Liu were not always opponents… The Cultural Revolution was rooted in both principled and personal disputes (MacFarquhar 1974, 2 – 3).

As a result of this fluidity between personalities, factions, and favoured policies, the policy outcomes involved episodic unity between forces with divergent interests and motivations. Lucien Pye argued that these 'factions rarely if ever represent clearly defined institutional, geographical or generational interest' (Pye 1981, 7). Instead they involve relationships built on trust, loyalties, common foes and career interests, and

observed 'no fixed rules in the relationship between policy and factional politics' (Pye 1981, 12). It seems likely that political organisations with no democratic mechanisms will always result in these machinations. Aspiring individuals are likely to refrain from openly stating positions that contravene the central line, because it risks sabotaging their access to the levers of power. Similarly, a one-party system that has no democratic mechanisms will also tend towards the dictatorship of the single leader. In these states, a functional relationship between the bureaucracy and the despot emerges on patron-client lies; each bureaucrat is dependent on the goodwill of those above them and the dictator is similarly dependent on the continued support of the bureaucracy. Mao had such a dictatorial authority in the state, and even before taking power he dominated the CCP after 1935. Frederick Teiwes argued correctly that Mao was 'the unchallenged pivot of elite politics – a dominant leader' (Teiwes 1984, 5). Criticism of Mao in the CCP was impermissible, so he was indeed the 'factor to which all others had to adjust' and the only 'figure [who] could attempt a Cultural Revolution' (Teiwes 1984, 42). Consequently, Mao's death becomes a factor in itself in the turn to the reform era, as it created the space for a new leadership, or, rather, a new 'pivotal elite leader' in the form of Deng, able to pursue a new political direction. In this way, these scholars identified real elements of the political process within the PRC. However, this 'power-analysis' also shows that ideology and culture imbued the life of the state, whose core organisational and political features were shaped by the assumptions of Russian 'state socialism'. This suggests the diffusion of Bolshevism into the polity, and its relationship to native discourses, had an enduring cultural influence on state power. However, the 'power analyst' scholarship neglected to appraise these origins, because they claimed ideology had no causally significant role.

In the existing literature, the power and policy narratives are treated as polar opposites in a manner that seems entirely unnecessary. It is perfectly possible to recognise the sociologically significant consequences of a regime with a single, unchallengeable leader, *and* the existence of a genuine schism over the political direction of the PRC. This theoretical polarity also obscures how the two positions suffer from similar weaknesses; both focus wholly on the actions and statements of leaders at the expense of social conditions formed through a historical process; neither locates the distinctive strategies of Mao and Deng within the overall context of differential but interactive social development. In other words, they exclude 'the international' from their accounts, even though the split within the Eastern bloc and the

drive to 'catch up' industrially with advanced capitalist powers expressed a geopolitical logic of competition that the CCP responded to through the prism of political nationalism. This latter point – the organic nationalism that underpinned CCP policy – is also surprisingly absent from these perspectives. It perhaps reflects the extent to which 'nation-ness' is often taken for granted in sociology such that it becomes omitted as a causally significant factor. Similarly excluded from these analyses is the longer historical process that shaped the state-building efforts of PRC leaders. This is particularly apparent within the 'power approach'- for it fails to ask how the Chinese communists came to found a state with a single, un-challengeable leader. If they adapted this model from the political and organisational principles pioneered in Stalin's Soviet Union, then one needs to ask what modifications did the structure undergo when transplanted to Chinese conditions and used for nationalist ends. I argue in chapter six a feature of this *differential appropriation* is seen in how Mao occupied a different position in relation to the central apparatus than Stalin. Whereas Stalin was dependent on the apparatus to impose despotism on a revolutionary democratic movement, Mao had an existing cult of personality during the struggle for power. This put him in an external relationship to the central bureaucracy, which he grew suspicious of after the Hundred Flowers campaign, and thus launched the Great Leap and the Cultural Revolution. Market reform therefore correlates closely with the re-establishment of central state authority after his death.

A twin-error committed by both the power and policy approaches lies in their failure to offer a theorisation of how this bureaucratic structure conditioned the political process. As we shall now see, this absence of contextualisation was recognised with the rise of 'institutional analysis', and a rich array of sociological analysis of the state resulted. However, the literature was impaired by its tendency to focus on the formal, legal institutional relations at the expense of class analysis. Meanwhile, the international terrain, where it warranted mention at all, was simply understood as a potential political and economic resource, which could be exploited by reform-minded politicians; and not, that is, as a significant dimension of the social world in its own right, even though the institutional terrain was framed by cultural discourses inherently bound up with the modern world.

1.5 Explaining Chinese economic reform: (iii) the lost promise of the institutional turn

The post-79 reform programme had provided western China scholars with greater access to Chinese state structures. Even so, as late as the mid-1990s research was still largely confined to those state bureaucracies concerned with Chinese industry and economic management (Lieberthal 1992, 1 – 4). Applying institutional analysis, Sinologists developed the concept of 'fragmented authoritarianism' to describe the complexity of a system that aggressively centralises power in a political monopoly, but simultaneously requires such diverse managerial units that this power then diffuses across a multi-layered system (Lieberthal 1992; Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Lampton 1992; Shirk 1992; Shirk 1993). Power and policy approaches were 'top down', insofar as the actions of leading political figures were treated as the fundamental element of the equation when explaining the reform era. In contrast, the institutional approach introduced a new level of analysis – the rules, resources, and interest groups of the Chinese state bureaucracies. These strata represented concentrations of social power capable of conditioning the options available to political leaders and thereby shaping the policy process. According to institutional theory, state structures needed to be studied at three dimensions of analysis; value integration, the structural distribution of rules and authority, and the processes of decision-making and policy implementation (Lieberthal 1992, 6). By investigating concretely the rules and authority within the state they highlighted the influence of diverse managerial bureaucracies (Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Lieberthal 1992; Shirk 1992; Shirk 1993). Procedurally, these interest groups won more power over decision-making and implementation in the reform era as a reaction to the purges and mobilisations of the Cultural Revolution (Lieberthal 1992, 6 – 9). This saw the restoration of power to the central bureaucracy away from the local, rural elites that bore much of the responsibility for the Great Leap Forward. This change in state power relations illustrates how, in a bureaucratic system of centralised political and economic power, it becomes particularly important to manage the diverse, potentially antagonistic, social groups within the state:

> The fragmented authoritarianism model… did not present the centre as helpless, the bureaucracies as unable to cooperate or the locales as all-powerful… It did seek to identify the causes of fragmentation… among various bureaucratic units, the types of resources and strategies that provide leverage in the bargaining that evidently characterises much decision making, and the incentives of individuals in various units, in order to get a better grasp on the ways that bureaucratic structure… affect… policy formulation, decision making and policy implementation (Lieberthal 1992, 10).

This suggested a move towards a reciprocal analysis of the relationship between the bureaucratic structure and elite political discourse. How, that is, the PRC created a ruling class that had access to cultural capital, e.g., education, official title, and managerial privileges, and a position of power over subordinates to whom they were not accountable. This privileged position was conditional on membership or affiliation with the ruling party, creating a patron-client relationship favourable to corruption, nepotism and factional intrigue. Given the party-state was built on top-down lines this made their status conditional on the support of those above them, fostering loyalty to the state. In a communist one-party state, a strict system of stratification with different identities exists, starting with urban-rural registered workers, who are unskilled, moving through technical proficient strata defined by an employment line, and at the top of which lie the 'cadre identity' of party officials:

> Cadres were those on the official nomenclature list and payroll system, and enjoyed certain privileges in salary, housing, welfare and services that the masses did not. As allocation of resources by ownership was replaced by central planning, obtaining the status and the identity of cadres was honourable and admirable, and permitted career advancement and moving upward in the hierarchically organised centralized political structure of the party-state apparatus. Cadres were classified in a hierarchical order into ranks which were associated with their positions, responsibilities, salaries, and privileges. A cadre's rank was associated with salary levels, welfare and privileges, and such cadre identity was permanent, even after retirement. Cadres were the elite of the party-state (Guo 2012, 4123).

Class analysis is therefore arguably central to understanding how social power was organised within the PRC, or the other Eastern bloc states where economic and political control was similarly fused. However, institutional scholars tended to eschew social analysis of elite power. Instead they primarily focused on the legal ties that determined the constitutional relationship between the CCP and the managerial bureaucracy. A failure to account for the informal, and culturally mediated, mechanisms of social power remained a central weakness of the institutional literature. Indeed, Lieberthal appeared to concede this in the introduction to a compendium of essays that applied the approach published in 1992:

> There is also little consideration of the relations of state and society. The various chapters include careful analysis of the relations among top leaders, key staff organs, and various bureaucratic units... [and] address the issue of relations between local government units and various enterprises. The focus here is explicitly on the political system and its internal dynamics, however, not on the

relations between this system and the larger Chinese population (Lieberthal 1992, 29).

Susan Shirk typified this general theoretical weakness (Shirk 1992; 1993). She argued the CCP existed in a 'principal-agent' relationship to the state, i.e. in contract law terms adapted by institutional theorists, the state was delegated power to act on behalf of the ruling party (ibid). At the constitutional, legal level, this was, of course, quite correct. The CCP is enshrined with supreme authority over the state and nation and, thus, any power the state holds is, by definition, 'delegated' by the party. However, observing this distinction is arguably of limited use, for party membership conditioned access to the bureaucracy at every level and, therefore, intra-bureaucratic antagonisms were *ipso facto* intra-party antagonisms. For example, Mao's dramatic turn against the central bureaucracy after 1957 led to a struggle within *both* the party *and* the state, which brought him into conflict with the pragmatic and technically minded section of the ruling communist party leadership.

In contrast, for Shirk the distinction between the leadership of the CCP and the managerial elite was the cornerstone of her explanation of Chinese reform (Shirk 1993). State bureaucratic units were seen as a conservative obstacle to reform owing to their rentier interests. Once this was coupled with the principle of consensus decision-making in economic policy, i.e. of reaching agreement across bureaucratic units, she argued that the institutional structure had a paralysing affect on state capacity to reform (Shirk 1993). For Shirk the ability to overcome this intransigence lay wholly with the CCP leadership: if united around reform the leadership could drive through its proposals regardless, but divided it succumbed to paralysis (Shirk 1993, 60 – 64). Shirk outlined this correlation of forces in rich empirical detail, illustrating how reformist leaders had to 'shake up', so to speak, bureaucratic units during the arguments over the 'tax-for-profit' changes in the early 1980s (Shirk 1993, 221 – 224). Essentially this argument concerned the impact of market forces on state owned enterprises. The less competitive amongst them reacted against measures that would end the redistribution of capital from the more productive units, thereby giving rise to intra-bureaucratic tension (ibid). Shirk tended to imply that market reform should not have been successful in light of these constraints. 'Introducing a market through a bureaucracy, especially one operating under… consensus', she argued, 'is extremely difficult', and with this 'conservative bias' the 'political challenge of economic reform becomes formidable' (Shirk 1993, 126). Reform-minded politicians and their chosen policies pursued in conflict with the

bureaucracy were therefore seen as central to the success of reform. Shirk even coined the term, 'political entrepreneurs', to capture their special role in the process (ibid). Kenneth Lieberthal concurred too, writing that 'the importance of policy content versus bureaucratic institutionalisation… is evident time and again' and 'no institutional relations in themselves seriously constrain the options available to top leaders' (Lieberthal 1992, 16). Reflecting on the role of Deng's celebrity in the 'Southern Tour' could easily lead one to draw this conclusion. Deng's 'political entrepreneurship' – including overt appeals to public opinion to put pressure on the party – ensured a swift and dramatic turn to market reform after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (see Baum 1996, 341 – 356). This elides, however, the real correlation of forces. Deng's was not 'one man against the rest', but was supported by and depended on key allies within the state.

A nexus of intersecting elements met at the conjuncture of Winter-Spring 1992 that were conducive to radical change: (i) for CCP members the dissolution of the Soviet Union was shocking, traumatic and threatening, creating external pressure for reform; (ii) the fragile post-Tiananmen environment in China posed the need for the ruling party to re-establish its political authority through a developmental agenda; and (iii) a complex alignment of pro-reform forces emerged *within* the structure of the state. Each of these factors poses problems with the 'political entrepreneurs' approach, for they locate reform within an historical intersection of sociological processes. Significantly, market reform had already created considerable forces within the bureaucracy that saw it as means to secure national power. Deng arranged for key PLA generals to pressure Jiang Zemin to make a dramatic U-turn in favour of the reform agenda, which effectively used 'unauthorised military support to settle a civilian debate about the role of the market' (Wang and Zheng 2008, 104). Given the crucial role of the PLA in the Tiananmen massacre, the military had assumed a similar position of power to that which they enjoyed after restoring order in the Cultural Revolution. It illustrates the central role the implicit threat of force can play within a dictatorial system heavily dependent on coercive force. Moreover, Deng also mobilised the pro-reform economic interest groups in the 'Southern Tour' and, in a sense, the industrial progress that it revealed showcased to the nation the emergence of a new ruling elite. It was this new, capitalist class, and market-orientated officialdom, that, he implied, would lead China to a prosperous future. To party officials the message was a simple one: if they embraced these changes and did so with decisiveness they would stabilise their political

dictatorship. A social and class analysis with a 'global' lens incorporates this concatenation of forces that pushed China on the capitalist road. Market reform can thus be rearticulated as a process of *combined* social development.

The missing element of institutional theory that Lieberthal conceded, 'the relations between this system and the larger Chinese population' (Lieberthal 1992, 29), similarly underlines the overall 'methodological internalism' that characterised all the market reform approaches. The focus on the formal, legal structure at the expense of state-society relations complemented the exclusion of the *inter*societal, i.e. the geopolitical, cultural and ideological influences of the wider world. As we shall now see, a possible answer to this neglect emerged with the rise of International Political Economy (IPE) over the last two decades. A vast literature emerged with a specific emphasis in China, reflecting the country's growing importance in the global economy. These scholars explicitly challenged the 'internalism' of the existing literature but they tended to conceive of 'the international' purely in terms of economic exchanges within global markets. As a result, the wholly domestic explanations of *why* China set upon the path of market reform were tacitly accepted.

1.6 Explaining Chinese economic reform: (iv) the rise of International Political Economy (IPE)

The methodological 'insularity' of western scholarship on China is, in part, to be expected given that the state pursued a policy of economic self-sufficiency on the lines of bureaucratic planning. The few visitors that arrived in China after the revolution encountered what must have seemed to them to be an entirely different world to that which they had known: a distinctively 'Sinified' vision of communism imbued with the emotional imagery of the recent peasant war, a fervently nationalist social consciousness binding people and state, and an extreme level of economic impoverishment. Even Soviet advisors, who naturally identified with the regime to some degree, underwent a severe culture shock when they arrived in the 1950s. Tasked with improving the economy, they were shocked at the poverty of village life; one accounts recalls how, on their first visit to the Manchurian countryside, they were dismayed that the peasants had no clothes, ate together out of one common pot, and had never seen a bar of soap before (Westad 1998, 127). Soviet support in the 1950s would prove crucial to establishing out of these impoverished conditions the core elements of an industrial base and a rudimentary improvement in basic living standards. In this

sense, the Sino-Soviet relation reshaped Chinese life to a considerable degree and illustrated how political relations could feed into processes of economic transformation within the domestic sphere. However, as I will now discuss, mainstream IPE tends to treat international processes in terms of the relationship between state and markets, and this poses obvious limits in its explanatory utility within bureaucratic, autarchic states.

China's economic transformation has led to a mushrooming of IPE literature that has appraised the global economic context for the changes seen in the reform era, including IPE scholars turning to China, and Sinologists looking to IPE (Breslin, 2007; Chin 2007; Cumings 1989; Economy 1999; Jacobson and Oksenberg 1990; Howell 1993; Lanteigne 2005; Moore 2002; Pearson 1991; Pearson 1999; Pearson 2001; Shirk 1994; Shirk 1996; Shirk 2007; Stubbs 2007; Zweig 2002; Zweig and Chen 2007; Chen 2007). Three broad stages in this literature can be seen. Firstly, scholars considered how integration in global markets affected the decisions of domestic political and economic actors (Barnett 1981; Howell 1993; Pearson 1991; Shirk 1994; Shirk 1996). A second stage saw researchers give greater conceptual emphasis to how the international political economy structured the reform process, opening up and restricting possible political-economic outcomes (Cumings 1989; Moore 2002; Zweig 2002). Finally, a third stage had seen research concerns move on to the perspectival question of how China's extraordinary pace of economic development could reshape the global economy itself (Chŏng 2006; Lanteigne 2005; Shirk 2007; Stubbs 2007). In this body of literature, therefore, the historical puzzle question – of why China reformed when it did and what pressures from the outside world were involved – remained occluded. The reason for this is simply and, in a sense, obvious, for it required an account of the rise and fall of 'state socialism' in the twentieth century, rather than a conceptualisation of the relationship between states and markets.

To illustrate this intellectual orientation, consider the four questions David Zweig and Chen Zhimin list in their introduction *China's Reforms and International Political Economy*:

> 1. Have external forces, particularly global markets, U.S hegemonic pressure, the global structure of power, international regimes and organisations, the regional political economy, and overseas Chinese, shaped China's position within the global polity and economy and affected the way China deals with the world economy?
> 2. Have Chinese leaders and foreign policy makers internalised the norms and values of the global economic order so that these norms affect state behaviour and diplomatic activity? Or, is China merely engaged in "strategic adaptation,"

whereby it appears to adopt global norms, while defending sovereignty at all costs?

3. Perhaps economy reform has been driven by elites who recognised the need for reform, greater market regulation, and deeper engagement with the global economy, as well as domestic market forces and/or local elite interests, rather than external forces… But if reform is internally driven, compliance and what the World Bank calls "deepening," should be central to China's own strategy of development, rather than something the external world… has imposed on China… China on its own will deepen the reform process as it sees it is in its national interest to do so.

4. Finally, who are the key players in China in this process of globalisation? (Zweig and Chen 2007, 3 – 4, emphasis added).

As an overall description of the literature, this encapsulates how IPE scholars have tended to look at the 'why question' of China's transformation. In point three, Zweig and Chen only reticently imply acceptance of one or other of the domestically grounded, political-leader-led explanations, but their remark is revealing because they are concerned to avoid the suggestion that reform was *imposed* on China by external forces, such as the international institutions like the IMF or the United States. This concern to avoid such an 'external imposition approach' has dominated the literature and is founded on an incontrovertible empirical fact: it was Chinese leaders, not those in Washington or elsewhere, who took the decision to reform. However, they arrived at these conclusions by comprehending the development challenge that China faced relationally, in reference to the global order. Moreover, if one looks at these changes in the *longue durée*, then it is possible to see the reform era as part of a struggle of Chinese actors for power and recognition in the modern world. To make this shift, however, a different, more social conception of the international political economy is needed that breaks free of the rigid constraints that mainstream approaches impose. Scholars looking at China's global economic relations have utilised the concept of 'internationalization', which refers to changes in the international economy to which domestic polities and elites have to adjust, and is defined technically: 'the processes generated by underlying shifts in transaction costs that produce observable flows of goods, services and capital' (Frieden and Rogowski 1996, 4). A simpler, indeed more abstract, alternative to this narrowly economic concept is needed if we are to account for the contradictory relations that gave rise to the 'culture shock' of Soviet advisors in the China of the 1950s. In this thesis, I treat 'the international' as a site of interaction between societies that adds qualities – such as diplomatic relations and interspersing of cultural narratives – that are not found in domestic societies alone, yet nonetheless form

part of their social reproduction (Rosenberg 2006). Economic relations are, therefore, but one dimension of this site of intersocietal interaction.

Sinologists that applied the concept of internationalisation have continued to insist on the entirely domestic origins of China's turn to market reform. Shirk, for example, accepted that 'once the wall between China and the international economy was lowered internationalisation exerted a powerful influence on the reform process' (Shirk 1996, 187). Yet she also argued that it did not determine the scope and character of reform, but simply created new openings and possibilities for China's reform-minded 'political entrepreneurs' (Shirk 1996, 207). Even when increasing attention is paid to the international context for the decisions taken by China's leaders the unrestrained nature of their decision-making is continually emphasised. In their study of China's participation in the keystone international economic organisations (KIEOs), for example, Harold Jacobsen and Michel Oksenberg argue China's 'policies were chosen by the leaders of China and were not forced upon them by the KIEOs' (Jacobson and Oksenberg 1990, 168). Similarly, Margaret Pearson argues that most policy changes during the 1980s and 1990s 'were made readily and at the initiative of Chinese policymakers, who seemed convinced of their benefits' (Pearson 1999, 175). One can see from these remarks how the fear of lost agency has inhibited the literature. An essentially straw-man argument – that to ascribe any causally significant role to 'the international' milieu – will deny the Chinese origins of the process, has meant that the overall *problématique* has not been addressed through a global lens. Thomas Moore has aptly termed this the 'all-or-nothing' approach: 'either international-level variables determine domestic outcomes or they are largely dismissed analytically' (Moore 2002, 39). This involves a three-step process. First, establish the assumption that any external influence should be defined in terms of control and coercion (Moore 2002, 42). Second, show foreign coercion was not present (ibid). And, third, conclude an internationally informed sociological way irrelevant to the field of study (ibid). In contrast, Moore's own analysis showed how international structures, specifically, the international trading system and its legal basis, impacted on Chinese industries at a microeconomic level to elicit processes of reorganisation (Moore 2002). These processes occurred under the radar of political leaders (whose decisions other scholars saw as paramount) yet still shaped the policy process. Moore, it should be noted, also equated international interaction with global markets, but he nonetheless destabilised dominant theoretical assumptions.

A more radical alternative to the concept of internationalisation is needed if we are to locate China's search for 'national salvation' within the global contradictions that brought the communists to power. Posed in these terms the question transcends the recognition, important, as it is, that Deng was impressed by the developmental model he saw in Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand in 1978, and entreats us to consider the sociological sources of China's nationalist agenda. This actually challenges a cornerstone assumption of the reform era: that China was closed, autarchic, and, then, as a result of changes in its domestic policy and leadership, 'opened' to the world. Chinese leaders employed the phrase, *kaifang*, or 'opening up' and it reflected how China's political and social evolution after 1949 was, in most respects, secretive and parochial. Indeed, in part, it represented an attempt to shield the polity from the destructive forces the outside world had imposed on the country in its 'century of humiliation', yet was simultaneously a device of despotic rule. Even in the three decades after 1949 China and its leaders still felt the convulsions and pressures of the modern world. Moreover, as James Townsend argued some two decades ago there were in truth 'many openings':

> The opening of China has always been a kaleidoscope event, yielding different images with every twist of the viewer's lens. Most Americans have focused on the recent open foreign policy, seeing a dramatic reversal of China's Maoist isolation followed rapidly by expanding exchanges with the West – especially the United States – with positive benefits on balance for all concerned. The same opening appears different from other viewpoints. Observers in Beijing or Guangzhou, Taipei or Hong Kong, Tokyo or Moscow, Seoul or Pyongyang, Hanoi or Jakarta may see an opening that began earlier or later, that looks East as well as West, that has domestic as well as foreign dimensions, and that is less benign in its implications. A turn to a different historical focus reveals another opening in the mid-nineteenth century, to some the *real* 'opening of China' and of greater historical import than the present one. The years in between have their openings as well, at the turn of the century, during and after the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and in the 1950s. One can see these as distinct images or let them blur together in a continuous, if erratic, process. Or one can look further into China's past for earlier openings to the non-Chinese world. More questions arise as the images change. Was China ever really closed? Who opened the door and for what purposes? How does the current opening compare to earlier ones? Is it driven by internal or external forces? What goods, ideas, peoples, or even armies have passed or will pass through the opening – in which direction? (Townsend 1991, 387 – 388, emphasis in original).

In this erudite passage, Townsend envisions a series of 'openings' – each can, as he puts it, be understood in their own terms as a distinct image, or seen as a continuous and dynamic process. In the following chapters, I follow the spirit of these remarks closely, seeking to locate the turn to market reform as a distinctive historical outcome of the

'many openings' of China. It is beyond question, I believe, that the country's integration into the colonial capitalist order *was* 'the *real* "opening of China"' and of greater historical import than the present one' (Townsend 1991, 387). For it is through this process – simultaneously, brutal, exploitative, racialized, yet also inspiring, educating, and, most of all, *change-making* – that a national consciousness emerged capable of imagining a future destiny in which China's standing is realigned with its imperial past. Twentieth century 'state socialism' tended to rise to power in polities shaped by a militantly nationalist consciousness – often, as in China's case, quite unfavourable to a democratic form of anti-capitalism. In chapter five, I argue the proliferation of new national sensibilities globally, arising amidst the collapse of the old colonial empires, was able to connect in a particularly complementary manner to the ethos of 'state socialism' as it was pioneered in Stalin's Russia. In the last section of this chapter, I look at the contribution Chalmers Johnson (Johnson 1962) made to our understanding of the origins of Maoism. This moves the argument beyond the failings of the major explanations of market reform, but, by illustrating the organic nationalism of Chinese communism in its moment of rapid political advance (1937 to 1945), Johnson highlighted a key feature of the regime formed after 1949.

1.7 Maoism and 'national salvation': the contribution of Chalmers Johnson

In this chapter, I have intimated through a process of critique that 'national salvation' or *jiuguo* was a founding principle of the PRC. This position follows closely Johnson's *Peasant Nationalism and Communist Power; the Emergence of Revolutionary China* that showed how *jiuguo* formed a pre-eminent part of the anti-Japanese war (Johnson 1962). Johnson's analysis contained ambiguities on the role of nationalism in PRC policy-making after the revolution, but his account of the overt nationalism the communists utilised in their rise to power was and remains apposite. He showed how CCP propaganda amongst the peasants continually emphasised the need to 'exterminate' the occupiers and freely adopted the patriotic terminology of political nationalism (Johnson 1962, 4). These ideological vexations were, as he put it, 'remarkably free of a communist quality' (ibid). Basing his study on reports compiled by Japanese officers that described the repeated attacks of the resistance movement, Johnson's book brought this national peasant movement to life. Communist success in the civil war with the Kuomintang was almost entirely dependent on their role leading the anti-colonial struggle in the north of the country, resulting in a dramatic reversal of

their pre-war fortunes, which had seen them close to annihilation by Kuomintang forces. Johnson argued that due to its substantive programme of independence from foreign domination and a strong and powerful nation state to defend the country, and its use of national myology, the 'communist rise to power in China should be understood as a species of nationalist movement' (Johnson 1962, xi). This shifted the role of the party away from the assumptions of orthodox Leninism, i.e. the party as the leader of a class subject, the proletariat, to the head of a, 'war-energized, radical nationalist movement' and, as such, the Marxist-Leninist ideology of the CCP was transformed into a 'myth serving the newly created Chinese state' (Johnson 1962, ix). Johnson drew out the distinction between the triumph of the communist parties in China and Yugoslavia, where they came to the head of popular national movements that bestowed them with political legitimacy, and the satellite regimes imposed by Soviet tanks. The latter acted as little more than colonial aggressors – and therefore antagonised the national spirit of the occupied countries –, whereas the Chinese party were synonymous with national liberation (Johnson 1962, 176 – 187). This led to the fusion of communism with nationalism:

> … Communism and nationalism were fused in wartime China and Yugoslavia as a result of the identification of the CCP and YCP, respectively, with the resistance movement of the two countries – movements that the communist parties themselves were not primarily responsible for setting in motion. The result of this fusion was the creation of communist nation-state that were not subordinate to the Soviet Union, specifically for the traditional party allegiance to Moscow counted for less than the national unity created between the agricultural masses and the party by their close cooperation in wartime (Johnson 1962, 8).

I take a very similar approach to Chinese communism in this thesis, but I situate the emergence of the national sensibility within a *longue durée* analysis of China's relationship to the modern world. In chapter four I locate the imagined 'awakening' of national consciousness in a specific moment of 'combined social development' in the 1890s. Johnson recognises the existence of the process within the urban areas prior to Japanese colonisation (Johnson 1962, 21 – 25), but argues that this national identity only crystalized for the great mass of the Chinese peasantry after 1937. Japanese 'mopping up' operations in rural areas inspired the spontaneous growth of resistance organisations even prior to CCP agitation, but they identified with and later joined the CCP-led movement (Johnson 1962, 2, 85, 31 – 70). This fostered a new mode of living and shared sense of identity amongst the peasantry:

> The feeling of belonging and of having a stake in government that grew up in this period was entirely novel for the Chinese masses; and it brought with it an exhilarating sense of self determination (Johnson 1962, 3).

I locate this urban-rural differentiation within an analysis of the rise and fall of colonial capitalism as it was experienced within the Chinese polity and, in part, this simply augments Johnson's position. However, I give greater emphasis to the *type* of political nationalism that emerged within urban areas after the first Sino-Japanese War. Many of these literate, modernising urban intellectuals turned to the banner of communism, and arguments within the CCP after the revolution arguably expressed tensions in the New Culture Movement between messianic and pragmatic discourses. Reflecting this lack of attention to the precise form that Chinese nationalism assumes in Mao's hands, Johnson's analysis is also plagued by ambiguity over the role of communist ideology in PRC policy-making. It expresses the fact that he does not offer an appraisal of the specific impact of 'state socialism' – and the combined development of the China's revolution with its Russian relation – on CCP policy. For example, Johnson recognises that 'communist ideology serves as the theoretical expression' of Chinese nationalism, but suggests that Marxist-Leninist doctrine 'prescribes policy for the Chinese' nation (Johnson 1962, 184). This somewhat bewildering formulation has to be seen in the context of Johnson writing back in 1962 – when the political splits and ruptures of 'state socialism' were only slowly becoming clear – and the methodological underpinning to Johnson's work. Sociological functionalism provided this underpinning and led Johnson to argue that within certain conditions Marxist-Leninism could answer the *functional need* of nationalism within a polity to establish a strong state with a national myth (Johnson 1962, 21). As such, once this need was met, then policy could be determined by the doctrine. If this were adopted as an explanation of market-reform it would therefore suffer from the same problems as the 'policy-analyst' approach that I critiqued in 2.3. A historical materialist account of the origins of Chinese nation-ness can, in contrast, locate it within the sociological conditions created by the crisis of colonial capitalism. Furthermore, I argue that Maoism represented a complementary fusion of Chinese nationalism with Soviet Stalinism. PRC state formation thereby reflected its combined development with the Soviet Union – and its planning infrastructure exhibited scleroses typical of the Eastern bloc states –, but the search for a specifically

Chinese road to development was driven by *jiuguo* and ultimately resulted in the 1978/79 reforms.

1.8 Reconceptualising Chinese economic reform as a search for jiuguo

This review of the existing theoretical accounts of market reform has illustrated the sociological problems that arise from a focus on purely *proximate* forms of causation. Methodological internalism might appear justified by the autarchic character of Chinese economic development in the early PRC. However, this argument can only be plausibly sustained if the object of study is conceived purely in terms of China's development *after* 1949. The Chinese Revolution was certainly a dramatic watershed, an 'epochal moment', so to speak, however, the ideological and cultural assumptions of the new regime – and the impoverished economic landscape they inherited – emerged through China's many openings with the wider world. To explain why the search for *jiuguo* assumed such centrality for Chinese communism that they ultimately adopted a capitalist economic strategy, then one arguably needs to move through three sociological steps, which might be summarised as 'class', 'nation' and 'socialism'. In other words, one needs to account for several overlapping processes: (i) the sources of China's extreme economic paucity, locating it within the colonial capitalist order that the polity was integrated in during the late eighteenth century; (ii) the origins of Chinese nationalism and the historical forces that conditioned its particularly radical form; and (iii) the failure of 'state socialism' to achieve the national salvation that Chinese elites desired. Each of these 'images', as Townsend put it, form moments in the moving picture that is China's interaction with the modern world. I explicate these overlapping historical interactions through an application of the theory of uneven and combined development. In the next chapter, I outline this theoretical foundation.

2
Theorising capitalist modernity: uneven and combined development in the *longue durée*

> The class struggle… is a struggle for the rough and material things, without which there is nothing fine and spiritual. Nevertheless these latter are present in the class struggle as something other than mere booty, which falls to the victor. They are present as confidence, as courage, as humour, as cunning, as steadfastness in this struggle, and they reach far back into the mists of time. They will, ever and anon, call every victory which has ever been won by the rulers into question.
> *Walter Benjamin*

2. 1 Introducing uneven and combined development

In the previous chapter, I showed how theories of Chinese economic reform have been locked in the confines of 'causal proximity' and accordingly excluded both intersocietal processes and long-maturing social contradictions. A theory is therefore needed that helps one to dig deeper, socially and temporally, into the peculiarities of Chinese development. I argue below that this *spatial* extension of the analysis to the global terrain requires a *temporal* deepening of our purview further back in time. Chinese communism and the one-party nature of the PRC state are, for example, taken for granted in existing approaches, their origins left un-excavated and a typical Marxist-Leninist nature assumed. Yet, it should be obvious that the origins of communism were certainly not 'local' to the Chinese polity but global, and how Chinese actors concretely internalised this ideology was, amongst other factors, causally significant to the economic choices made in the late 1970s. I explore this conceptual theme in this chapter, explaining how uneven and combined development offers an account of the cumulative interactions amongst many societies – taking place across the *longue durée* – that produce seemingly 'paradoxical' outcomes such as China's capitalist reform programme. Trotsky's concept of uneven and combined development (Trotsky 1967a; 1978; 2005) has been the subject of vigorous debate in recent years, inspired by the claim of Justin Rosenberg that it can constitute the conceptual core to a theory of 'the international' for historical sociology (Rosenberg 2005; Rosenberg 2006; Rosenberg 2007; Rosenberg 2010). Yet the relationship between the theory of uneven and combined development, the 'narrative strategy' in sociology, and *longue durée* historiography has yet to be properly broached. As I show below, my focus on these aspects is based upon a broad agreement with Rosenberg's account of uneven and

combined development as a property of social change *per se*. I argue a holistic, flexible approach to this idea allows greater scope for its historical particularisation, and a clearer identification of its various 'sub-set' typographies.

In Trotsky's most developed understanding of uneven and combined development, *The History of the Russian Revolution, volume 1* (Trotsky 1967a, 21 – 32), he introduced theoretical explanations as they were relevant to the historical argument. This is sometimes referred to as a 'narrative strategy' and, below, I first defend this approach against its critics. If theoretically grounded, i.e., if one is seeking to uncover deeper processes of social change that are not immediately apparent in observation (M. Archer et al. 1998; Bhaskar 1975; 1998; Sayer 1992; Sayer 1998), then the narrative strategy helps us to conceptualise the concrete determinations of social development as they are manifested in history. In the pages below, I locate this within a dialectical, 'internal relations' approach to the Marxist method, one emphasising the need to excavate the variety of social mechanisms and mental-conceptions present within concrete historical changes (Ollman 2003; D. Sayer 1987). I show how this methodology was central to Trotsky's own conception of uneven and combined development (Trotsky 1967a; 1978; 2005). I go on to argue that agency and contingency are fundamental to 'combined social development', because the diversity of social processes that become concentrated in unique ways within a polity must give rise to partially 'indeterminate' outcomes. This then poses a question between the conjuncture, where social processes concretely 'combine' together, and the cumulative dimensions of social change across the *longue durée*. Engaging with the debate between Bourdieu and Hobsbawm I argue that uneven and combined development offers a useful synergy of *longue durée* and contingency-focused approaches. In the final two sections, I return to the contemporary debates on uneven and combined development and eurocentrism to illustrate the significance of this approach to concrete examples of historical change.

2.2 In defence of a theoretically-informed 'narrative strategy'
Theda Skocpol's work on social revolution (Skocpol 1979) was widely acclaimed for combining historical sensitivity with generalizable sociological claims about the nature of revolution *per se.* But it was also roundly criticised for not assigning any causal efficacy to the role of ideology. In one of the best known of these critiques, William Sewell drew a distinction between two forms of sociological strategy, a focus on

'narrative' description and a 'hierarchical' chain of causation, and argued that notwithstanding the lacuna of ideological causality, Skocpol had succeed in avoiding the allure of these mistaken approaches. Marxism was, he argued, such a 'hierarchal' approach:

> All serious analysts agree that the causes of revolutions are complex. But in the face of this complexity they usually employ one of two strategies: a "hierarchical" strategy of asserting the primacy of some type of cause over the others, or a "narrative" strategy of trying to recount the course of the revolution in some semblance of its real complexity. The trouble with both the usual strategies is that they are, literally, insufficiently analytical. The narrative strategy discusses different causal features of the revolutionary process only as they make themselves felt in the unfolding of the story. Consequently, causes tend to get lost in a muddle of narrative detail and are never separated out sufficiently to make their autonomous dynamics clear. The problem with the hierarchical strategy is that while it successfully specifies the causal dynamics of one factor, it tends to subordinate the roles of other factors, either treating them only as background (as most studies of revolution have done with the problem of the international setting) or conflating them with the chosen causal factor. Here the obvious example is the way that Marxist theories of revolution have tended to view the state as simply an expression of class power, rather than as a distinctive institution with its own interests and dynamics (Sewell 1985, 57 – 58).

Sewell's observations and Skocpol's original theory challenged traditional conceptions of historical materialism. To her credit, Skocpol emphasised transnational forms of causality, even though this was largely limited to the logic of geopolitical competition amongst states. It, thus, gave the geopolitical process a genuine causal efficacy rather than relegating it to simply a background that might or might not be relevant to the decision-making process amongst domestic actors. Skocpol would also identify with Sewell's further claim that Marxist theories of revolution conflate such geopolitical or 'state-determined' processes with the causal factor that predominates within its chosen theoretical 'hierarchy' – namely, class power. Sewell argued that Skocpol's had succeeded in taking the conceptual strengths of causal-hierarchy approaches and combining it with the strengths of the narrative method, 'its emphasis on 'sequence, conjuncture, and contingency' (Sewell 1985, 58). These were the broad contours of Skocpol's attempted synthesis, but the problem with her conceptual armoury was that the *general conditions* she identified for social revolution were far too prescriptive. In broad terms, she argued that the combination of (i) 'relatively isolated peasant communities', (ii) suffering under the hardship of absentee landlordism, and (iii) confronting a bureaucratic state that was falling behind geopolitically vis-à-vis more

powerful polities, were the common causal conditions in the Chinese, Russian and French Revolution, and, by way of inference, general conditions of social revolution *per se* (Sewell 1985, 57; Skocpol 1979, 19). These were highly prescriptive conditions that left the theory open to refutation should a social revolution occur in the absence of these conditions. Sure enough, in the year that *States and Social Revolution* was published, 1979, the Iranian Revolution erupted, which transformed the nature of state-society relations within the polity, despite the absence of all Skocpol's three conditions for social revolution.

Skocpol's reaction was to highlight the role of ideological determination in the Iranian special case, and this 'Iranian exceptionalism' seriously undermined the apparent theoretical generality with which her original claims had been cast (Matin forthcoming). But the more pressing methodological problem was the very narrow ascriptions of the concepts that she had applied. Kamran Matin has recently made this point in relation to Skocpol's wholly geopolitical notion of 'the international' (ibid). He argues that Skocpol, following Weber's claim that nation-states should be treated as organic wholes and thus legitimate objects of comparative analysis, identified 'the international' milieu with geopolitical competition between states, and so excluded forms of cultural and social diffusion amongst them (ibid). Contrastingly, Matin argues, that in their essence, international processes are mutually constitutive of domestic properties, as there is no society that exists outside a set of causally significant relations with other societies (ibid). 'The international' therefore needs to be recast in terms that include *all forms* of intersocietal processes and the sociological presupposition of 'socie*ty* in the singular' accordingly discarded in favour of a dynamic conception of intersocietal processes.

Matin's point can be further extended and developed to respond to the criticism that Sewell makes of traditional 'hierarchical' forms of explanation. For there is actually a vision of historical materialism that much more closely resembles the 'narrative strategy' that Sewell had counter-posed to it. Matin's intimation is that Skocpol's concepts are at once *too narrow* – for they exclude intersocietal processes not included under the rubric of geopolitics – *and too broad*, for they lack the sensitivity to concreteness required to explain the Iranian Revolution. This critical response contrasts to the one that Sewell gives, but it is arguably posed sharply by the general terms in which he casts his own 'ideological' addendum to Skocpol's theory. Sewell's answer to her eliding of the ideological dimensions of revolution was to reinsert it, but without

upsetting the structuralist assumptions of the core theoretical paradigm. He noted how Skocpol 'surreptitiously' incorporated ideology by registering the sequential variation in the 'world historical context' – i.e. the changes in global narratives – that had characterised the epochs of the French, Russian and Chinese Revolutions (Sewell 1985, 59). For Sewell this implicit registering of ideological causality had to be given its own *independent* causal significance (ibid). Yet, the description he proceeded to give of the role of ideology was such that it pre-supposed a mutually constitutive relationship between several evolving social forms. The logical independence Sewell assigned to it, is, therefore, highly questionable:

> Ideology must be seen neither as the mere reflex of material class relations nor as mere 'ideas' which 'intellectuals' hold about society. Rather, ideologies inform the structure of institutions, the nature of social cooperation and conflict, and the attitudes and predispositions of the population. All social relations are at the same time ideological relations (Sewell 1985, 61).

If, however, Sewell is right and ideology has this all pervasive quality in the fabric of material life, it is difficult to sustain any conceptualisation that grants it a logical independence or, as he put it, its 'own autonomous dynamics' (Sewell 1985, 58). Rather, these discourses need to be studied in their historical reality as concrete processes invariably 'inter-meshed' with the social and class aspects of human interaction. Rather than subsume the ideological to class, it was Marx, no less, that suggested sensitivity to the *totality* of concrete processes was crucial to social theory. 'The concrete is concrete', he wrote, in a now well known passage, for 'it is the concentration of many determinations, hence the unity of the diverse' (Marx 1973, 101). Consequently, Marx advocated a movement from the abstract to the concrete, for it was with concepts that we made sense of these 'many determinations'. The aim of this abstraction, however, was ultimately to construct a moving picture of the 'real relations' in the *concrete* historical process. Far from reducing the concrete to epiphenomenal expressions of abstract categories (the path of 'vulgar Marxism'), it was the very complexity and diversity of human life that led Marx to make his concepts elastic and flexible enough to incorporate a penumbra of diverse temporalities (Ollman 2003; D. Sayer 1987). He has often been derided since for inconsistency, even sloppiness, for doing so, but this method arguably reflected the genuine 'messiness' of historical change. Marx would thus surely concur with Sewell 'that all social relations are at the same time ideological relations' (Sewell 1985, 61), but it was precisely this inter-connectedness that led him to reject the construction of closed and universal

typographies in his theories (D. Sayer 1987, 21). Instead he saw ideological forms as inherently bound up – 'internally related' – with the process of social reproduction (Ollman 2003; D. Sayer 1987).

This 'internal-relations' perspective leads us down the pathway of the *narrative strategy*, albeit one that is *theoretically informed,* which Sewell rejects. The merits of such an approach can be seen in studying the perplexities of the Iranian Revolution. For the causal role that ideology plays in a world historic event like this will arguably not depend on the 'autonomous dynamics' of ideology as such (Sewell 1985, 58), but its *actual, substantive form*; i.e., how it is crystalized into the minds of participants and concentrated in living political forces, movements and programmes. It might appear obvious to say so, but different ideologies have a differing impact on social and political life, rather than exhibiting the same causal property of 'ideological determination'. In the Iranian case, indeed, one has to radically distinguish different *concrete* ideologies – for example, amongst the Islamist supporters of Ayatollah Khomeini and the various communist actors – including their differing relationships to competing social classes, in order to capture the complex historical story of the revolution. Sewell might well argue in response that social theorists always set themselves the task of moving from the general to the particular, and no two instances of a phenomenon are ever the same. True as this is, the point remains that ideology can have *no autonomous* role in concrete historical processes, inevitably involving a variety of different factors, let alone be assumed to have *broadly similar effects* across different contexts. A more radical break with structuralism towards a historically concrete, 'unity of many determinations', perspective is necessary, if, that is, one is to avoid the narrow, and quickly refuted, theoretical predictions that Skocpol's comparative approach ultimately succumbed to.

2.3 The Marxist method: conceptualizing 'lawfulness' in historical processes

This focus on historical narrative might appear curious given the criticisms I made in chapter 1 of the tendency to 'causal proximity' in existing approaches to Chinese economic reform. But a theoretical emphasis on the peculiarities of social development need not imply the constraining of the remit of historical discovery to merely the surface-level of events and processes. On the contrary, the role of theory can actually be extended deeper, not to attempt to draw prescriptive predictions from empirical observations of past occurrences in the manner that Skocpol ultimately did, but to theorise the causal properties and inter-locking interests and conflicts within a social

structure. Marxism has long been derided for its determinism and invoking of 'laws of history', but there is concept of lawfulness within this extraordinarily broad school of thought, one augmented and developed by the critical realist philosophy in the late twentieth century (M. Archer et al. 1998; Bhaskar 1975; 1998; Sayer 1992; 1998), in which a concern for theorising necessities is *complementary* to recognising contingencies. There is a method indeed of integrating *contingency* into our explanations in such a way that it allows us to simultaneously explain the ways in which the lives of people, and all the institutions such as states that we create through historical time, are *structured* in ways outside of our individual control by multiple networks of social relations. Before I move onto the theory of uneven and combined development, I need to briefly reprise the broad contours of this conception of the Marxist method, as one sensitive to contingency as well as necessity. One of the important contributions Roy Bhaskar made in the 1970s was to challenge the positivist monopoly on 'science-ism' by rejecting the probabilistic notion of law. All explanatory or 'scientific' theories, be they concerned with the natural or social world, he argued, implicitly start from the assumption that events and processes are not spontaneous but are produced by natural and social forces (Bhaskar 1975, 146). He proceeded to argue that recurring patterns of phenomena showed the need to investigate the generative properties *giving rise to* the pattern and did not in any way constitute 'lawful' processes in their own right (Bhaskar 1975, 63 – 78). The role of theory is to understand and capture these generative mechanisms that constitute the operative relations of social and natural structure (Bhaskar 1975, 64). This formulation of the Marxist method is sensitive to the specific fusion of mechanisms, events and actions, which determine conjunctural developments. It also means that contingency is seen as fundamental to social change, because in these conjunctures different mechanisms will intersect contingently, thus ruling out the very possibility of determinism.

The dialectical character of this view is given by the way in which necessity and contingency are understood to inter-relate; both are seen as essential moments in the 'organised anarchy' that characterises human reproduction. Moreover and equally, the mechanisms are also seen as conditional on the existence of the social structure in which they operate. Marxism, indeed, is famous for its laws of capitalism, but naturally enough Marx did not see these as timeless, for he argued that properties within the social structure fostering an expansion of labour simultaneously created a class with the interests and social power that, potentially at least, made capitalism transient. Whether

this would be the case was, of course, dependent upon politics, and this illustrates not only how human agency adds a very special contingency to the social process, but also how social structures *enable* as well as constrain our actions. Capitalist social relations *create* the material possibility of a classless society; whether the world's workers collectively utilise these conditions in this way is quite another question. This does not mean, however, that the economic base is subject to 'laws' and all conscious activity is 'contingent'. Indeed, a more social concept of the necessities that are generative within a historical structure reveals the existence of constraining elements in the fabric of human culture that may otherwise be occluded. Consider, for example, the necessity involved in the production of personal identity. Real people, born in real places, are ascribed an identity (a name, ethnicity, etc) merely as a result of the spatial location and their kinship relations. Although we are conscious, although we have intentionality, we cannot 'escape' the historical reality of our own birth, nor the way the world may treat us as a result. The necessity involved in the reproduction of identity is essential to the notion of 'otherness' often discussed in IR, normally using concepts of inside/outside relations, but, curiously, it is never viewed as a necessity. If we treat it as so, with the 'historical' caveat, i.e. the recognition of the temporal and social relativity of the 'law', then we capture the constrained feeling governing how we experience identity, and make the 'necessity' conditional on our cultural circumstances. One consequence is that modern racism, for example, could be treated as irreducible to the 'economic' but still *internally related* to the host of culturally mediated power relations found in capitalist epochs, such as colonial empire.

This *theoretically informed* narrative strategy introduces sociological causes 'as they make themselves felt in the unfolding of the story' (Sewell 1985, 58), but, in doing so, also seeks to travel beneath the events prominent in a narrative, to ask how structural properties of a society conditioned, in enabling and constraining ways, the causally significant actions. In this way, a search for the 'real relations' of a process can be at once 'abstract', requiring the testing and reformulation of conceptual typographies, and resolutely concrete. Given this sensitivity to historical specificity, the concepts are not logically deduced from a set of abstract assumptions, because their utility is continually tested against historical development. They thus have an intrinsic 'historicity' as specific properties of a given phase of human development. In short, they only hold true for as long as the historical relations to which they refer exist (Ollman 2003, 67 – 69). Yet, Marx also did not reject 'transhistorical' categories. Notions of human labour for

example, as opposed to distinctively capitalist labour relations, plainly provided an underpinning to his enquiries, but, he only afforded them substantive analytical utility once they were historically concretised (D. Sayer 1987, 21). It was this theoretical and historical relativity that led Marx to reject the kind of 'exclusive, unambiguous, closed and universal' definitions of positivism (ibid). His concepts were much more elastic, admitting the possibility of multiple usages in differing contexts with concretisations thus modifying the general properties to enrich a historical explanation (ibid). These, then, are the broad methodological contours of a *theoretically informed* narrative strategy that is sensitive to the role of both contingency and necessity. But it is arguably only with uneven and combined development that one can show how contingency forms an irreducible moment of all combined social development.

2.4 The theory of uneven and combined development

Trotsky first articulated the idea of uneven and combined development to conceptualise the contradictory impact of capitalist modernisation on underdeveloped states in the periphery of the global system, particularly his native Russia (Trotsky 1967a; 1978; 2005). The peculiarities of early twentieth century Russia, with its juxtaposition of an archaic, absolutist state, semi-feudal backwardness and rapid industrial modernisation, posed the need for a dialectical formulation of the historical process that resulted in the fusing together of archaic and modern patterns of social development (Trotsky 1967a, 21 – 32). Trotsky's innovative approach to this problem sought to incorporate these contradictory elements into the remit of social theory, by arguing that they arose necessarily from the multilinear dimensions of historical development. 'The development of historically backward nations', he argued, 'leads necessarily to a peculiar combination of different stages in the historic process' and thus their evolution 'acquires a planless, complex, combined character' (Trotsky 1967a, 23). *Unevenness* referred to the asynchronous form taken by global social development – the great diversity that existed in the human form with geographically dispersed polities and regions developing in different ways, eliciting variation in the pace of technical and social progress. *Combination* denoted the interactive process that set in when these forms interrelated – giving rise to outcomes such as the one Trotsky studied in Russia, where a single society fused together divergent social and cultural forms. *Lawfulness* referred to the necessity of this process, because in human history it could be no other

way: when diverse social agents and processes interacted they invariably produced concretely distinctive trajectories of development.

This established the conceptual framework with which Trotsky understood Russia's late development, allowing him to carefully weave together its diverse lineages and situate the life of the domestic polity firmly in the contradictions of global history. The subtle processes of cultural and intellectual diffusion from outside combined with the harder imperatives of geopolitical and economic competition (the 'whip of external necessity' as he called it). These influences and pressures intersected with the nation's domestic culture, along with its class and state structure. The uneven and combined development 'from afar' helped to reproduce and accelerate it 'within' the sovereign bounds of the territorial state. Spatially concentrated industrial urbanisation took place against a backdrop of appalling misery and backwardness in the country, where 'peasant land cultivation as a whole remained... at the level of the seventeenth century' (Trotsky 1967a, 27). Trotsky thus excavated Russia's unique path dependence within the contours of global history, which crucially included the recognition that different social property forms could become juxtaposed within a single state formation. In this way, he challenged the 'pedantic schematism' (Trotsky 1967a, 23) of those 'stadial' or stage-ist modes of production analyses that held Russia to be 'feudal', rather than undertaking a contradictory form of accelerated capitalist development. The implications of this were not localised to the Russian polity alone. Trotsky himself extrapolated the concept outwards, embracing the entire periphery of late capitalist development (Trotsky 1974, 15 – 16). In Trotsky's application of the concept, however, the 'combination' tended to denote, specifically, the impact and outcomes produced by capitalist internationalisation (ibid). This allowed him to conceptualise the contradictory dynamics of capitalist globalisation and, indeed, he was surely right to do so. Neither contemporaries of Trotsky nor scholars today would downplay, let alone deny, the enormous impact of capitalist social relations on the pace and form of development in every corner of the world. But combined development also had explanatory utility for the study of pre-capitalist modes of production. Indeed, Trotsky's work arguably added a new premise to historical materialist investigation, which saw human development as necessarily involving a series of multilinear interactions amongst many societies. This has been the primary claim of Rosenberg (Rosenberg 2005; 2006; 2007; 2010), who has extended the concept of combined development backwards temporally through time – thereby also raising it to a higher level of abstraction conceptually. For international theory this

makes it possible to use uneven and combined development as the *explanans* for an historical account of the emergence of 'the international', defined as dispersed but interactive political communities (Rosenberg 2010). Many have argued this departs too far from its original meaning (Ashman 2006; Ashman 2009; Neil Davidson 2006a; Neil Davidson 2006b; Smith 2006), even though it largely follows the logic of Trotsky's own claim that 'unevenness is the most general law of the historic process' out of which combination, i.e. causally significant forms of social interaction, then arises (Trotsky 1967a, 23). For Marx transhistorical concepts acted as premises for more historical analysis, and there is no reason why we cannot also work with combined development at different levels of abstraction and concretisation. Reification of the social process will only set in should we forget Sayer's point that categories will acquire substantive analytical utility only in their historically specific form (D. Sayer 1987, 21). The positive implication of working with uneven and combined development as a basic presupposition is that it allows us to integrate world historical processes *per se* into sociological analysis without subsuming difference and particularity into universal, and misleading, general variables. Robert Nisbet once argued that it was impossible to take *humanity* as the subject and object of the notion of development, for it is too 'diverse, multiple and particular' (cited in Rosenberg 2006, 333). But, as Rosenberg has argued, this position only stands if we already hold in our minds the assumption that development is unilinear and not uneven. By adding the properties of unevenness and combination *in abstracto*, then the 'diverse, multiple and particular' – the variety of cultural and social forms in world history – cease to be externalities to the concept of development (ibid). Quite the opposite, they are now understood as *internally related* to the patterns of global change, thereby arising through the multiple, dispersed but interactive properties of this reconceived view of development.

The dialectical character of the analysis (unevenness > interaction > particularity > unevenness) suggests that social-historical necessities lead to emergent, particular social forms. But to elicit particularity – the diverse historical examples of developmental and cultural forms – there must be a powerful element of contingency. Wars, revolutions, state formation, to take the classical subject matter of historical sociology by way of example, all involve struggles between social groups, the precise outcome of which cannot be pre-determined. Defending the lawful character of unevenness, Rosenberg writes, '...The concrete pattern of socio-cultural diversity is contingent', but, 'the fact of the diversity is not' (Rosenberg 2006, 317). It derives, he

suggests, from the social necessity of unevenness in historical development. Rosenberg does not appear to mean merely that the pattern of social cultural diversity is conditional on wider social forces – one possible interpretation of the term 'contingency'. Rather, he appears to be putting forward the more interesting idea that the contingent arrangement of social forces arises out of the necessarily uneven and combined nature of development, resulting in social-historical particularity. In short, it must be the case that when diverse social forms interact, the co-operation, conflict and intellectual exchange this interaction involves, results in particular outcomes that cannot be entirely known in advance and are therefore 'contingent'. Crucial to this is the notion of plurality or 'more than one', for the contingent nature of 'combination' arises from the fact there are numerous agencies whose interaction has an unpredictable dimension (Cooper 2013). This more socially sensitive account of political change thus encourages an encompassing view of agency, one that asks questions about the role played by those at the foot of social hierarchies as well as those at the head of them, and is concerned to understand the variety of actors whose conflicts and co-operation 'combines' in historical change.

A critical reflection on this anterior assumption – the plurality of interlocking agencies – has a particular pertinence to understanding China's unusual relationship with capitalist modernity. For the Imperial Chinese polity was for most periods of its life significantly more developed in technological and social terms than its European rivals, yet it was not able to generate its own capitalist transformation. The recurring class struggles between merchants, industrialists and officialdom, not to mention the spirit of rebellion amongst peasant communities, tended to be resolved to the advantage of the bureaucracy, even in the face of political, i.e. dynastic, change. The capitalis*tic* (if not capital*ist*) activity of China's entrepreneurial classes, thus, continually fell afoul of the ruling class at the apex of the state who absorbed surpluses that might otherwise have been invested in production. The class struggles between these actors, however, particularly at moments when the empire was engulfed by crises, could in principle have been resolved in favour of nascent capitalists. If this occurred then the already existing technical and social conditions for capitalism may have yet led to it being unleashed upon the Chinese polity first. Reflecting on these alternative possibilities provides a richer insight into the outcome, as it allows one to assume the vantage point of actors that pushed for an alternative perspective, and see how their failed struggles form one dimension of the real, living history.

2.5 'Combination' as an indeterminate site of social interaction and conflict

In this outline, then, social-historical 'combination' is seen as a site of struggle and conflict, cultural renewal, artistic creativity, and other such practices, which combine together to give rise to these criss-crossing development pathways. How should one deal, however, with the possible objection that this understanding of agency within the process of 'combined development' errs towards voluntarism, despite the emphasis that was initially given to the conditional necessities within social structures? One possible answer is to recognise the *inherently social* character of our agency. This means that we should see human activity as something that can only exist within and through social relations. Structure can then be conceived as a terrain of opportunities and risks for individual agents that conditions, but does not wholly determine, our activity. The 'causal power of things' is actually expressed by our social reproduction; for our activity continually takes advantage of the causal power of social structure and in the process reproduces and transforms it in different ways (Sayer 1992, 116). Similarly, laws within the social structure are 'activated' by, indeed can only *exist* through, the daily practice of creative, transforming human agencies (ibid). The effects of laws operating in any one historical conjuncture are mediated by this activity. Such effects may even be unique, but to understand this novelty, we need theory to shed light on the 'constitutive structures' that inter-relate in the course of our active reproduction (ibid). If agency is seen in this way as inherently social, then theories that treat society as a sum of independent parts (e.g. the atomistic conception of society in liberalism) need to be rejected in favour of an approach that treats structure and agency as *internally related,* and therefore analyses the material and social structures that are ever-present dimensions to our activity. On these foundations, structure and agency can be conceived not as polar opposites but as interlocking aspects of human reproduction. As Bhaskar puts it, all our intentional activity pre-supposes the 'prior existence of social forms' and vice-versa:

> ...Conscious human activity consists in work on *given* objects and cannot be conceived as occurring in their absence... For all activity pre-supposes the prior existence of social forms. Thus consider *saying, making* and *doing* as characteristic modalities of human agency. People cannot communicate except by utilizing media, produce except by applying themselves to materials which are already formed, or act save in some or other context. Speech requires language; making materials; action conditions; agency resources; activity rules. Even spontaneity has as its necessary condition the pre-existence of a social

form with (or by means of) which the spontaneous act is performed. Thus if the social cannot be reduced to (and is not the product of) the individual it is equally clear that society is a pre-condition for any intentional human act at all (Bhaskar 1998, 37, emphasis in original).

'The social' is conceived here in plural terms, i.e. encompassing language, resources, rules and all the dimensions of human existence. Beyond the work of Bhaskar, this agency-sensitive vision of historical materialism can also be rooted in Marx and Engels' method, particularly as they outlined it in *The German Ideology*. '*Social* being and *social* consciousness' was, they argued, the very 'essence of the materialistic conception of history', one grounded in the assumption that 'definite individuals who are productively active in a definite way enter into definite social and political relations' (Marx 1969, 24). Accordingly, it was 'empirical observation' that 'must in each separate instance bring out empirically, and without any mystification or speculation, the connection of the social and political structure with production' (ibid). The political was not seen merely as an epiphenomenal expression of economic relations, in which differentiation between political forms is unimportant. Rather, the emphasis was put upon the crucial role of empirically informed, concrete historical analysis to draw out these 'definite relations'. Their criticism of idealism in this famous passage was certainly stringent, but they also insisted 'this phenomena' of ideology 'arises just as much from their historical life-process as the inversion of objects on the retina does from their physical life-process' (Marx 1969, 25). These imagined ideological forms, however mystifying their representation of the dynamics of human life might be, nonetheless formed part of the cumulative, historical reproduction of societies, and thus their empirical connections to social and productive relations required careful study. Time and again Marx and Engels emphasised how social consciousness is internally related to the production of human life. They insisted it is 'interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men' (Marx 1969, 24 – 25) and that 'the phantoms formed in the human brain are… *sublimates* of their material-life process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to empirical premises' (emphasis added Marx 1969, 25). This social consciousness has no 'semblance of independence', 'no history, no development' (ibid) separate from the dynamic, evolving reproduction of human life. Terms that recur repeatedly, 'real life', 'real history', 'the actual life-process' (Marx 1969, 24 – 26), reflect the foundational premises of their investigation, as a study of the interaction between humanity and nature that sought to incorporate all forms of

economic, cultural, social and political reproduction. The emphasis throughout these passages is therefore plainly on the *social* content of agency – the fact that it can only exist through and within the natural and social structures of material life. Yet at the same time it is the practical activity and consciousness of human labour that infuses 'the actual life-process' with a dynamic and evolving content, making it subject to continual change.

In this understanding of historical materialism the concepts we form to make sense of the world should be dialectical concepts; that is, capable of accounting for the qualities of change, transformation, and contradiction we repeatedly find in the historical process (Ollman 2003). This means that the most abstract of concepts in Marxism have the peculiar quality of being both 'lawful', i.e. necessary, properties of human development and simultaneously also question begging about the concrete historical form the abstract conceptualization assumes in a certain time and place. Marx and Engels used their idea of the 'double relationship' in this way, as a grounding presupposition for historical analysis that helps us *ask the right questions* about historical stages of development.[5] The 'production of life', they argued, 'appears as a double-relationship', one that is at once social and natural, involving relationships of co-operation with *other individuals* in order to harness the material resources provided by the *natural world* (Marx 1969, 31). Precisely because social and natural relations are subject to change, the question enquirers have to answer empirically is the historical properties of this double-relationship, a reality that is 'ever taking on new forms' (Marx 1969, 31 – 32). In the same vein, it is equally possible to use uneven and combined development at a more general level of analysis, albeit not *as general* a level as the 'double relationship', in order to inform just such an empirically sensitive mode of enquiry. Articulated in general terms, the concept can help us to ask the right questions about the precise form taken by the proliferating patterns of social interaction ('combination') that arise when dispersed societies interact with one another. While this might sound abstract, if this presupposition had underpinned explanations of Chinese economic reform, it seems unlikely that 'the international' would have remained a lacuna. For had this foundation been present researchers would have 'asked the right questions' about the impact of China's interactions with the modern world on its latter-day drive to market reform. Like all concepts, the extent to which it retains its utility

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[5] Thanks to Kerem Nisancioglu for stressing upon me the importance of this conception of Marx's method of abstraction for the theory of uneven and combined development.

will depend on whether intersocietal relations continue to exist in the actual life-process. In late capitalism these processes have certainly assumed a particular significance, one that is repeatedly throwing up new and distinctive cultural amalgams among the dispersed states that are integrated in anarchic and unstable ways by the world market. To avoid reifying one's concepts it is naturally necessary to remain conscious of the way that these historically novel characteristics overlay and give meaning to the more pre-suppositional ('abstract') categories.

In this social account of agency, the 'social agents' encompass all the diverse entities formed across space and time by collective human activities. From the modern territorial state, to trans-national corporations, urban conurbations, and, if one looks backwards temporally, to the geopolitical communities of the classical civilisations, and the first sedentary communities, we see how human social interaction produces a shifting and transforming array of historical actors in international politics. Critically extending the idea of uneven and combined development in the manner Rosenberg has suggested arguably gives us a theorisation of the indeterminacy of outcome that multiple interactions between social agents must entail. The approach also insists that we cannot understand any individual 'social form' without conceptualising the ways in which they interact through space and time with others. This reconfiguration in our conceptualization of development consequently unseats traditional perspectives that tend to explain, sometimes implicitly, other times explicitly, the formation of social hierarchy only via 'domestic' processes. No longer seen as a process of domestic development alone, the form a given hierarchy takes will reflect its interaction – competition, conflict and scientific and technological exchange – with global processes. In this regard, and to summarise this stage of the argument, there is no 'pre-interactive moment' in the life of a historical community; from its earliest genesis any one specific polity will be subject to the pressures and influences of the outside world.

2.6 Moments of rupture and/or the longue durée?

It would be remiss of us to not now reflect upon the processes by which that multiplicity of actors living in the 'moment of combination' arrives there. In literal, indeed obvious, terms the answer is, of course, history, and the difficulty it poses for agent-led accounts is its seemingly determinate nature. History, after all, is surely the greatest of all necessities, for the simply reason that once it has happened it cannot be changed. Despite the banality of this epistemological fact there lies buried within it a perplexing

question for social theorists concerned with historical transformation. Namely, how may we integrate the conjunctural – its events, moments, actions – and, more generally speaking, the sheer ephemerality of all our lived experiences, with the persistent, long-maturing and evolving causes, whose existence cannot be plausibly doubted? In the work of Eric Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm 1977; 1989; 1990; 1994; 2007; 2010) and the *Annales* school of French post-war historians (Braudel 1960; Braudel 1982; Braudel 1996; L. Febvre 1982; L. P. V. Febvre, Burke, and Folca 1973) the emphasis was put upon the latter dimensions of the historical process. That is, the *evolutionary* development – at varying tempos but always across periods of time beyond the episodic – of the most powerful causes of social transformation. In his classical advocacy of *longue durée* historiography, Fernand Braudel spoke of how our immediate, sensuous experiences were overlain by realities accumulated across the span of time, whose precise physiognomy was often opaque, difficult to conceptualise, yet, nonetheless, had profound causal efficacy in the historical process:

> … Social duration, those multiple and contradictory timespans of the lives of men, is not only the substance of the past but also the stuff of present social life. The dialectic of duration forcefully points out the importance and utility of history for the social sciences. Nothing at the center of social reality is more significant than the living, continuous tension between the moment and the span of time. Whether a question concerns the past or the here-and-now, a clear awareness of this plurality of social time is necessary for a common [social science] methodology (Braudel 1960, 3 – 4).

Consider our earlier discussion of 'personal identity as historical necessity' (p. 48) in the context of Braudel's eloquent formulation, the 'living, continuous tension between the moment and the span of time' (ibid), and we can visualise how even in the current moment the past continues to impose itself on how we make sense of who we are and the world we live in. But if the pressures of the past can be felt at the level of personal experience, identity, even psychology, then imagine the power of collectively constructed and reconstructed narratives and social forces. One of the features of Russian society that gave it such instability in late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was the way in which narratives of feudal authority were undermined by the social and ideological impact of modernisation, yet, paradoxically, it was the Tsarist state that drove modernisation forward to strengthen its coercive power. Social forms historically and ideologically rooted in the *longue durée* of Eurasian feudalism were torn apart by the logic of defending its geopolitical and social power in the context of the competitive pressures of the capitalist epoch. Understanding how these historical

temporalities endured across decades, which had seen a myriad of more partial and episodic forms of change, has been a particular concern of *longue durée* historiography and their work poses challenges for agency-led social theory. Marx is famously and repeatedly quoted as arguing that 'we make history but not in conditions of our own making', suggesting a simple and unproblematic distinction between historically inherited conditions and conscious actions. But a closer reading of his original formulation shows how he was keenly aware of the 'sticky quality' that ideas had on the minds of actors, even when they were transforming historical conditions in novel ways:

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. *The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.* And just as they seem to be engaged with revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis *they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service, and borrow from them names, battle cries, and costumes in order to present this new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language* (emphasis added Marx 1969, 398).

Marx's object of analysis was, of course, the great period of European state formation in which national mythologies provided a supposedly timeless source of ideological legitimacy to the distinctively modern process of state building. Methodologically, the 'weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living' formula also evocatively suggests a lack of individual consent, recognising that forms of social consciousness emerge collectively out of shared historical experience. We are more than likely therefore to draw upon a 'time-honoured disguise' and 'borrowed language' to make sense of new social structures and render them meaningful to our existing collective subjectivity. Understanding this mediation between freedom and necessity at the level of ideas does not imply a one-way causal determination from structure to social consciousness, but rather emphasises their inner-reciprocity in the actual life-process. The French philosopher Pierre Bourdieu has made a similar point when discussing the 'the paradoxes of objective meaning without subjective intention' (Bourdieu 1992, 62) and his solution is to see this discourse as an emergent quality of the *habitus* – the socially constituted relationships and environments we form in the material life-process:

> The habitus, a product of history, produces individual and collective practices - more history - in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the

'correctness' of practices and their constancy over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms (Bourdieu 1992, 54).

For Bourdieu the contradiction of the *habitus* lies in how our actions are intentional without us being fully conscious of all the processes that lead to us acting the way we do. This means that unilinear explanations will implicitly give the *habitus* a common cohesiveness and 'consciousness' that in practice it lacks. Nonetheless, social practices will have a degree of 'correctness' insofar as they have to draw upon shared rules and experiences within the *habitus* to be intelligible by the groups that relate to them (ibid). The attractiveness of 'pure objectivism', or forms of teleology that see historical change as the flowering of an already present and unchanging inner-essence, thus lies in the way in which they appear to accord with the capacity of social activity to 'project the past into the future' (ibid).[6] Our enduring capacity to resurrect archaic narratives in order to give meaning to our social circumstances certainly requires an explanation of how these endure in spite of the contingencies one finds in combined development. It also poses the question of how far-reaching social transformation is achieved across time and space: is the conjunctural or *habitus* responsible for this, or do genuinely epoch-shifting social changes actually take place across the *longue durée*?

Longue durée historiography is often identified with determinist approaches to social reproduction, because the institutions and social structures the theory highlights normally endure far beyond the lives of conscious human individuals. However, *longue durée* scholarship is actually divided between the figures of Lucien Febvre, who erred heavily towards voluntarism, emphasising the discursive construction of paradigms that achieved a certain fixity in the minds of participants across entire epochs (L. Febvre 1982), and Braudel who was an avowed determinist (see Burke 1990, 40). 'When I think of the individual', the latter wrote quite emphatically, 'I am inclined to see him imprisoned within a destiny in which he himself has little hand' (cited in ibid). Perhaps surprisingly given his sensitivity to the more sensual aspects of history, Braudel even heaped praise upon Nikolai Kondratiev's mechanical schematisation of capitalist development, going so far as to urge the 'correlative' methodology be extended to embrace theoretical thinking about political institutions, sciences, and civilizations

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[6] In Bourdieu's words, 'because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products - thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions - whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production, the conditioned and conditional freedom it provides is as remote from creation of unpredictable novelty as it is from simple mechanical reproduction of the original conditioning' (Bourdieu 1992, 55).

(Braudel 1960, 5). In neither Kondratiev nor Braudel is there a sense of the possibility of varying outcomes as social forms interact, co-determining one another's societies and thus giving rise to new development trajectories. Kondratiev, for instance, emphasised how technological discoveries gave impetus to capitalist development across the *longue durée* and when these benefits were exhausted they gave way to a similarly extended period of stagnation (Kondratiev 1984). Leaving aside the empirical evidence he drew upon, as a theoretical claim this lacks plausibility, due to the simple reason that the extent to which a set of technological discoveries benefits the capital accumulation process is subject to concrete mediation, depending, amongst other things, on the nature of the discoveries. Yet more implausible still is Braudel's argument that a cyclical, correlative methodology of might be extended to studies of evolving forms of human consciousness (Braudel 1960, 5); for there are, surely, no such 'cycles' in the complex evolution of social thought.

Bourdieu takes a position that stands between Braudel and Febvre. He argues there are moments of 'grand historic rupture' that produce tectonic shifts in the plates of social change across a number of generations and are also partially universal insofar as their effects are felt globally (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 67). These take place within the *habitus* as a vision of the social that is an inherently historical product and site of social activity. In the words of Hobsbawm, 'the habitus fills the space between historical structure and human agency, between conscious action and historic determination or, to use the classical Marxian terms, it brings together 'base' and 'superstructure' (Hobsbawm 2007, 3). The great turning points in global history, 1968 – whose significance fascinated Bourdieu -, 1917, 1848, *et al*, can each be categorised in this way as moments of 'grand historic rupture'. Interestingly, Hobsbawm, a *longue durée* scholar *par excellence,* actually criticised this as a theorisation of social change. He argued that all the elements of the *habitus* conspire to reproduce existing modes of life and, in contrast, transformative processes actually take place across a longer span of time (ibid). Hobsbawm cites the enormity of the transformations of the nineteenth century or the still on going technological and social changes introduced in the post-war period as examples of social changes to which actors in the *habitus* largely *adapt to* rather than *actively foster* (ibid). In his historical writing more generally Hobsbawm's vision of the *longue durée* does appear to have inclined him to a degree of fatalism in his understanding of historical transformation. The account he offers of the inter-war years, for example, affords little room for the contingent possibilities in the diverse sites

of social struggle that could have shifted the terrain of political momentum away from the advancing forces of fascism towards more liberatory currents (Hobsbawm 1994: 54 - 85). Hobsbawm's claim that the 'extraordinary and growing acceleration of social change since the middle of the twentieth century is by far the most important historical phenomenon of our times', which 'runs in parallel to the traditional history of events in politics, culture, the arts' (Hobsbawm 2007, 3) is wonderfully suggestive and challenging. But his conclusion that 'historians in the year 3000… will pay far more attention to it than to the wars, massacres and revolutions of that century' (ibid) seems a little farfetched. Bourdieu, after all, is surely right that there are *moments of rupture* of such intensity that they condition the terrain of history decades into the future. Simply to imagine how different what we call the 'post-war years' would have been had the Second World War concluded differently underlines the efficacy of conjunctural developments for historical change. Perhaps even the archaic Tsarist monarchy might have successfully adapted to modernity had more conciliatory tendencies dominated the young workers' movement and been confronted by a more intelligent royal court. It is due to these conjunctural, agent-led processes that a vision of 'social-historical combination' offers a valuable synthesis, one which recognises how political and social actors are historical products of multiple development trajectories in the *longue durée,* but also have a genuine transformative ability to remake their social relations in new and novel ways, forging afresh novel development pathways.

Trotsky, indeed, was a historian of the *longue durée* before the term had even entered the scholarly vocabulary but is, alas, rarely credited for it. Peter Burke's remarks typify this intellectual blind spot in the academic community. He notes how 'the distinction between the short and the long term had of course been common enough in the historian's vocabulary, as in ordinary language' before *The Mediterranean* (Burke 1990, 42). But he insists no less that it remains, 'Braudel's personal achievement to have combined the study of *la longue durée* with that of the complex interaction between the environment, the economy, society, politics, culture and events' (ibid). Replace the word 'Braudel' with 'Trotsky' and Burke could easily be describing the methodology he employed in *The History of the Russian Revolution*. This fact that underlines not only the way Trotsky has for a long time been unjustly shunned in academic circles, but also the extraordinary originality of that work. Published some seventeen years earlier to *The Mediterranean* it wove together long-evolving dimensions of the real life-process to explain the revolutionary climax of 1917 as a

crescendo of maturing contradictions. Indeed, the opening pages are particularly remarkable for the sheer expansiveness of the historical narrative (Trotsky 1967b, 21 – 32). Braudel's notion of the 'organic but contradictory unity between the moment and the span of time' – echoes the manner in which Trotsky discusses the 'peculiarities of Russian development' as a patchwork of diffuse but interactive cultural, geographical, social and economic processes, which had given Russia its specific character and, by the turn of the century, its deep, structural instability (ibid). Although the process he set out to explain was apparently *local* and *conjunctural,* the sociological distinctiveness of the Russian Revolution was seen as a feature of its long-term historical evolution within the international milieu. Russia, said Trotsky, 'stood not only geographically, but also socially and historically, between Europe and Asia' (Trotsky 1967b, 21 – 22). Even the early formation of the Tsarist state was shaped by the Mongol Empire's ('Tartar Yoke') defensive alliance with Russian princes (ibid). This reflected the nation's historical position as a bridgehead between East and West – both metaphorically in its culture and physically in its geography. 'The West was a more threatening foe', but 'also a teacher', and thus Russia continually drew upon techniques borrowed from the West in order to compete with its rivals (Trotsky 1967b, 21 – 22). It was these competitive pressures that led Russia's rulers to attempt rapid industrialisation to survive intensified geopolitical and economic competition, which, in turn, gave rise to a small but highly concentrated working class, whose political radicalisation would ultimately make them one of the principal foes of Tsarism. While we are likely to recoil at some of the more overtly eurocentric formulations Trotsky uses, the methodology itself suggests a critical universalism, one appreciative of *cultural differences* and, equally, of *cultural interactions*. But, crucially, one can see in Trotsky's approach the way in which the concept of 'combination' incorporates *both* the long-maturing historical experiences that concentrate within a polity through its relations with 'the outside' *and* the conjunctural struggles and interactions of actors to remake the future; as the past provides resources – ideologically and culturally as well as materially – upon which future trajectories of social development can be forged.

As this illustrates, Trotsky's notion of combined development and his application of it to Russia provides an alternative way of conceptualising the long and short durations. 'Combination' within and amongst states and actors, can be seen as a site of social struggle, interaction, ingenuity, creativity, and, ultimately, contingency, but also simultaneously and 'dialectically' understood as *non-spontaneous*. Social

actors are conscious and active subjects of history, but they are also 'objects' of it too: i.e. the products of experiences taking place across the *longue durée.* The genealogy of the past continues to impose itself on our socially constructed understanding of the present moment. Conceptualised in these terms, the theory of uneven and combined development not only offers an approach to the social contradictions that arise when diverse communities interact with one another across the terrain of human existence; it also provides a synthesis of conjunctural, agent-led forms of historiography – its focus on the particular, the contingent, the distinctive – with *longue durée* analyses. It therefore equally draws upon the strengths of the latter: a focus on theorising the social structure, tracing the evolution of processes across the longer span of time, and a particular concern, *a la* internal relations approaches *per se*, to integrate diverse cultural, geographical and social determinations into a concrete, historical analysis of social transformations.

2.7 Beyond eurocentrism via social-historical combination

I have now established the broad contours of the conceptual framework: a theoretically informed narrative strategy sensitive to the concrete and differential patterns of social development; an account of agency as bound up with the reproduction and transformation of social structure; and a resulting synergy of *longue durée* and conjunctural forms of historical analysis. I now want to argue that these theoretical foundations can also offer a non-eurocentric approach to historical development. This can be achieved if we conceptualise uneven and combined development backwards through time, allowing us to draw out the causal efficacy of 'the international' terrain (and thus of 'the East') on the historical processes that gave rise to capitalist modernity (J. M. Hobson 2011a; Matin 2012). This 'redeeming' of 'the universal' (Matin 2012) with a framework that treats cultural differences and peculiarities as emergent properties of intersocietal interaction, is particularly important in the Chinese setting. For China stands at the heart of the imagined Western narratives of 'the Orient' and the central conceptual form this took: the notion of 'Asiatic despotism' as a description of the Imperial state (Hegel, Hegel, and Sibree 2010, 161; Jones 1964; Marx and Engels 1968, 13 – 16; Mill 1871, 8; Montesquieu et al. 1989, 283 – 285; Weber 1959).[7] These

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[7] Here, Weber stands apart, for his work grappled with the real history of China's development in relation to the West. But his focus on the Confucian 'mentality' as the principle *explanans* nonetheless echoed eurocentric assumptions, even though he recognised the causal significance of the interaction of this

Western impressions of China appeared to be confirmed by 'the century of humiliation' and the nature of the collapse of Imperial China in 1911, which I discuss in chapter three. The revolution of 1911 had none of the 'typical' features of social revolution, i.e., bitter struggles amongst competing forces culminating in the violent overthrow of the old order. While the revolution of 1949 would have these qualities, in 1911 the Imperial state appeared to be simply exhausted and hollowed out, beset, indeed, by the centrifugal pressures that had been unleashed by its interaction with global capitalism. What better confirmation could there be, then, for the traditional Eurocentric imagery? Did this not confirm that China was indeed a polity marred by developmental sclerosis under an absolutist system with no regard for the virtues of free enterprise, and was this not after all the root cause of its failure to rise to the competitive challenge of the West? No one could deny that the Chinese elite and their system of rule were overwhelmed by the power of colonial capitalism in the nineteenth century, but the notions of 'Asiatic despotism' could not explain the specific historical contours of this collapse and instead subsumed these into a mythical and timeless image of a stagnant, archaic civilisation.

Theorists of Chinese communism stood in a curious relationship to the eurocentrism of classical Western political thought. On the one hand, they super-imposed the Western concept of feudalism onto Imperial China and so denied its state formation and property relations any distinctive qualities as such (Mao 1939; Yan 1955; Zhang). Yet, on the other hand, reflecting the impulses of the anti-traditionalism of the New Culture Movement (Lin 1979), they saw Confucianism as a decaying cultural remnant of the old order. This structure was not only to be dismantled, but those who appeared to be sympathetic to this worldview, or were simply labelled as such, were harshly repressed. Thus, Mao wrote in *On New Democracy* (Mao 1939; Yan 1955; Zhang) that defenders of the old system:

> …Include all those who advocate the worship of Confucius, the study of the Confucian canon, the old ethical code and the old ideas in opposition to the new culture and new ideas (Mao 2003).

CCP ideologues also shared the eurocentric assumption that Confucianism was to blame for China's stagnation, and attempts to break free from this cultural legacy provided a key justification for the carnage of the Cultural Revolution, expressed most explicitly in

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'consciousness' with the polity's political economy. He wrote, 'To be sure, the basic characteristics of the "mentality"… were deeply co-determined by political and economic destinies. Yet, in view of their autonomous laws, one can hardly fail to ascribe to these attitudes effects strongly counteractive to capitalist development' (Weber 1959, 249).

Mao's encouragement of the Red Guards to destroy 'the four olds', 'old customs, old culture, old habits, and old ideas' (cited in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 113). Whereas Western eurocentrism had posited a radical differentiation between East and West, Chinese communism posited *sameness* insofar as they identified an apparent feudalistic essence to social reaction across the modern world, whose suppression was essential to the power of the communist order. But this, in turn, existed in an uncomfortable tension to the nationalistic *melange* of their theory, as they lavished praise on the timeless, heroic qualities of China's people.

Classical European eurocentrism was implicitly based upon the idea that had the West 'arrived' sooner then this would have simply hastened the demise of the Confucian order (Hegel, Hegel, and Sibree 2010, 161; Jones 1964; Marx and Engels 1968, 13 – 16; Mill 1871, 8; Montesquieu et al. 1989, 283 – 285; Weber 1959). This ignores the dramatic, and relatively 'belated', shift in power relations in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was nearly three hundred years after the arrival of Portuguese sea traders in 1514. For most of its life China had thought of itself to be the centre of the world and this was not an entirely imagined sensibility, but reflected the real technical and social achievements of the polity and its political standing in Asia. Many inventions often associated with the development of capitalism in the West, actually found their way to Europe via the Silk Roads and libraries of the Islamic world (Anderson 1974; Hobson 2004; 2011). Viewed in historical retrospective Imperial China was never fully 'isolated' from the West, but had differing periods of intense and retrenched interaction with Eurasia across its long history. Given this achievement a variety of comparative approaches have been concerned to explain the genuine puzzle question of why a *highly developed* social system such as Imperial China was never able to move beyond a predominantly agricultural society and realise industrial capitalist development on the scale of the West (Anderson 1974, 462 – 549; Banaji 2011, 27 – 31; Brenner and Isett 2002; Deutscher 1984; Elvin 1973; Feuerwerker 1980; 1984; Hamilton 1984; Huang 1991; Isaacs 1961, 1 – 34; Moore 1967, 162 – 187; Skocpol 1979, 67 – 80; Weber 1968).

The search for a non-eurocentric account of capitalist modernity is to this day largely predicated upon the criticism Skocpol levelled at the eurocentric research agenda in the late 1970s. She argued there was a pronounced tendency within Western sociological accounts of modernity to assume that European development was at once

endogenous, i.e., eschewing transnational influences and processes from the genesis of capitalism, and *universal*, i.e., irresistibly global in its impact:

> …All conceptions of modernizing processes necessarily take off from the Western experience, because that is where the commercial-industrial and national revolutions originated. However, the theoretical approaches that have been dominant until recently… have generalised too specifically from the apparent logic of English development in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Especially, *modernization has been conceived as a dynamic internal to a nation*… The assumption has typically been that every nation, perhaps stimulated by the example or influence of earlier developing societies, would sooner or later undergo a more or less compressed version of the same kind of fundamental transformation… (emphasis added Skocpol 1979, 19).

Consequently, reflecting her concern to break free of this eurocentrism, Skocpol attempted to move 'from East to West', i.e. draw a comparison with the revolutions in France and Russia in light of the more contemporary Chinese experience, reject the idea that 'received social scientific characterisations' such as feudalism have a universal applicability and look at 'the specific interrelations of class and state structure and the complex interplay over time of domestic and international developments' (Skocpol 1979, xiii). Skocpol's original point, however, arguably remained question begging. She had correctly argued that modernization should not be 'conceived as a dynamic internal to the nation' and noted the danger of assuming a general *stadial* pattern of development inductively inferred from the English experience. But this posed a question around whether English modernization itself needed to be seen as one dimension to a wider set of geopolitical and social processes, and, if so, then the causal efficacy of the Eurasian peoples' interaction across polities could be integrated into an account of capitalism's origins. As I noted initially in this chapter, Skocpol's approach was significant for incorporating geopolitical causality, but by restricting the notion of 'the international' to this alone, it neglected the social processes that diffused across the totality of human development, thereby *ipso facto* excluding the technical and social achievements of the Imperial Chinese polity from any causal role in the origins of capitalism. If such processes can be shown to exist they present problems for comparative accounts of the origins of capitalism *per se*. Even seen in its own terms, comparative analyses of capitalism's genesis suffer from a lack of comparable cases; for if Europe was culturally, institutionally, geographically and geopolitically divergent from China, then it is not possible to 'test' which of these factors was the most important (M. Mann 1986, 1:502). Given industrial capitalism *was indeed* spatially

located first in Europe, then any analysis that focuses on comparison between Europe and the outside world is likely to fall back into implicitly eurocentric claims. Overcoming eurocentrism and developing a richer account of the diverse processes that fostered what we call 'global capitalism', arguably requires a more radical break with the comparative method. Put simply, no culture was 'autonomous' and only subject to domestic causes and so the cases to be compared had a causal impact on one another which undermines the comparison (M. Mann 1986, 1:503). If the development pathway undertaken by Europe was co-determined by its relations to the wider world, then transnational causes, which cannot be subjected to comparative analysis in the narrow sense, have to be integrated into the theory. Skocpol expressed this problem for the comparative method, but a *social* conception of 'the international' was required to resolve it, one that rejected the idea national polities were logically independent and rather saw their development as subject to reciprocal interrelation.

Attempts to move beyond the comparative method narrowly conceived have sought to integrate the transnational dimension by recognising that it plays a constitutive role in the development of the specific qualities of the individual national polity. Philip McMichael proposed a methodology of 'incorporated comparison' in this vein, arguing that researchers needed to 'ground units of analysis in world historical processes' (McMichael 1990, 385). Similar assumptions have also encouraged the turn to uneven and combined development amongst non-eurocentric scholars who see it as providing a theorisation of their own claim that there was 'no pre-interaction' capitalist England, which was not subject to global processes (Hobson 2011; Matin 2012; 2013). Of these two approaches uneven and combined development involves the stronger set of sociological claims encapsulated by the idea such social interaction is a lawful property of social development. Seen in these terms the theory of uneven and combined development anticipates and internalises into the bounds of the conceptual framework, the peculiarity, difference and contingency, normally seen as 'external' addenda 'added in' to the analysis at a purely empirical, non-theoretical level. The explanatory benefits of this conceptualization can be illustrated by reflecting upon the social and historical basis for the rise of Orientalist assumptions in the West during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These ascriptions of Chinese civilisation tended to naturalise differences into timeless ethnic, racial or geographical conditions of divergence rather than the historically specific dimensions of development that had fostered differential patterns. Montesquieu, for instance, contrasted Chinese 'despotism' to Europe's 'spirit

of liberty' that was 'so resistant to subjugation' it had encouraged the formation of a plurality of freely competing states (cited in Anderson 1976: 465). Europe was seen as powerful due to its 'liberty', China as weak due to its 'despotism' and this divergence was explained by their geographies – with China's 'extreme servitude' seen as a feature of its supposedly impoverished landscape (ibid). Eurocentric arguments nearly always tend towards this *essentializing* of development into the timelessly defined qualities of a people. Yet, they also, in their own way, curiously express the ideological consequences of unevenness in human development. Indeed, while Montesquieu was simply wrong about China's impoverished geography, a more social line of enquiry, one sensitive to historical difference, can open up a means of integrating geographical differentiation into an account of sociological divergence. Vast geographical regions stood between China and Europe – to the southwest were the Himalayas, to the north the vast relatively unpopulated terrain of Mongolia and Russia, and on its eastern flank stood the Pacific. These great distances separating Europe from East Asia and their respective geographies *did* shape their experience of social development and crucially served to 'otherize' cultural perceptions of East and West on either side. Orientalist imagery became interwoven into the ideology of the West in the late eighteenth century. Accelerated interchange with the outside world was complemented by genuine social advance, resulting in narratives of racial supremacy in Europe. But even these distorting ideological dispositions illustrated an anterior reality. Namely that social unevenness, i.e. the dispersion of humanity across the globe, gave rise to divergent patterns of development that were expressed in *competing claims to cultural universality*. The rise of Orientalism is therefore a quintessential moment of combined development in its narrative form; a clash of irreconcilable worldviews, emerging from different locales*,* but that now meet in conditions of accelerated social interaction.

2.8 Understanding China: the variety of forms of social-historical combination
Running through this chapter has been a concern for a *social* account of combined development capable of internalising in its conceptual orbit the diverse cultural, ideological, and political processes that foster peculiar pathways of historical development. This more general casting of the methodology, as a *conceptual framework* for *historically specific* investigation of intersocietal processes, naturally has implications for the debate on uneven and combined development. And indeed so too does the case study of China itself, for if causally significant forms of intersocietal

interaction can be shown to exist in the social physiognomy of the Chinese Empire under, for example, the Song dynasty in the tenth to thirteenth centuries, then it will represent a challenge to more narrowly conceived ascriptions of uneven and combined development as a phenomenon rooted exclusively in the international expansion of the capitalist mode of production (Ashman 2006; Ashman 2009; Allinson and Anievas 2009; Callinicos 2009a; Davidson 2006; 2009). Those who have argued that uneven and combined development has this more general quality as a dialectical property of social development (Matin 2007; 2012; Rosenberg 2006; 2007; 2010) could therefore usefully explore China's pre-modern history, particularly given the 'semi-hegemonic' role it played in Asia across the centuries. While my theorisation of uneven and combined development very much falls into the *transhistorical combination* wing of the debate, the temporal range of the case study – China's interaction with the forces of capitalist modernity – is not sufficiently wide enough to throw new light on the specific argument over the existence of 'pre-capitalist' forms of social-historical combination. Nonetheless, the form of China's interaction with capitalist modernity does indeed suggest the need for a broadening out and refining of the theoretical typographies of the concept. For most of its long period of interaction with capitalism, China experienced very little of the 'sudden, intensive industrialization and urbanization' that Davidson takes as the *sine qua non* of combined development, even citing 1920s China as an example (Davidson 2009, 15). Davidson does acknowledge the difference between Russia and China, arguing the latter was 'still more backward' and 'had been had been broken by imperialist pressure but… instead of being colonized' was 'allowed to disintegrate while the agents of foreign capital established areas of industrialization under the protection of… local warlords' (Davidson 2009, 14). Arguably, however, the radical extent of the differentiation between the rapid, successful industrialisation of Tsarist Russia from around the 1880s, and the primitive and sclerotic expansion in China right up until the 1930s (see pp. 106 – 107), puts a great strain on Davidson's desire to narrow the remit of 'combination' to a specific moment of industrial modernisation in underdeveloped societies. The narrowness of the concept risks apportioning 'sameness' in the face of peculiarity, whereas a more general ascription informs a more historical investigation. This echoes our original discussion of Skocpol and underlines how more general concepts can help inform more historical lines of enquiry.

This more theoretically open-ended conception of social-historical combination, discarding exclusive and narrow definitions, can help us to explore the specific contours of historical peculiarity in China. Combined development in China gave rise to hybridity in social and cultural forms, the contours of which would prove hugely consequential to the revolution. To be clear, situating uneven and combined development at a higher level of abstraction in this way does not close off discussion of its distinctive forms that it takes, but simply sees these as part of an overarching, more general conception of the social process *per se*. To refer again to the *locus classicus* articulation of the idea, we can see that for Trotsky too the concept operated at different levels of historical generality and particularisation. Indeed, it is possible to develop a brief taxonomy of different forms the concept took in his original work, which illustrate the way his theoretical categories were flexible enough to deal with concrete complexities.[8] Unevenness operated at three levels. Firstly, there was the unevenness of Eurasian development that produced differentiated but interacting polities and thus Russia 'stood not only geographically, but also socially and historically, between Europe and Asia' (Trotsky 1967b, 22). Secondly, there was the internal social unevenness of a polity; such as, the developmental disequilibrium that Trotsky described in the sway that the country held over the town in feudal Russia (Trotsky 1967b, 25). Thirdly, there were the unique cultural characteristics of a polity; e.g. what he called 'the incompleteness' of Russian feudalism that gave it a peculiar character in relation to Western Europe (Trotsky 1967b, 22). Trotsky operationalized each of these features of uneven development in his analysis; they were seen as co-existing historical moments woven into, indeed 'underpinning', the historical narrative. The dialectical character of the framework lies, however, in the way these dimensions presuppose not only one another but also the kinds of processes that Trotsky referred to under the rubric of 'combined development'. Here too a three-part distinction can be drawn indicating the inclusive nature of the methodology. Firstly, combined development referred to rapid, but differentiating 'catch up'. This involved the non-repetition of stages of technical development achieved by competitor states because their emerging rivals could potentially draw upon existing scientific achievements; 'the privilege of historical backwardness' (Trotsky 1967b, 22). Secondly, there was a combination of events and processes arising from the interaction amongst locales each with their own temporality,

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[8] Thanks to Justin Rosenberg for drawing out the significance of these distinctions in discussion.

i.e., their own cultures, institutions and historical experiences; 'a drawing together of different stages of the journey, a combining of separate steps' (Trotsky 1967b, 23). Thirdly, there was the fusion of cultural and economic forms to create peculiar developmental outcomes; 'an amalgam of archaic with more contemporary forms' (Trotsky 1967b, 23). Lastly, the 'whip of external necessity', the term Trotsky used to discuss the geopolitical compulsion on polities to 'catch up' with the more advanced states in the system, straddles these distinctions between unevenness and combination. For it describes the pressures that exist within a geopolitically divided world with a plurality of state-like entities (unevenness) that are each engaged in acts of competition that co-determine their various pathways of social development (combination).

All of these aspects are emphasised by one or other of the contemporary interpretations, but, arguably, it is only the more general conception that can integrate them into a coherent whole and see them as distinctive parts of a single framework. On this reading, Trotsky clearly implies that combination arises ineluctably out of the fact of unevenness; for the dispersion of polities gives rise to interaction and conflict amongst them. Posed in these terms the issue in the contemporary debate is over how exactly capitalism modifies these processes: i.e., whether combination becomes *'active and causal'* only within the capitalist mode (Allinson and Anievas 2009). Our answer will depend on whether we think 'the whip of external necessity' (Trotsky 1967b, 23) is an exclusive property of capitalism (Allinson and Anievas 2009) or not (Rosenberg 2006). Trotsky argued that capitalism 'prepares and in a certain sense realizes the universality' of human development, but in a manner that simultaneously increases its planless and complex character (Trotsky 1967b, 22 – 23). At first sight, then, this appears to follow closely the argument of Allinson and Anievas, because Trotsky's chosen formula of 'universality' implies the world system only takes on an active and causal relationship to 'domestic' properties of social development with capitalism. But, if this is so, then we are left with the perplexing question of how a social formation of any kind could give rise to *descriptive and latent* forms of interaction without having *active and causal* properties: for the *descriptive qualities* must be conditional on *social causes*. This conception of 'universality' can only be rendered consistent with Trotsky's other articulations of uneven and combined development, therefore, if we see 'capitalist combination' as an *intensification* of the interconnected yet 'planless' properties of development. Capitalist transformation accelerates interaction to such a degree that it universalises awareness of living in interlocking communities within a single world.

This is the 'global village' of sporting competitions, international organisations, transport and communication systems, as well as commodity markets and production networks, which so fascinated globalisation theorists in the 1990s and early 2000s. Nonetheless, novel as much of this is, pre-capitalist systems arguably still harbour forms of inter-polity competition, even though the imperatives to 'catch up' are mediated unconsciously across a longer span of time (Hobson 2011). A corollary of this argument is that Trotsky's claim that theories of the 'repetition of historical stages' emerged in observations of 'pre-capitalistic cultures' and the early capitalist powers (Trotsky 1967b, 22) should not be read as endorsing these approaches, but as contextualising their *one-sidedness*. While they had a partial utility, their limitations, which were always present owing to the fact they ascribed an unmediated universality to multilinear social processes, became particularly distorting once the most universal system human society had ever known, modern capitalism, still exhibited the 'anarchic' characteristics seen in pre-modern social development. In short, capitalism had thoroughly altered global economic life by universalising markets and the imperatives of industrial capital, but this had, paradoxically, intensified the complexity, diversity and sheer anarchy of human social development.

This conception of the idea consequently puts the emphasis firmly on combined development: those criss-crossing development pathways amongst social agencies whose cultural, social, and economic relations intersect to produce change. These processes of interaction make up the singular and differentiated system of 'the international'. To understand a single cog within it one needs to trace the series of interactive processes to which it is subjected across time and space, and which the single cog can, in turn, modify and change. It is the contradictory nature of this inter-relation that gives rise to such diversity in forms of life, state, and economy, which, have ultimately transpired, historically speaking at least, to accelerate *unevenness* in social development. Accordingly, a theoretically informed narrative strategy is required to unpick these complexities of social change. It is this task, of tracing China's contradictory and *crisis-ridden* interaction with capitalist modernity – a process that fostered such a peculiar pattern of social development – to which I shall now turn.

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From late developer to imperialist hegemon: Britain ensnares China in the new realities of global capitalism

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China offers an enchanting picture of what the whole world might become, if the laws of the empire were to become the laws of all nations. Go to Peking! Gaze upon the mightiest of mortals; he is the true and perfect image of heaven
Pierre Poivre

There is no sin to which they are not prone, no crime which is not common among them
Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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3.1 China in the Western imagination and the rise of Britain

Such is the backlash against the eurocentrism perceived, with more than a little justification, to have intellectual origins rooted in the Enlightenment, that the early modern embrace of 'China' in the Western scholarly imagination can all too easily be forgotten. Indeed, it was initially the position of Poivre and not Rousseau (both above) that dominated the scholarly discourse. The 'cult of China' (Clarke 1997, 37 – 53), as it became called, produced fantastic claims that 'now appear a trifle ludicrous' (Cameron 1989, 290), but were nonetheless logical enough seen in the context of the assumptions that imbued post-Renaissance Western philosophy. The great 'schematizers', who believed a rational and moral order could be established through proper philosophical design, were fascinated by a civilization that appeared to practice what they had only preached and in doing so, especially given Imperial China's longevity and cultural sophistication, affirmed their basic righteousness. 'The Chinese have perfected moral science', wrote Voltaire, and their 'missionaries should be sent to us to teach us the aim and practice of natural theology' (cited in Cameron 1989, 290). It is easy to look upon such claims with a certain derision and identify their ignorance of China's real history, institutional life and culture, but this imagery of the Confucian Kingdom within intellectual consciousness grew out of the more direct and conscious encounter between Western Europe and China, which began with the Mongol conquest of Eurasia and accelerated after the landing of Portuguese ships on the East Asian coast. The Western Enlightenment is today so often held in low regard for its notions of ethnic superiority and dangerously 'instrumental' understanding of rationality, but the initially positive reception afforded to Chinese culture and the outlandish claims made for its philosophical achievements, shed light on a too frequently forgotten reality. This was a

time when a social consciousness emerged in Europe seeking a more complete sense of the world – its diverse geographies, cultures and dispersed inhabitants – and whose repertoires of intellectual thought were shifting accordingly. How could this process develop if not through a series of evolving and piecemeal representations? Explorers developed closer representations of territories and peoples far afield, communicated them by the written word and they consequently entered into the collective imagination of actors trying to apprehend the newly revealed world (Withers 2007, 111). The difficulty, of course, is that these new voices reflected not only European scholars' cultural inquisitiveness, but also the global extension of its leading states' power. This dramatic intensification of combined development would lay bare the antagonism between the universal cultural claims of 'the New Europe' and the traditional structures of the ancient Eurasian empires.

Rousseau, Poivre and Voltaire took radically different positions on China and this reflected a genuine intellectual schism in Enlightenment thought. The shift, however, towards Sino-phobia paralleled changes in the global political economy. In this sense, whether positively or negatively conceived, or whether they were straightforwardly false or simply imperfect impressions, the cultural dispositions that offered divergent representations tell us more about the changes underway in Western Europe at the time than the actual physiognomy of Imperial China. It was a troubling reality that more radical critiques of absolutism, such as the one that Rousseau advanced, easily became bound up with discourses of supremacy. Here, then, the darker side of the European Enlightenment reason manifested itself in the creation of the ahistorical essentialisms of race, civilisation, property and 'man'.

Britain more than any other state would contribute to the globalisation of both the positive and negative aspects of capitalist modernity. The industrial revolution gave the British state a commercial primacy in the international market place but this dramatic growth in its competitiveness was juxtaposed in a complex relation to a shift in its public discourse away from the old dichotomy between heathen and Christian and towards racialized notions of 'the other' (Wheeler 2000). Indeed, it is impossible to escape the fact that Britain's global turn to empire took legitimacy from this new, indeed 'modern', idea of a hierarchy of racial species with the *white British man* standing at the top. Perhaps fittingly, then, it was the Scottish scholar David Hume who gave one of the most naked expressions of the new racist worldview. 'I am apt to suspect the negroes', he wrote, 'and in general all the other species of men… to be

naturally inferior to whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures, no arts, no sciences' (cited in Wheeler 2000, 186). The genesis of racism negated the possibility of realising the radical universalism to which the Enlightenment aspired and the discourse connected quite organically to the colonial extension of British power. Nonetheless, it should be observed, of course, that Imperial Chinese assumptions also presupposed the cultural and ethnic superiority of the Confucian state over all other peoples, and, in this sense, the clash between these two polities, which was to prove so fateful to their development, was a conflict between two antagonistic conceptions of the world. Britain was pioneering capitalism built on the jurisprudence of private property rights, the rule of law, and commercial expansion; this economic-institutional structure was territorialized, either by imposing colonial administration, or by encouraging the creation of sovereign states via the subtleties of competitive geopolitical pressures (and thereby resulting in modern diplomacy). Imperial China, in contrast, valued the supposed harmony of the agrarian economy, afforded no sacrosanct right to private ownership in land, industry or commerce, and conceived of international relations simply in terms of the tributary relations connecting China to the other Asian states.

It is this 'clash of fundamentalisms' (Ali 2003) – the crisis-ridden 'combination' of two radically different worldviews and attendant forms of socioeconomic system – that I wish to explore in this chapter. From the outset I situate the analysis firmly in the 'condition of combined social development' on the international stage, thus seeing global relations as an eminent part of China's specificity. I first consider the Chinese tributary class structure in the context of debates on the origins of capitalism, giving particular emphasis to Britain's role as a 'late developer' that drew upon the social achievements of the Confucian system. I then investigate the specific class structure established by the Qing dynasty after its seizure of power in 1644. These new overlords modified the agrarian property system and rendered the command economy structurally dependent on markets and inter-regional trade. The exhaustion of the scope for economic expansion within this system created endogenous tendencies to social crisis in the late Qing polity. In the last section, I look at how these existing patterns of commercialisation within the tributary class structure became interwoven with the rise of British capitalism and its financialization of international trade, making the late-Qing crisis a product of this interchange that incorporated China into the new realities of

global capitalism. My focus in this chapter is thus the transformation of its class structure. I show how a *post-tributary colonial-capitalist economy* was established that transformed the Qing state into a hollowed out shell unable to secure the interests of domestic *capital* within a *capitalist* system. In the following chapter, I trace how these changes structured the terrain on which a national consciousness emerged, and gave it a distinctively anti-colonial colouration.

3.2 Britain as late-developer: technological achievements of Imperial China

In the classical Marxist canon the theory of the so-called 'Asiatic mode of production' was an attempt to understand the class structures of non-European states. It acts as a nomenclature weaving together the scattered observations Marx and Engels made on the nature of pre-capitalist societies in Asia. The most thorough critique of this notion remains one of the two lengthy appendices Perry Anderson included in *Lineages of the Absolutist State*, in which he observed the differential qualities of the class structures in pre-modern Asia, and so rejected the claim that a universal mode of production with common features and dynamics existed across these polities (Anderson 1974, 462 – 549). He also located the concept firmly within the tradition of post-Enlightenment Eurocentrism, showing how Marx and Engels tended to concur with the prevalent but wrong view that these polities were static, unchanging and suffering from a stagnation which made them incapable of forging new development pathways (Anderson 1974, 462 – 477). Two elements stand at the core of this problematic ascription of pre-capitalist Asia. Firstly, Marx and Engels believed, incorrectly, that communal property relations existed on the land with only the despotic state extracting surpluses via taxes on peasant production (Anderson 1974, 473 – 477). Secondly, the accordant absence of a strong aristocracy and their displacement by this stultifying bureaucracy was thought to negate the very possibility of a dynamic and evolving civil society (ibid). The latter rendered these states technologically backward and incapable of generating their own modernity (Anderson 1974, 476 – 477). Despite the strength of Anderson's criticisms, the Asiatic mode is still to this day seen by some as a component of a multilinear conception of history (K. Anderson 2010, 155 – 157). Even if we leave to one side the overtly eurocentric tone of their discussions of Asia ultimately Marx and Engels did not have access to the historical evidence that we now do, which has revealed the relative *dependency* of Western modernity on the technological, scientific and institutional achievements of the Asian polities and the diversity found in their social property

relations. This new evidence challenges not only the *spatial universality* of the Asiatic mode – i.e. the ascription of a singular mode of production to all these polities - but also the *temporal universality*, i.e. the claim that the class structure remained relatively unchanging. For my purposes, this temporal differentiation is particularly important. It narrows the orbit of the study to the specific qualities of the social structure under the Qing dynasty, rather than attempting to find a 'general' ascription of class relations for the lifetime of the Imperial Chinese state. Given my explanatory concerns I need to study how the interaction of the Qing state with international markets and capitalist geopolitics gave birth to a 'combined social formation' that provided the terrain for the conflicts ending in the Chinese Revolution. Before I come onto this, some initial observations on China's technological achievements can help us to dislodge the claim that this was a social structure beset by permanent stagnation.

Imperial China was an advanced and pioneering developer for much of its two thousand year history and when the northwest corner of Europe began the economic and social transformations that Marxists have since termed 'the transition from feudalism to capitalism', they drew upon the technical achievements of Chinese culture. Viewed in the *longue durée* China's technological and social progress had only relatively recently fallen behind Europe. In his original critique of the concept of an Asiatic mode, Perry Anderson listed out these accomplishments one after the other and the impressive number – further augmented by more recent historiography – speaks volumes about the historic productive strength of the Imperial Chinese economy. Metallurgy was generally highly advanced. Techniques for casting iron that the Chinese were using in the fifth century BC would not became widely adopted in Europe until the later Middle Ages and the Chinese also pioneered steel production from the second century BC onwards (Anderson 1974, 522). This provided the material foundation for early forms of intensive agriculture. The move from a largely wooden plough to one made entirely of heavy cast iron took place under the Han dynasty in the second century BC (Anderson 1974, 522). The wheelbarrow was discovered in the third century AD – a millennium prior to its arrival in Europe (ibid). Silk was produced from the earliest origins of its history and porcelain production became highly refined by the fifth century AD (ibid). Technologies we commonly associate with the breakthroughs of Renaissance Europe – the firearm, magnetic compass, and mechanical clock – were invented in China during the eleventh century (Anderson 1974, 529). The early breakthrough in iron production also precipitated other inventions in manufacture (Hobson 2004, 52). By the Song

dynasty Imperial China produced a veritable array of iron products: knives, hatchets, chisels, drill bits, hammers and mallets, ploughshares, spades and shovels, wheelbarrow axles, wheels, horseshoes, cooking pots and pans, kettles, bells, chains for suspension bridges, armoured gates and watchtowers, bridges, printing frames and type, hinges, locks, stoves, lamps, nails, needles, pins, boilers, cymbals and drum fittings (ibid). Indeed, the Song period between the ninth and twelfth centuries is widely recognised as a high point for China's social development (the 'Song Industrial Revolution') establishing many of the pre-requisites for modern capitalism.

Anderson's analysis was far ahead of its time, and strikingly rich for a mere 'appendix', but it was, nevertheless, implicitly rooted in the comparative method insofar as he tended to see modernisation as a race that China had until recently led. Left open, then, was the question of intersocietal causality and, specifically, whether states that successfully fostered capitalist modernisation took advantage of China's earlier accomplishments. In the *Eastern Origins of Western Civilisation* (Hobson 2004) and his more recent intervention into the debates on uneven and combined development (Hobson 2011), John Hobson has argued that early modern England benefited from a 'privilege of backwardness', because it adapted China's innovations, rather than having to endogenously generate these discoveries afresh:

> …Some of these ideas and inventions were brought back directly… (e.g. the iron mouldboard plough and the rotary winnowing machine), while others, such as seed-drills and the horse-drawn hoe, crop-rotation methods, ideas about the steam engine, coal and blast furnaces, iron and steel production methods, various techniques for cotton manufacturing and many others, were often learned from the Chinese manuals that flooded into Europe during the Enlightenment (Hobson 2011, 164 – 165).

In short, this was a textbook example of combined development leading to emulation and 'catch up', resulting in a 'leapfrogging of stages' as Britain established a global economic and political supremacy that far exceeded China's. Hobson is even bold enough to claim that this was not an unconscious process, but, rather, Chinese levels of development were *positively aspired* to by British elites (Hobson 2004, 192). He thus has an interesting take on the 'cult of China', arguing it was a typical example of the intellectual fascination with a leading state often found in polities trying to catch up (Hobson 2004, 195 – 197). The Enlightenment is thus seen as 'essentially schizophrenic', for while its discourses were crucial to the genesis of modern racism,

i.e. the moment when 'race' enters the popular lexicon as a *political* concept, it was influenced by Eastern ideas (Hobson 2004, 194).

I agree with much of Hobson's argument. In particular he is right to highlight the shift in public discourse in the West towards highly racialized narratives between the 1760s and 1780s (ibid). The decline of 'the China cult', justifications for the slave trade and the white colonisation of North America stand at the epicentre of this cultural transformation (Wheeler 2000). The industrial revolution formed the backdrop to this process, providing a material foundation for optimism for the 'white man's future', now 'burdened' with a 'civilizing mission' amongst 'uncultured' global polities. This shift towards *racial* narratives was *novel*, even though it had anterior, genealogical origins in the Catholic justifications for the Spanish conquest of the Americas, the slave trade, which had begun in its transatlantic form some two centuries earlier, and, similarly, with all pre-modern narratives of ethnic supremacy (Hobson 2004, 165 – 168, 197 – 198; Wheeler 2000). There is always, however, a danger that once sociologists challenge a deeply pervasive error they push their corrective argument too far in the other direction, losing sight of the germ of truth which even the eurocentric imagery might contain. And this is the risk of Hobson's tendency to suggest there might be *wholly Eastern* origins to Western capitalist modernity. Or, to put it more justly, his tendency to eschew conceptualisation of the causal interactions across Eurasia as a whole, and, thus, inevitably emphasis only one, non-European, dimension to the story. Certainly, the figure of Confucius is wrongly overlooked as an influence on the Enlightenment, but the fact remains these scholars drew upon a plurality of intellectual traditions from the West as well as the East. But it is Hobson's most important argument and set of empirical insights which are ultimately question begging as a rounded explanation of the origins of capitalism. Once the technological dependency of the Industrial Revolution on Chinese science has been proven, it poses sharply the question of why these technologies were utilised for *capitalist* economic ends in Britain in the second half of the eighteenth century and not in China under the Song dynasty seven centuries earlier. Hobson rightly seeks to recast the questions we ask about this differentiation away from any standpoint that might imply an explanation rooted in timeless cultural qualities (Hobson 2004, 295 – 301). But one arguably needs to weave together the dynamic inter-relation of East and West in their combined development that *together* – neither wholly one side nor the other – gave birth to capitalism. While this question is outside the remit of my study, some observations on it will be necessary

to draw out the role that British capitalism played in establishing the crisis-ridden conditions for Chinese modernity.

Hobson's argument represents a particular challenge to the dominant Marxist conception of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. This is, of course, Robert Brenner's claim that the creation of a class of free labourers whose access to the land was mediated by the market, i.e. who were forced to sell their labour power to landholders, and the corresponding interest these land owners had to raise productivity on the land to generate surplus value, played the decisive role in the transition from feudalism to capitalism in sixteenth century England (Brenner 1977; Brenner 1997). In short, Brenner argued, it was a specific form of social property relations on the land in England and *not* a broader sociological transformation of the global economy that created the conditions for the ascent of capital. Indeed, he was very explicit that he not only posited *a crucial role* for the transformation of property relations in agrarian England, but *the decisive one* (Brenner 1977). He, thus, rejected as 'neo-Smithian Marxism' (ibid) the commercialisation thesis that had highlighted how the unprecedented expansion of maritime trade in the sixteenth century generated vast deposits of wealth for mercantile capitalists (Sweezy 1954; Wallerstein 2011). Brenner's almost openly 'anglocentric' (Heller 2011, 90) account did not therefore apportion causal significance for capitalist transformation to the social processes highlighted by Hobson and others: the role of commerce, trade and technology transfer from East to West. Nonetheless, as a theoretical claim that apportions primacy to one dimension of the social structure – the mode of exploitation on the land – it does expose Hobson's failure to appraise the relative significance of the factors he highlights. For instance, in the *Eastern Origins* Hobson praises the economic development of the Song era for its plethora of productive improvements and technological ingenuity, but these are not then discussed as factors in the post-Song period. Instead different indicators – the continued role of China in world trade, the choice not to engage in empire building, and the strength of its manufacturing – are used to underline Asia's relative strength vis-à-vis the West (Hobson 2004, 61 – 73). This eclecticism badly undermines Hobson's core empirical argument, for it means that he fails to acknowledge a simple historical reality: the dynasties that followed Song rule displayed none of its technological-industrial dynamism in spite of their commercial prosperity and international trading links (Anderson 1974, 534). While Brenner in contrast offers an eminently falsifiable set of theoretical claims, it is not tenable to exclude as insignificant to the emergence of

capitalism such a plethora of historical processes (trade, commerce, colonialism, slavery, mercantilism, revolution, state formation, etc.). In my view, these various dimensions need to be integrated conceptually as interlocking, i.e. 'internally related', aspects of combined social development. In this regard, before we discuss how China's relationship to Britain shifted from the latter's 'privilege of backwardness' (the first application given in chapter 2), to a crisis-ridden geopolitical conflict (the second of the three applications), it is necessary to look in more detail at the class structure of Qing China.

3.3 The tributary system: the class structure of Qing China (1644 – 1911)

The eurocentric notion of the Asiatic mode of production contained one important element of truth; namely, that the state officialdom of the Ottoman and Chinese Empires constituted the ruling class in the social structure. This system of social reproduction, in which a relatively centralised state power exacts tribute from all other social classes, has since been characterised as the tributary mode of production (Anderson 1996, 462 – 550; Berktay 1987; Banaji 2011, 23 – 27; J. Haldon 1991; J. F. Haldon 1993; Gates 1996, 1 – 41). In China, its origins lie in the Tang dynasty, which gave an expanding role to administrators in a bid to secure the territorial cohesion of the polity (Twitchett 1979, 4 – 8). Across this dynasty a caste developed whose influence grew at the expense of the aristocracy and emerged as a new ruling class behind the nominal figurehead of the emperor (Anderson 1974, 524 – 526; Banaji 2011, 27 – 28; Twitchett 1979, 8 – 12). This bureaucracy was nominally egalitarian with entry into it determined by examinations in Confucian thought, but, in reality, the bureaucracy and gentry overlapped, for a career in officialdom required an education that only wealth could secure (Banaji 2011, 30 – 31; Moore 1967, 166 – 170). Taxation of agricultural crops, the discretionary awards of landed property to office holders, and the control of industrial and commercial enterprises with *statist* (i.e. nonmarket) methods, were the principal means for securing their social power, but corruption was pervasive across all aspects of the administration (Anderson 1974, 525 – 526; Elvin 1973, 78 – 80; Gates 1996, 21 – 29; Needham 1956, 337). The claim that the emperor held to the ownership of all land was of a purely 'doctrinal' character (Banaji 2011, 18), and in practice land was *alienable* and legally exchanged (Anderson 1974, 527; Rowe 2002, 485). This distinguished China from the Ottoman tributary mode within which peasants had an inalienable right to work the lands of the Sultan and private land holdings were *formally*

prohibited until the seventeenth century (Nisancioglu 2012). It also contrasts with the inalienable right of nobles to the control of their land, albeit conditional on their provision of military resources to the monarch, which characterised Western European feudalism during the Early Middle Ages (Anderson 1974). China's rulers had no need for such concessions to the gentry as the state raised taxes directly to finance its defence (Elvin 1973, 69). But this difference was not simply one of governance and military order. In pre-capitalist systems, where economic and political power overlap, it involves a divergence in the nature of class rule. In the Chinese tributary mode, primogeniture in property was prohibited, and inheritance was therefore divided equally amongst all sons, making it harder for the gentry to develop aristocratic-style family lineages. Instead it was *scholarly title* that guaranteed large and prosperous landholdings (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 21, 83 – 85, 181). The taxation on land and commerce also gave the gentry-bureaucracy a rentier like relationship to economic activity, siphoning off surpluses at the expanse of landed and merchant interests (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 181; Anderson 1974, 525). It was, of course, the state that coercively upheld this system and, significantly, the Confucian legal code was ambiguous on the status of private property. A merely negative principle – the right to not have one's property stolen – was upheld, rather than an inviolable natural right to hold property (Isett 2006, 78 – 79; see also Anderson 1974, 543). The cultural setting made the latter inconceivable. The Confucian state was the opposite of an impartial arbiter among private interest groups; it claimed the title of moral guardianship, so was culturally obliged to intervene as necessary to correct egregious actions harmful to a stable order (Isett 2006, 79).

In the traditional imagery, the Confucian state is seen as inherently hostile to commercial enterprise, but this mistook the near-absolute philosophical hostility to privately generated wealth with the more pragmatic reality of rulers' interchange with markets. The gentry-bureaucracy created incentives for market activity when it was deemed necessary to increase output and restore a stable equilibrium, but then tended to retrench this activity once private groups were perceived to threaten their power. The Chinese tributary structure thus combined three interlocking elements: a customary economy, in which 'households participated in production and exchange according to convention and institutions (rules, practices, beliefs, and so forth)'; a command economy based on direct taxation and the use of *corvée* labour; and a market economy in handicraft products and surplus grain, cash crops, and foreign and interregional trade

(Myers and Wang 2002, 563 – 564). While some have argued the latter constituted a petty capitalist mode of production, albeit one that was subordinated to the tributary mode (Gates 1996, 29 – 41), these three elements were arguably overlapping dimensions to the social reproduction of the Chinese tributary system. Merchants were only permitted to operate via the system of franchised brokers, whereby the state would provide licenses to allow them to trade (Gates 1996, 27 – 28). If commercial activity was deemed necessary to restore economic output then more licences would be released, but as this unleashed 'destabilising' concentrations of private wealth, the bureaucracy would then curtail the activity, with only 'uncorrupted' merchants permitted to continue (Myers and Wang 2002, 606). Time and again in Chinese history elite discourse had become concerned in this way with the 'threat of disorder' to the 'stable agrarian economy' that commercial expansion posed (Myers and Wang 2002, 606). Cultural attitudes thus overlaid class interests, providing elites with meaningful narratives and socially constructed imageries that solidified the status quo order. This dynamic interrelation between culture and material interests could be seen in how the bureaucratic elite was conscious of the threat pro-market policies posed for their position. The state would restrict industry in order to obstruct the creation of a large class of free labourers separated from the agrarian family unit, which was considered a bedrock of the social order (Myers and Wang 2002, 608 – 609). A cultural commitment to patriarchal forms of reproduction thus consolidated an agrarian economy in which peasants had direct, i.e. non-market, access to the land they cultivated with the agrarian peasant family the basic productive force (Brenner and Isett 2002; Isett 2006). In this way, the officialdom successfully hindered the emergence of competitive capitalist production, because the customary and market economies were subject to bureaucratic rents, confounding property owners' ability to reinvest in production to drive down costs and create relative surplus value.

The Chinese tributary system was not however static and unchanging. It bore witness to the rhythms of social upheaval and change under the exigencies of conflict as much as any other class structure. One needs therefore to locate the specific contours of the Qing state, with whose interaction with Western capitalism we are ultimately concerned. Under the Qing there was actually a substantial commercialisation of property relations on the land, but the specific form this took was such that the majority of peasants retained direct relations to the land, i.e. relations determined by their legal claims to private tenancy and smallholdings rather than via the sale of their labour

power on a market (Brenner and Isett 2002; Isett 2006). Whereas at the end of the sixteenth century a majority of Chinese peasants were legally bound to the land in a form of serfdom or debasement, by the close of the close of the seventeenth century most peasants were formally free with serfdom persisting only on the manorial lands of the conquest elite (Isett 2006, 50 – 51; Rowe 2002, 493 – 497). In Manchuria the cultural concern to sustain a distinctively Manchu ethnic hierarchy coupled with the increased exploitation serfdom made possible, led the Qing to proactively extend manorial lands in contrast to the wider pattern of commoner tenancy (Isett 2006, 50 – 55). Importantly, it was thus *contract* and not *status* that determined the mode of labour recruitment for the ruling gentry-bureaucracy (Rowe 2002, 497). The Qing dynasty appears to have held consistently to the view that, with the exception of its own imperial estates, a landlord-tenant relationship was not equivalent to a master-servant one, and thus tenants could renegotiate their lease or leave the land when its ownership changed hands (Rowe 2002, 501). This commercialisation led to a form of small proprietor agriculture with ruling class incomes derived from taxes and rents (Rowe 2002, 499), but it was one in which direct access to the land meant peasants could in their majority avoid *full dependence* on the market by focusing on subsistence farming that eschewed market inputs and specialisation, and thereby minimised their exposure to price fluctuations (Isett 2006, 178 – 180). By adhering to the principle of private property in land the state was also able to appease local gentry and Han imperial elites by defending their contractual rights to surplus. Consequently, in the core commercialised regions large privately owned estates remained the norm (Rowe 2002, 516).

It is normally assumed amongst Marxists that pre-capitalist forms of surplus extraction have an extra-economic quality, based upon hereditary status, kinship, and so on, rather than the thoroughly economic contractual agreements between labourers and property-owners in the market (Anderson 1974, 403 – 404; Teschke 2003, 53 – 56). In this sense, the peculiarity of Qing China can be seen in the development of a contractual, i.e. economic, mode of exploitation on the land, which was predominantly based upon tenancy and de facto recognised private property rights. It was only the surpluses extracted as tax by the state officialdom, either directly from commoners or as a proportion of the landlords' rents, where an extra-economic form of surplus extraction based on status (of being 'in' or 'outside' the officialdom) reasserted itself. This contractual rather than status-based surplus extraction could therefore be seen as an example of a capitalist mode of exploitation existing within a non-capitalist tributary

economy, of the kind Jairus Banaji has discussed (Banaji 2011, 282). In turn, this also means that British-led capitalist surplus value production could later intersect with existing commercial forms of exploitation that were an organic part of the Qing tributary economy. This peculiar amalgam of economic and extra-economic modes of exploitation grew directly out of Qing China's combined development with the wider world. The Qing (Manchu) elite was *alien* to the Han Chinese majority, having completed their conquest of Ming China in 1644. The Qing state represented an institutionalised amalgam of cultural forms, for the dynastic elite retained their ethnic identity and a degree of distance from the existing Han ruling class. Geopolitical combination in the form of military conflict between sedentary and nomadic peoples thus fed into a combined socio-historical amalgam of cultural traditions in the Confucian state. In the face of widespread rural uprisings in the seventeenth century the partial abolition of serfdom amongst the peasantry helped to consolidate Qing rule. Politically disempowered, the Han Chinese gentry had little choice but to accept the abolition of serfdom on their estates (Isett 2006, 157). Peasants were thus granted direct access to the land but in a 'decidedly non-feudal' form that accelerated its overall marketability (Rowe 2002, 485). Private property was key to this process, because the state was able to appease landowners by upholding their property claims in relation to the rents that tenants owed (Rowe 2002, 516). The Chinese polity had a sufficient tradition of private property ownership – albeit, as discussed, the right not to have property stolen, rather than an inviolable right – to make these moves logical in the context of dynastic transition and peasant uprisings, regardless of the role played by the wider world economy. But Qing China's combined development with the new global trading system is arguably crucial to explaining the *extent* of the commercialisation it witnessed during the eighteenth century.

European maritime trading states confronted an already highly developed polity in Ming and Qing China and this was reflected in their demands for its commercial products. Sea power provided the connecting link between divergent class structures that became incorporated via trade into a global division of labour and with it the possibility of conscious and unconscious emulation. Their distinctive histories and productive capacities thus encouraged their geo-economic combination, which gave added impetus to China's domestic pattern of commercialisation, heightening tensions between different class agencies within the tributary structure. In short, Qing policies favourable to markets interconnected, i.e. 'combined', with the growth of the

international trading system led by European states. Canton trade with Europe grew at an annual rate of 4 per cent per year between 1719 and 1806 and the export trade provided the silver stocks that fuelled commercialisation of the domestic economy (Myers and Wang 2002, 587). The European discovery of the Americas allowed its colonists to plunder vast sums of silver in order to finance their trade deficits with the Asian states and thus 'inserted themselves into a global silver-recycling loop that hinged on China' (Hobson 2011, 162). Silver coins were minted in Spanish-controlled Mexico and between 1700 and 1830 Chinese merchants are thought to have imported some 500 million in exchange for Chinese exports, such as silk, porcelain, tea ceramics, zinc and sugar (Myers and Wang 2002, 587, 627 – 628). The Chinese state minted copper coins and paper notes were also issued by Chinese banks with fluctuating internal exchange rates between the two dominations becoming an important source of instability (ibid). In this context the agrarian economy had to react to the realities of monetisation, particularly once Qing officials started to demand that taxes paid in the form of cash with landlords in turn requiring this of tenants (Rowe 2002, 514). It might be expected that these changes would encourage capitalistic forms of competition with concentrations of wealth reinvested in production to expand production of surplus value. In fact, here 'combination' had a different effect. It gave life and impetus to the commercial elements that formed one component *within* the pre-existing social structure of the Chinese tributary mode of production. As supporters of Brenner's approach to the transition debate have argued this commercialisation alone does not constitute capitalist development, because the structural constraints upon agricultural producers within this system allowed them to avoid full exposure to markets (Brenner and Isett 2002; Isett 2006).

The Qing offered a robust defence of contractual rights to the land in terms of both ownership and tenancy, and, despite it correspondingly undergoing marketization, the subsistence-based nature of peasant life meant they had little surplus to invest in capital to boost output. Instead the peasantry undertook a series of labour-intensive steps to increase output and ensure their subsistence in the context of a strong trend towards population growth (Peterson 2002, 5), which was one factor behind declining farm size (Isett 2006, 168 – 172, 188 – 192). In these circumstances, they diversified their output into cash crops such as cotton, tea and sugar (Rowe 2002, 580); increased labour intensity by working the land harder (Isett 2006, 199 – 201); made efficient use of cotton and labour by turning to proto-industry in yarn and cloth production (Brenner

and Isett 2002, 630; Myers and Wang 2002, 611); and sent family members out to generate additional income as wage-labourers (Isett 2006, 170 – 171). For the great majority of peasants, therefore, landholdings remained small and only ten per cent of agricultural products were exchanged on the market (Isett 2006, 161 – 162, 170). These peasants lacked the capital to improve productivity and employed these methods in order to make the best possible use of the labour and land that they had at their disposal. Even wage labour was an outlet for redundant family labour not used on the farm. As opposed to constituting a class *fully separated* from the land and forced to sell their labour power to a capitalist landlord. Tellingly, peasants that fell into this category of agrarian wage-labourers made up only eight to ten per cent of the population (Isett 2006, 170,172). Large landholders divided up land to let out plots to tenants and very few played a directly 'managerial' role on estates in the manner one would expect of capitalist employers (Isett 2006, 162). In short, the social relations of Qing China retained a decidedly tributary as opposed to capitalist character. This was not due to a shortage of capital to invest, which was abundant in the more prosperous Qing decades. Rather, the question was how it was used, i.e. whether this wealth would be invested into production to create relative surplus value. Obstructing this was ruling class interests and the economic strategies they chose, because *rentier* forms of appropriation were deeply engrained into the cultural assumptions of the Qing state. In landownership it was prudent to accept private property rights that Imperial elites also benefited from. The monopolistic organisation of the private economy was a far greater obstacle to nascent capitalists, not only in terms of material interests it embodied but also in its chosen forms of institutional regulation. Private interest groups did, however, exist that challenged the *rentier* state's monopolisation of economic life. The question, then, is why these did not spiral into a force for social change, one able to push for the deconstruction of the command economy.

Lineage associations – in effect, extended family groupings of elite households, whose connection is traceable on agnate, i.e. male, lines – had been a recurring feature of Imperial Chinese life because they provided an organisational insurance scheme against the institutionally induced threats to elite status: i.e., 'population growth, partible inheritance, an examination system built to reward individual achievement rather than birthright, and, in the seventeenth century, wrenching political change' (Rowe 2002, 531). Private associations of this order were naturally treated suspiciously by dynastic elites as they represented concentrations of social power at least partially

outside the rubric of the state. Many started their life as defence associations against tax payment and, if sufficiently territorially concentrated and with a degree of military strength, they could be successful, for although they could not challenge the power of the Imperial state they negotiated from a position of strength (Gates 1996, 107). These associations also formed themselves into ancestral trusts – in effect an early form of investment vehicle – designed to expand the wealth of its members to satisfy the demands of multiple generations (Rowe 2002, 535). In reclaimed areas such as the Pearl River Delta lineage associations were able to become landlords on a remarkable scale (Rowe 2002, 534). Under the Qing the lineage associations in their merchant form grew considerably wealthy as the state developed a structural dependency on commercial exchange to manage inter-regional trade (Isett 2006, 251 – 253; Rowe 2002, 531). But the Qing did so with cultural reluctance, aware of how the resources that made these associations efficient could be harnessed to hoard goods to manipulate markets (Isett 2006, 254). It has been suggested (Gates 1996, 107 – 112) that lineage associations represented the nascent elements of capitalist economy. But in their investment choices they still tended to focus on land reclamation, irrigation projects, and usury, eschewing direct investment in commercial and industrial sectors, except as loans to association members (Rowe 2002, 537). They confronted the problem that these potentially pioneering sectors were plagued by risks and the Qing state had no corporate law that could provide for some form of limited liability protection for quasi-corporate interests (ibid). This point can, however, be extended further because the risks that private entrepreneurs faced were largely based upon the hostility of the state to capitalistic forms of wealth generation. Permits that allowed merchant and industrial activity could be easily withdrawn if this was deemed to have gone so far as to be destabilising. The rents the elite extracted were also funnelled back into the agrarian economy, as the source of wealth their class position and state authority depended on. The Qing may have been slightly more hospitable to commercialisation than previous regimes, but it stopped well short of encouraging industrial progress. As in commerce, private mining rights required the requisite permit and these were only granted in areas that suffered from rural unemployment, in order to avoid creating a class of landless labourers which destabilised the patriarchal family unit at the core of production (Myers and Wang 2002, 607). Cultural hostility was rooted in the form of surplus extraction that underpinned the existence of the bureaucracy as a class, i.e. its fusion of economic and political power that in turn allowed it to extract tribute by extra-economic means from

all social classes. The Qing did employ *economic*, i.e. contractual, forms of exploitation on the land, but it still obstructed capitalist development through its rentier surplus extraction from nascent private capitalists.

This analysis suggests one needs to account for the failure of Qing commercialisation to generate capitalist patterns of economic development firmly within the class dimensions of state power. 'The modes of production of any pre-capitalist social formation', wrote Perry Anderson in a dictum more than a little pertinent in this regard, 'are always specified by the politico-juridical apparatus of class rule which enforces the extra-economic coercion peculiar to it' (Anderson 1974, 543, see also 404). As a result of commercialisation, the Qing state developed a quasi-economic form of surplus extraction rooted in private property claims, but it was combined in a double-relationship of exploitation with the *rentier* forms that were the *sine qua non* of the tributary mode of production. The failure of Qing modernisation in the nineteenth century, which we will come onto, reflects the cohabitation of social forces within the state that were committed to a specific, archaic form of surplus appropriation. In this context, the smaller merchant interests in the Canton system, as opposed to the larger combines that dominated interregional trade, suffered from *rentier* practices, leaving them open to their incorporation via credit into the British-dominated system of international trade. Brenner and Isett are right to emphasise the role played by agrarian social property relations in obstructing the development of a properly free market in land and labour, i.e. an agrarian capitalism (Brenner and Isett 2002; Isett 2006). But *contra* the *Political* Marxist school (Teschke 2003; Wood 1981; 2002) who share this social-property approach, it might be argued that their account is *insufficiently* political, i.e. insufficiently rooted in the political-juridical apparatus of the Qing state and the class interests it enforced. Recall, after all, the *origins* of the tenant-based social-property relations that dominated the Qing countryside. It was the Manchu state – a product par excellence of combined geopolitical development in the form of war and conquest – that introduced this peculiar system by way of raw military power and without the consent of Han Chinese landlords. It was this political choice, in effect a class compromise that drew sharp ethnic demarcations between Manchu and Han manorial estates, which institutionalised a small-holder agrarian economy. The Qing state was, thus, an exemplary example of combined development. The invading Manchu army introduced this novel system of social property relations on the bulk of the land, but at the same time underwent a process of Sinification into the structural and cultural

assumptions of the Imperial state. In other words, they were 'naturalised' into the system of tributary class rule. The elite Manchu caste benefited from this system's rentier form of surplus extraction, which was by its very nature ultimately hostile to the buccaneering ethos of free market capitalism.

This institutional-ideological foundation of a coercive state apparatus for tributary class rule is perfectly described in passing by Isett even though it is 'external' to his theoretical claims:

> Yet, despite the [Qing] state's greater reliance upon merchants to circulate grain, this did not signal the precipitation of a Chinese "Liberalism"… Classical liberalism is committed to the notion that the self-interest of the individual is congruent with that of the broader society; it relegates the role of the state to that of legal guarantor of the social relations that therefore enables the pursuit of self-interest. Thus, the liberal social order comes into being through the seemingly anarchic actions of individuals who in pursuing their private economic interest nonetheless produce a self-regulating civil society. No such ideological claims or vision can be attributed to officials of the Qing state; the Qing sovereign and his bureaucratic staff had a very different world vision. Their function, as they saw it, was to *create* a social and political order in which human behaviour would come to mirror principles of moral conduct that were idealized but *not yet realized* (Isett 2006, 253, emphasis in original).

These cultural features were bound up with the social reproduction of the tributary class system and in practice its rulers were pragmatic in relation to private interests, but they curtailed them sufficiently to ensure that economic life was never 'privatised'. It is quite a contrast to the capitalist state, which *coercively upholds* the *privatisation* of the economic sphere into a *depoliticised* civil society. In the liberal imagination this civil society is made up of rational, self-interested individuals, whose pursuit of their own interests is mutually favourable to all. In reality, the social power of capital is veiled and naturalised by this supposedly 'de-political' nature, with politics as such therefore structured around the acceptance of capitalist class power. Posed in these terms, then, it underscores the extent of the radical transformation in class power needed to put capitalist development on a proper institutional footing in late Imperial China. It is little wonder, given the remarkable longevity the Confucian state traced for itself into time immemorial, that social actors who had an interest in the privatisation of economic life, free from the tutelage of tributary relations, struggled to even comprehend an alternative form of rule. The cultural production of these mental-conceptions was clearly bound-up with the reproduction of the tributary form of class power. As Anderson observed, the timeless and doctrinaire nature of Confucian teaching, which lacked any kind of notion

of falsification, made the polity less able to generate the kind of 'determinate paradigms whose disproof could have led to theoretical upheavals within them' important to Western modernity (Anderson 1974, 543). Similarly, the conditional nature of Confucian rule under 'the mandate of heaven', with only rulers that guaranteed order and stability considered legitimate, also made possible the process of dynastic transition as an outcome to war and revolution, which still left the institutionalised class structure intact (Myers and Wang 2002, 606). This politically constituted form of class power explains both the longevity of the Confucian order and the way in which conflicts that could have resulted in the triumph of private capitalists tended to be resolved in favour of the existing hierarchies of bureaucratic rule. It was only when a new set of invaders, this time of British provenance, brought with them a fundamentally transformative mode of social reproduction, that China's domestic class structure was uprooted and transformed, compelled to integrate into the unequal relations of bondage of the new global capitalist economy.

At this point the narrative has already excavated several properties of the uneven and combined development of China's social relations with the modern world. We have shown:

- Its developmental strength, which, in turn, resulted in Britain's related 'privilege of backwardness' as it drew upon the social and technical achievements of China.

- The combined integration of the polity into an international system of maritime trade from the late sixteenth century, putting it at the centre of a silver-recycling loop linking the New World colonies with China as the most highly developed state globally.

- The conquest and Sinification of the Manchu nomads into the tributary system of class rule, resulting in an amalgam of cultural forms and their imposing, as a result of a class compromise, predominantly tenant-based property relations in agriculture.

- The global patterns of unevenness that allowed competing claims to universal forms of social organisation to become juxtaposed in the global order. Insofar as in China this was codified into the institutional assumptions of the Confucian state as an apparatus of class rule, it is crucial in explaining the 'non-genesis' of capitalism. The coming conflict with Britain was thus a 'clash of fundamentalisms' with radically differentiated conceptions of international politics and institutionalised class relations.

The next turn in the argument will analyse the crises that engulfed China in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, arguing that it was not a mere question of 'external imposition' of a new order. Conversely, a domestic crisis of Qing rule interconnected with its colonial ensnarement. This represented an intensified combination of global events and processes that, intersecting with its domestic economic decline, transformed its class structure and dislodged the state as an effective form of rule as the social power of statist-bureaucratic interests it upheld withered.

3.4 The late Qing crisis as a product of combined social development

In the Chinese tributary mode of production economic crises were *manifested* as crises of overpopulation. Economic growth was principally provided by land reclamation, the large-scale irrigation projects this involved, and population growth, which increased the labour inputs available for the expansion of the productive forces. Consequently, in the absence of productivity increases this economic structure was prone to result in what Kenneth Pomeranz has termed the 'proto-industrial cul-de-sac', which he argues afflicted the entire Old World prior to the emergence of Western industrial capitalism between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries:[9]

> … The most "fully populated" (i.e. densely populated relative to the carrying capacity of the land using available technologies) and economically developed parts of the Old World all seem to have been headed for a common "proto-industrial" cul-de-sac, in which even with steadily increasing labour inputs, the spread of the best known productive practices, and growing commercialization making possible an ever-more efficient division of labour, production was barely staying ahead of population growth (Pomeranz 2000, 206 – 207).

In this economic context, social crises in Imperial China were *experienced* as a Malthusian crisis of overpopulation because 'the production of food, fibre, fuel, and building supplies all competed for increasingly scarce land' (Pomeranz 2000, 207). These problems were aggravated further in late Qing China by the commercialisation it had undergone which, by developing a *more integrated* division of labour, had intensified its *internal developmental unevenness.* In the core of the Empire the limits of economic expansion via population growth and labour intensity had set in, resulting in rising prices for grain and soy beans (Isett 2006, 235). With these price increases absorbing a greater proportion of peasant incomes, the consequence was declining prices in cotton and related cash crops, which benefited regions like Manchuria that

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[9] Pomeranz defines 'Old World' in non-Eurocentric terms as the developed states of Eurasia, i.e. China, India, the Ottoman Empire, and the European polities, in contrast to the New World of the Americas.

predominantly produced grain, allowing them to run export surpluses (ibid). However, even in Manchuria productivity was falling with population growth so these price increases only achieved an on-going stagnation in peasant incomes (ibid). This distinction between a core and periphery of the Empire, which was organised into a division of labour via the growth in inter-regional trade, was a product of the colonial expansion of the Qing. They had conquered large swathes of Mongolia in the north, Taiwan in the East, and Xinjiang and Tibet in the West, as well as consolidated Manchuria as a Chinese region, which, taken together, meant that the empire had doubled in size compared to the Ming epoch (Peterson 2002, 7). One can see, then, how this combined development of a broader swathe of territory and peoples elicited an uneven differentiation, with regional specialisation in output and the concentration of wealth and power in the core commercial zones of the empire. Cities and towns were centres of social power and rapid urbanization occurred in tandem with the early Qing period of prosperity, augmenting socio-economic unevenness. The Qing dynasty presided over some 30 cities with populations in excess of 100,000 people, meaning its largest cities tended to dwarf equivalents in eighteenth century Western Europe (Ekstein 1977, 12; Vries 1984, 262). The commodification of landed property, the decline in *corvée* labour with the partial abolition of serfdom, and the expansion of non-rural commercial opportunities, led to a growth in absentee landlordism as the wealthy flocked to these metropoles (Rowe 2002, 497). This separation of the elite from rural communities increased the scope for peasant rebellion, as grievances with the gentry were magnified by their absence from local areas. In addition, the predominantly rural nature of the economy, low productivity, and land scarcity, meant that urbanization inevitably entailed a deepening in the exploitation of the peasantry, because, without developing industrial forms of capital accumulation, urban life was largely sustained by the redistribution of agricultural surpluses.

In short, the 'combined' social formation of the Qing polity was an increasingly complex whole with economically, culturally and politically diverse locales and agents. Economic decline represented a considerable challenge to Qing rulers and the empire was rocked by social crises in the second half of the eighteenth century. With the pressures of social change taking their toll, Qing 'subjects routinely engaged in processes of aggressive mutual struggle over issues of food, land, water rights, market access, rents, wages, women, gravesites, status, and countless other scarce resources' (Rowe 2002, 555). For the Qing, one of the most important signs of decay afflicted the

structure of patriarchy considered so important to stability. Land scarcity and population pressure led to a growth in female infanticide as families prioritised male offspring as heirs. Once coupled with the polygamy of the elite this resulted in growing numbers of men struggling to marry (S. Mann 2002, 449 – 451, 454 – 455; Rowe 2002, 477). This amalgam of social tensions created work for the legal system of the Qing state, as its Ministry of Punishments had to deal with a growth in interpersonal, property-related violence (Rowe 2002, 555 – 556). The roots of the crisis in Qing economic decline, however, also fermented collective social action – from food riots, to rent strikes by peasants and labour unrest in the commercial enterprises (Rowe 2002, 556). These exposed the potentially antagonistic interrelation between different kinship, local and ethnic identities (ibid). Indeed, the propensity for association building in the earlier Qing period was bound up with an increased sense of cultural plurality encapsulated by the rise of heterodox religious sects (Rowe 2002, 550 – 555). These socially constructed mental-conceptions promising salvation interconnected in complex ways with patterns of commercialism. Merchant diasporas, for example, promoted the expansion of plague god cults with week-long processions thanking the all mighty from saving the city from epidemics (Rowe 2002, 552). This could lead to spectacular outpouring of sacrifice when epidemics did strike (ibid). But the most important of these changes was the formation of the White Lotus societies, messianic religious associations that popularised a heretical version of Buddhism, predicting the imminent coming of Buddha Maitreya. They launched a rebellion in the 1790s in anticipation of celestial intervention, but, of course, it was, in reality, driven by social and economic decay (H.-F. Hung 2011, 128 – 134). Indeed, White Lotus religious heterodoxy was only partly characterised by millenarianism, for their cultural identities transcended customary local bounds and undermined patriarchal hierarchies, with a prominent place for women as doctrinal transmitters and even deities, giving them a heretical zeal vis-à-vis the conformities of Confucianism (Rowe 2002, 554). This gave the uprising a certain anti-establishment character, allowing it to connect organically with anti-Manchu consciousness.

These centrifugal pressures in the domestic sphere thus reflected the commercialisation and territorial expansion of the Manchu era, whose origins lay in the geopolitical conflicts with northern nomads that Ming China had been mired in, and the integration of the Qing polity into the silver-recycling loop connecting China to the states of Europe and the Americas. The late eighteenth century crisis of Qing rule therefore arose through an intersection of local, national and international processes.

Prior to the rapid accent of Britain as a colonial and economic power, Qing China was already experiencing considerable domestic social instability. One can legitimately ponder the counter-factual possibility that had this crisis not intersected in its temporal sequencing with the industrial revolution in North Western Europe, the decline of the Spanish Empire, and the attendant triumph of British geopolitical power, China's fate may have been quite different. But, while, as I have discussed, the actors existed domestically that might have pushed for the institutional changes necessary to privatise economic life and free private capital from the state command economy, nonetheless, the strength of the socially constructed mental conceptions of Confucian culture amongst elite classes, coupled with their integration into tributary mechanisms of privilege, suggests significant further social struggles and transformations would have been needed to push China in this direction.

In historical reality, China's domestic crises *did* occur in consonance with the rapid rise of British power. The latter benefited from a privilege of backwardness in the form of technological transfer and trading links. In this regard, Hobson is quite right to argue that European and Chinese development from c. 800 AD was never 'even and separate' and thus there was no 'pre-combination' industrial Britain, whose development can be properly conceptualised as separate and apart from its relations to the East (Hobson 2011, 165). But he renders his own argument deeply one-sided by his persistent use of misleading empirical comparisons. Hobson argues, for example, that in 1750 the Chinese 'share of world manufacturing output was over 1600 per cent that of Britain's, while by 1800 the ratio was as much as 670 per cent in favour of China, and 215 per cent in 1830. Only as late as 1860 did the British share finally equal that of China's' (Hobson 2011, 163). Hobson sees this as correcting the widely held view of China as weak and passive, but even seen in his own terms these facts highlight the staggering competitive collapse of the Chinese economy – something that he barely acknowledges. Moreover there is no recognition of the dramatically altered socio-economic foundation on which Britain's rapid industrial rise was based. Whereas China remained mired in the 'proto-industrial cul-de-sac' (Pomeranz 2000, 206 – 207) of the agrarian-based tributary economy, Britain by the late eighteenth century had undergone the Industrial Revolution, sociologically rooted not only in its absorption of Chinese technologies but the novel social relations of the capitalist mode of production. The need for new global markets generated a corresponding expansion in the scope and range of its geopolitical interests beyond European shores: in India, North America,

amongst the new Southern American states emerging out of Spain's imperial disintegration, and the Chinese-dominated polities of East Asia. This precipitated a financial revolution in trade that made possible Britain's systematic extraction of surpluses from the global economy, allowing it to realise the profits of Chinese tea exports by as early as the late eighteenth century – an economic dynamic of their combined development that is simply absent from Hobson's comparative analysis. The genesis of the late Qing crisis thus began as the exhaustion of the economic structure established by the Manchu after 1644, but in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries its contours shifted with the imposition of unequal trade relations favourable to the new British hegemon. Ultimately, this would foster social forces that uprooted the institutions of tributary class rule. Counter-factual arguments – the possibilities we might perceive had Britain not imposed itself on China – can now be left to one side as we explore the eminently concrete process of combined development that saw a tributary economy ensnared by capital.

3.5 Combined development as semi-colonial ensnarement: the rise of British imperialism

The British East India Company had been trading in China since the first half of the seventeenth century, following in the wake of its modern day 'opening' by Portuguese merchants. Across this period it was widely accepted that 'the westerner desired the goods of the East and was able to offer little merchandise in return' (Greenberg 1979, 1). The European pillaging of Latin American silver was therefore key to making trade economically viable in the absence of British or European goods that were able to carve out a market in the domestic Chinese economy. The reigns of William III, Anne and George I had all passed protective acts against the importation of Chinese textiles in order to shelter fledgling British industry, implicitly recognising China's competitive advantage, and as late as the 1830s British traders heaped praise on the superiority of Chinese textile products vis-à-vis Britain's cotton exports (Greenberg 1979, 1). Indeed, the sudden shift in the imagined conceptions of China from the 'cult of emulation' to racialized notions of Oriental inferiority correlated closely with changing power relations in the global economic system. These discursive shifts were rooted in a new intersocietal context that saw a transformation between two distinctive forms of combined development. The (i) *catch-up* of Britain with China (itself predicated on their asynchronous but interactive economic development) was transcended as a result

of its hegemonic rise, thus giving rise to (ii) *intensifying social interaction* that effectively subjected the tributary economy to the disciplining logics of global capitalism on decidedly unequal terms. In turn, this fostered the further typography of 'combination': a (iii) *sociological amalgam* based on a capitalist logic of power within the shell of the tributary structure (i.e. the third of the three forms of combined development I discussed in chapter 2).

Such was the importance of Sino-British trade that to claim these transformations emerged from a struggle over the relations of domination involved in the production and distribution of two key global commodities, opium and tea, is to only slightly exaggerate the point. China enjoyed a near-total monopoly on global tea production until the second half of the eighteenth century (Gardella 1994, 124 – 125) and between 1719 and 1833 tea is estimated to have comprised between 70 to 90 per cent of all Canton exports (Gardella 1994, 34). In the seventeenth century, the East Indian Company was impelled to focus on tea imports given the protections afforded to British manufacturers in the textile industry and the lack of markets for British goods in China (Greenberg 1979, 3). Opium imports from British Bengal would prove critical in allowing the East India Company to balance its books and thereby avoid a spiralling trade deficit with Imperial China. Britain established a colonial trade triangle in which its political domination of India, which ran a trade deficit to China, proved crucial in offsetting the trade deficit that Britain's new found thirst for tea was creating with the Chinese (see tables 1 and 2). Seen in these terms, one can at least contextualise Hobson's position as these facts underscore China's domination of tea production. As well as colonising India, however, Britain also used financial innovation to profit from Chinese tea production. Indeed, it was not, Chinese officials or merchants, let alone peasants, who primarily realised the benefits of China's tea monopoly *but the British;* in the last ten years of the East Indian Company's monopoly of the trade (i.e. up to 1834) tea brought £3.3 million into the British treasury, a stunning tenth of its *total revenue,* and accounted for the entire profits of the Company (Greenberg 1979, 3). The question, then, is how Chinese producers, merchants, and officials, were *denied* these extraordinary revenues that tea brought to Britain. The answer lies in how the commercialisation of the Qing-era tributary system intersected with the geopolitical and economic qualities of British expansion.

Table 1: India's balance of trade with Britain 1828–29 to 1839–40 (Rupees '000,000)

Year	Merchandise	Bullion	Balance
1828–29	18.9	3.1	22.0
1829–30	30.2	8.1	38.3
1830–31	11.4	5.3	16.7
1831–32	5.6	16.9	22.5
1832–33	14.0	11.6	25.6
1833–34	12.5	4.7	17.2
1834–35	13.9	0.5	14.4
1835–36	21.2	0.1	21.3
1836–37	23.9	0.0	23.9
1837–38	15.1	0.5	15.6
1838–39	15.7	–0.3	15.4
1839–40	25.4	–4.4	21.0

Source: K.N. Chaudhuri, 'India's foreign trade with the cessation of the East India Company's trading activities, 1828–1840', *Economic History Review,* 2nd Series, vol. XIX, 1966, pp. 358 – 359

Table 2: India's balance of trade with China 1828-29 to 1839-40 (Rupees '000,000)

Year	Merchandise	Bullion	Balance
1828–29	21.0	–10.8	10.2
1829–30	22.1	–13.7	8.4
1830–31	21.2	–9.6	11.6
1831–32	33.8	–5.6	28.2
1832–33	29.0	–5.9	23.1
1833–34	42.0	–13.1	28.9
1834–35	31.4	–12.1	19.3
1835–36	50.4	–13.9	36.5
1836–37	61.9	–12.3	49.6
1837–38	40.6	–17.4	23.2
1838–39	40.7	–21.3	19.4
1839–40	10.1	–4.0	6.1

Source: K.N. Chaudhuri, 'India's foreign trade with the cessation of the East India Company's trading activities, 1828–1840', *Economic History Review,* 2nd Series, vol. XIX, 1966, pp. 358 – 359

China's rulers were hostile to capitalist logics of power, but its economy still exhibited capitalistic tendencies that were favourable to incorporation into international systems of credit and finance (see Banaji 2011). These basic contradictions were concentrated in the Canton system of trade, as its creation was an example *par excellence* of the *rentier* assumptions of the Qing officialdom. Yet by impoverishing merchant classes it helped foster a financial dependency on British capital, thus encouraging the formation of a domestic agency for colonial interests. This trading system was established by the decision in 1757 to confine foreign trade with Western

merchants to the port of Canton. The rationale, to allow efficient administrative oversight and taxation of the trade and keep a close watching eye on foreign merchants resident in China, was a natural development of tributary power (Pichon 2006, 10). But, as we have seen, the tributary mode of production also created antagonisms between domestic merchants and bureaucratic interests. In the Canton system the former were the Hong, Chinese merchants who provided the point of connection between producers and foreign exporters. The latter were represented by the office of the Hoppo (Hubu), the revenue commissioner, responsible for taxes, duties, and the granting of merchant licenses, which allowed for the extortion of large sums from the Hong (Cheong 1978, 15 – 17). 'The path to the security of official recognition was', thus, as Cheong put it, 'for many also that of chronic indebtedness, for some, to bankruptcy' (Cheong 1978, 18). Even the coHong (Gonghang), an association formally designed to secure the interests of Chinese merchants through price regulation, became an instrument for the predatory practices of the administration, which 'added little' to the Hong's 'commercial capacity but committed them to official policy' (Cheong 1978, 17).

It was this reality of tributary class rule that provided the opening for the power of foreign capital on the Chinese market (Isaacs 1961, 6). As early as 1770 the Hong became 'financial wards of the East India Company, dependent on it for cash advances to secure their annual tea consignments' (Gardella 1994, 35). Foreign bribery secured the dissolution of the coHong (Gonghang) in 1771 and by 1777 only four of the eleven Hong merchants were solvent, with British private traders having extended them credit on the egregious terms of 20 per cent per annum (Greenberg 1979, 21). The resultant intervention of the Crown to secure the contractual property claims of British traders foreshadowed the gunboat diplomacy that would lead to the two Opium Wars (1839 – 1842; 1856 – 1860). Revealed time and again in these conflicts was the divergence in class interests that these states each defended: the Chinese state was concerned to constrict free accumulation in the name of social order, the British were committed to use military power to defend the liberty of their subjects' commercial activity; i.e., in other words, the British state was prepared to use *public force* to coercively defend a *private sphere* of globalised capital accumulation.

The shifting role of the East Indian Company itself reflected this transition towards a liberal conception of the relationship between state and society. It was of course a monopoly whose activity was sanctioned by the British Crown and, indeed, its *formal* organisational structure shared some of the cartel-like features of the coHong

(Gonghang). However, from the early eighteenth century it allowed the supercargos – the agents who managed the affairs of the Company in China and India – to engage in private trade on their own account, and a similar perk was also afforded to commanders and officers (Greenberg 1979, 18 – 19). This allowed them to accumulate capital that they then wished to reinvest in the trade. Indian Agency Houses formed in the 1780s were, as a result, effectively asset management trusts that reinvested officers' deposits to generate greater returns (Pichon 2006, 5 – 6). British colonial annexation also provided avenues for officers to get considerably rich. The right of revenue collection in India known as *diwani* and the obtaining of a sinecure over farmland provided avenues for rapid wealth generation (Pichon 2006, 5). Significantly, these *rentier* practices, which would not be out of place within the Chinese tributary structure, fed into the private accumulation of capital for these British colonists. It is also the case that the British locked onto *existing patterns* of commercialisation within China and India, but these now became integrated into a global system of capital production and circulation. In this context, the East India Company represented a transitional form. Agency Houses undermined the Company's monopoly and posited a reorganisation of the colonial state that removed it from the economy and coercively upheld individual rights to private capital accumulation. The India acts in parliament (e.g. in 1773, 1784, 1833, and 1858) reflected the playing out of this tension between the capitalist dynamic of accumulation and the anachronistic political form (fusing economic and political interests) that had provided the original catalyst for it. If the process being described here is the emergence of a fully capitalist world economy, then it suggests diverse forms of production and institutional innovation helped in its consolidation.

The diverse mechanisms that were utilised to integrate the Chinese and Indian economies into this new economic order exemplify the way in which different development trajectories became subject to a process of mutual conditioning on the international terrain. World-systems theorists tend to identify how the Chinese and Indian polities were incorporated into international systems of trade, with its capitalist dynamic, and conclude that this offers prima facie grounds to ascribe a capitalist character to the overall process. Consequently, they eschew historical analysis of the divisions of labour in discrete polities that became incorporated into a generalised system of commodity production based on the exploitative extraction of unpaid labour as surplus value (Banaji 2011, 325 – 326, 332). In contrast, treating these trajectories as outcomes of combined development can help us to ascertain the variety of mechanisms

in discrete polities, whose mutual interchange led to the emergence of a distinctively capitalist economic order. To be clear, there *was* a world system whose economic relations were causally significant to capitalist development (Heller 2011, 215 – 242). British capitalist expansion was built upon the development of agrarian and industrial capitalism at home and its control of the Atlantic slave trade and the Asian trading system abroad. Its sovereignty over India was critical to offsetting its trade deficit with China. The Company had a monopoly on opium production in Bengal, which private traders illicitly shipped to China (defying the Imperial ban of 1799) and this led to a drain of silver out of the Chinese economy, which, in turn, deepened Chinese traders dependency on British finance (Cheong 1978, 5 – 21; Greenberg 1979, 1 – 40; Pichon 2006, 1 – 20; Wong 2002, 412). Between 1828 and 1838 India's trade surplus with China almost doubled (see table 2) thanks to its rapidly growing market in opium consumption and from 1817 to 1833 British private traders were running an average surplus of £2 million per year having established a series of Agency Houses in Canton that were modelled on already established operations in India (Pichon 2006, 13 – 14). Private traders put their capital back into Company bills of exchange, which the latter used to finance tea exports and the costs of India governance (Cheong 1978, 29 – 31; Greenberg 1979, 25 – 26). India was a net exporter of bullion to Britain as repayment of credit and interest on loans, even though it ran a net trade surplus (i.e. with all its trading partners) into the mid eighteenth century. Financialization, i.e. the use of credit to create dependency, added a 'subtlety' to this process, but ultimately these British-dominated trading relations systematically siphoned capital abroad. China was reduced, in effect, to a semi-colonial client economy of Britain.

The nineteenth century growth in world trade led to further financial innovation. The bullion shipment system came to an end partly out of the Canton liquidity crisis (1811 to 1815), which underlined the need for private bills of exchange as an alternative to the use of Company-backed paper money underpinned by occasional bullion shipment (Cheong 1978, 5 – 21). Its end was partly also determined by the geopolitical conditions created by the Mexican War of Independence and Napoleonic Wars. These conflicts bankrupted mainland Europe, resulting in the financial hegemony of the City of London, which was naturally grounded in Britain's colonial interests and the growing power of its domestic industry (McMichael 1985; McMichael 2004, 1 – 34). British policy in the nineteenth century was committed to expanding global markets for its industrial products through a combination of force and consent. Capitalist expansion

was thus intimately bound up with its colonial policies of annexation, and semi-colonial trade and financial practices that advantaged British producers at the expense of the periphery. The overall dynamic of the accumulation process was rooted in a liberal conception of jurisprudence that promoted the privatisation of economic life. British capital was thus 'free' to exploit resources found at its disposal in this international order 'opened' by its military and geopolitical mechanisms of raw power. Contrary to Political Marxism (Brenner 1977; 1997; Harman and Brenner; Wood 2002), then, the growth in wage labour – and the attendant role of relative surplus value production, in contrast to that played by absolute surplus value – was but one moment in a dynamic circuit of capital production and realisation, which included pre-modern modes of exploitation (Heller 2011). In this sense, the diversity of the Indian and Chinese cases illustrated the inherent pragmatism of capital as its moves through this circuit of accumulation. Modes of exploitation more commonly associated with pre-modern forms of surplus extraction were readily utilised. This should not, however, lead to a simple acceptance of the arguments of world systems theorists (Wallerstein 2011; Wallerstein 2011), i.e. that integration into the world market *ipso facto* renders a pre-modern economy capitalist (Banaji 2011, 325 – 326, 332). In both China and India, British capitalist expansion integrated itself into existing patterns of capitalis*tic* commercial activity. Indeed, as I have argued in relation to China, it is conceivable that these domestic processes could have resulted in a capitalist dynamic of expanded reproduction had the coercive apparatus of the state been transformed in such a way that it positively promoted private accumulation. However, the weakness of merchants in relation to the officialdom concerned only one strand of this real but obstructed tendency to capitalist development. The other strand extended into the sphere of production with the growth of commercial markets in cash crops and the rise of commoner tenancy, i.e. exploitation based on contract rather than status. The importance of China's tea production to the global capitalist economy in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is obvious, but the question is whether this integration into the global market elicited a corresponding transformation in its domestic class structure. Whether Chinese development in the nineteenth century took on a capitalist character will depend on the nature of the financing of the trade and if it had the character of capital investment seeking to generate surplus value: if, that is, Company loans were not simply a *means of purchase* according to the laws of simple circulation and exchange, but, rather, were advances of capital in money form that enabled the reproduction of

labour power (means of subsistence) and the means of production (seeds, etc) (Banaji 2011, 304). In other words, a tenancy system might well be integrated into a circuit of investment, surplus value generation and realisation via sale, which renders the small producer dependent on the capital for their reproduction.

In late Qing China tea-producing regions exhibited these features as they underwent export-led expansion. Earlier I described how the Canton Hongs were pushed into the hands of the Company, which, from the 1770s onwards, became their principal support and creditor in the Canton tea market, providing the cash advances necessary for procurement (Gardella 1994, 35). In most cases, Hongs did not own tea fields, but acted as brokers and purchased tea from smaller tea wholesalers. The latter also *lacked sufficient funds* to trade on their own capital so were dependent on Hong credit (Gardella 1994, 35 – 36). A clear hierarchy of debtor-creditor relations thus extended downwards from the East India Company. Moreover, this exhibited a fusion of the mercantile and usurer capital of the type that Banaji describes in British India:

> There was scarcely a 'merchant' who could not also be classified as a 'moneylender', and vice versa. But it would be wrong to conclude, conversely, that such 'merchants-cum moneylenders' were pure agents of the circulation-process (in the sense in which merchant's and commercial capital are within the developed bourgeois mode of production). Precisely because the 'occupational' classifications of capital did not reflect a strict division of labour of the sort that prevails where industrial capital predominates, the concomitant distinction, between purely 'parasitic' and basically 'productive' types of capital, becomes somewhat misleading (Banaji 2011, 293).

In Qing China, commercial capital gradually extended its control over production, but this did not generally take a managerial form of agrarian capitalism. In the Wuyi Mountains, part of the tea producing region of Fujian, merchants gradually purchased the mountain side real estate suitable for tea production from the eighteenth century onwards (Gardella 1994, 43). They would then let the land out to tenant producers and established production networks for processing and packaging that employed rural wage-labour (Gardella 1994, 45 – 46). It would have been difficult for tea wholesalers to establish fully modern capitalist forms of rural organisation, because they lived in a state of credit dependency to the Hong (and, ultimately, the Company) and thus lacked sufficient capital to reinvest in production. While there were some wealthier peasants, the majority were small petty producers who were forced to mortgage their goods in advance to buyers in order to subsist (Gardella 1994, 45 – 46). The picture that emerges

from these relations is a system of social reproduction dominated by the monied capitalist (and ultimately the Company) in which petty producers could not avoid market dependency because they were farming cash crops in a highly monetised economy. In these circumstances, rent and interest are forms of appearance of surplus value and the means of production belong only nominally to the petty-producer. Consequently, rent and interest become, thus, 'the necessary forms of appearance of capitalist relations in the conditions of a small production economy where the process of labour remained the process of the small producer' (Banaji 2011, 306 – 307). This was therefore a form of semi-colonial capitalism whose development had serious social consequences for the section of Chinese peasants this embroiled. Indeed, one source describes the situation in Fujian during the reign of Emperor Daoguang (1821- 1850) as follows:

> From the [time when] the Qing… traded with the foreigners, the din of numerous merchants enveloped the markets. Acting as if they were brokers, the Buddhists and Taoists in the midst of the mountains monopolized the trade. The worst ones are depraved and wild, and no better than cheap peddlars. They abscond and bilk their creditors; the smash up Buddha images, melt down bells and gongs, and sell their dwellings, monasteries, and mountain fields to the big merchants… Profits are such that wicked go-betweens cut down woods and remove many houses [to clear land for tea] (cited in Gardella 1994, 43).

In this way, capitalist relations of production arising from afar were interwoven with existing patterns of commercialisation at home, in a contradictory inter-penetration of economic forms. With the intervention of the East Indian Company a system of credit-debtor relations intersected with Chinese merchant capital – and the obstacles put upon its development by the tributary system - which allowed for the extraction of surplus value and siphoning of it abroad. The credit dependency of Chinese merchants on their foreign patrons meant that they lacked sufficient capital to reinvest in production that could have raised productivity and started to close the vast competitive gulf that had opened up with Britain. The result was systematic underdevelopment as the Chinese economy was subjected to this colonial practice.

There was, however, a 'new rich' that developed in China's urban centres. Often cited in this regard are the compradors, agents that worked for foreign firms as a 'go-between' to Chinese dealers. They also traded on their own account and many grew exceedingly wealthy. It was these figures that took the first steps to establishing a Chinese presence in shipping, financial services and modern industry in the late nineteenth century (Feuerwerker 1980b, 56 – 57). But domestic industry suffered from

the lack of productivity improvements in the agrarian economy, as China could not generate the internal demand needed to develop large consumer markets for manufactured products. Agriculture remained blighted by low productivity with population increases, in the absence of a transformation in the division of labour, resulting in smaller farm plots and squeezed peasant incomes (Feuerwerker 1980b, 5 – 6). Peasants adapted by shifting to crops that required greater labour inputs and less land, and by increasing their dependency on the market with the production of cash crops (Feuerwerker 1980b, 6 – 9). Such changes were perfectly possible without modifying the dominant smallholder tenancy system. The living contradiction of this process lay in how the persistent absence of wage-labour-based capitalist agriculture resulted from the domination of the monied capitalist over the economy, because returns from land were modest in comparison to those that could be garnered from commerce and moneylending, creating economic incentives for elites working against a concentration of large landholdings (Feuerwerker 1980b, 12 – 13). It was this enduring agricultural backwardness that placed important limitations on Chinese industry, and for that matter the domestic market per se, because the rural economy could not generate sufficient demand for manufactured products, making new ventures highly risk prone and often dependent on corrupt links of patronage flowing from official channels (Feuerwerker 1980b, 33 – 34). Entrepreneurial investors in these conditions were often dependent upon tributary rule and thus undermined *private,* market competition:

> Given a limited market, the lack of a modern banking system which could systematically channel savings into industrial investment, a central government whose financial resources were severely limited, and competition from imported goods and foreign-owned factories in China, it is perhaps not surprising that some regional officials and the entrepreneurs who were associated with them attempted to establish limited but protected industrial empires for their mutual profit. Few purely private ventures could expect success (Feuerwerker 1980b, 34).

This was a feature of a tributary economy that had been reduced to a largely institutional shell against a backdrop of capitalist activity whose substantive benefits were being siphoned abroad. The Qing government was ideologically and socially hostile to creating an institutional framework favourable to private capital accumulation (Feuerwerker 1980b, 38 – 39), i.e. a coercive structure that encouraged and defended a privately owned sphere of production and trade. Social actors did not emerge that could push for these transformations in the form of the state necessary to move China onto the course of development seen by other late developing powers. Accordingly, the class

structure established in late Qing China was novel in relation to the form of social-historical combination often seen in 'late developers'. There was no juxtaposition of rapid industrial development with archaic forms of state and modes of exploitation, but instead a specific form of capitalist development emerged in which predatory colonial practices intersected with existing forms of commercialisation to give the monied capitalist a semi-hegemonic role. British financial innovation in world trade intersected with Qing-era encouragement of markets, but without creating any security or incentive for domestic private capital investment in *production*. The resulting scale of its underdevelopment can be illustrated by a contrast with Tsarist Russia – a state whose economy was widely regarded as backward vis-à-vis the other European powers.

Russia's period of industrial ascent in the last two decades of the nineteenth century saw dramatic technical and social modernisation. It had a large-scale industrial manufacturing labour force of 3 million by 1913 (Crisp 1978, 350). A total of 10.4 million workers, which represented 23 per cent of its active labour force, were in non-agricultural employment in the same year (Crisp 1978, 333) and this was out of a total population of c. 139.9 million (Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft 1994, 59). Some two decades later, China, in 1933, could record only a fraction of this development with less than 1 million workers employed in its factories (Lippit 1987, 47) out of a total population of c. 500 million (Feuerwerker 1980a, 35). The historical role of handicraft industries in the tributary mode of production partially disguised this underdevelopment. In 1914 manufacturing and services constituted 20 per cent of China's GDP, which was a similar proportion to the economy of Tsarist Russia at the time, but only a small proportion of this, estimated at between 3 and 7 per cent GDP, used modern industrial techniques with small handicraft production still playing a much larger role in the economy (Ekstein 1977, 12 – 13). China's factories also remained small in comparison with Russia. One study undertaken in 11 provinces and the four most developed cities in 1935 found that 48.7 per cent of the factories employed less than 30 workers with only 5 per cent employing more than 500 (Riskin 1987, 21). Contrastingly, for the Russian industrial labour force of 1910, nearly two and a half decades earlier, around half were already employed in factories of more than 500 workers (Bater 1987, 27). It seems reasonable on the basis of this contrast to argue that Tsarist Russia was ten times more industrialised than post-Imperial China, because for a country less than a third of the size its industrial labour force was three times larger and concentrated in large-scale, heavy industrial units rather than a plethora of small

factories. Although Russian statistics tended to exaggerate the proportion of large industrial units relative to small,[10] it is clear *relatively underdeveloped* Tsarist Russia was *significantly more developed* than China. This difference in levels of development would prove crucial to the character of their respective revolutions and it grew directly out of the legacy left behind by tributary class rule. This, in turn, both reflected and gave added significance to its relative geopolitical independence on the world stage, because amongst the capitalist 'late developers' the state has always proven crucial to their success. It established discounted financial flows for industry, rendering capitalists dependent on the state but, nonetheless, creating conditions for secure productive capital investment (Feuerwerker 1980b, 59). In China, the British had a monopoly on the provision of modern banking services for forty years after 1848, and even the modern Chinese banks established in the 1900s were not intended for industrial investment, but focused on commercial lending and thus reflected the hegemony of the monied capitalist in the wider economy (Feuerwerker 1980b, 57). In short, a state that provided security for *private* industry remained an enduring enigma.

3.6 Imperialist geopolitics and the 'century of humiliation'

The period from 1809 (attempt to ban export of silver) to 1839 (the first Opium War) can be seen as a decisive moment in China's unequal incorporation into the modern capitalist system, for it exposed the increasing impotence of Imperial China in the face of colonialism. It was during this time, following the defeat of France in the Napoleonic Wars and the redrawing of the balance of power in Europe by the Congress of Vienna in 1815, that the British established a system of political command and control over the international trading system based upon an unchallenged position on the high seas. Able to emerge from the conflict in a similar position of economic supremacy as the United States enjoyed in the West after 1945, Britain extracted a direct economic benefit from its naval and geopolitical supremacy. The British navy had successfully blockaded Europe and starved industries of international markets, even resulting in a degree of

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[10] In Russia very small factories were counted as part of the *non-industrial* manufacturing sector (Bater 1987, 352), whereas China's economy was so underdeveloped such factories were considered *industrial*. Tsarist state statisticians' measurements tended to exaggerate the proportion of big industrial units with hundreds, if not thousands, of employees, and tended to neglect analysis of the more nimble, smaller manufacturing units, which actually grew sharply in the early twentieth century (ibid). The 'traditional' understanding of the Russian working class as articulated by Trotsky (Trotsky 1967) was based on these statistics, and therefore tended to downplay the importance of smaller manufacturing units to the economy as a whole. Nonetheless, even if the statistics were a little misleading, it was certainly the case that factories in the key industrial centres of Russia grew to vast proportions on the back of foreign investment and credit, and this tendency was far more immature, to put it mildly, in China.

deindustrialisation of the great port cities of Amsterdam, Bordeaux and Marseilles (McMichael 2004, 7). After the war, Europe's now insolvent polities focused on economic reconstruction and their political reorganisation as modern states, meaning that the City of London from 1815 to 1850 enjoyed a 'monopoly on the supply of capital to the world market' (Hobson 1963, 98), and Britain could turn outwards building a commercial and trading empire in the global periphery (McMichael 2004, 7 – 9). While the empire-building of the mercantilist age had also treated colonies as markets for goods, organised their labour forces for the extraction of commodities to accumulate merchant capital and accrue state revenue, British hegemony was based on its *domestic* industrial-commercial supremacy and thus uniquely 'promoted the universal tendencies of industrial capital and its drive to continually revolutionise commerce' (McMichael 2004, 3). The pioneering application of technological advances was central to these transformations as the British 'led the adoption of large-scale mass production firms using coal-fired steam generators to produce textiles, machinery, steamships, and railroad equipment' (Chase-Dunn, Kawano, and Brewer 2000, 81). This orientation led the British state to pragmatically combine policies of trade liberalisation, i.e. the breaking down of barriers to consumer markets for its products, with more classical forms of political colonisation. The latter included white colonial settlement and, where necessary, formal annexation of territories to establish fiscal and tariff regimes appropriate to its commercial interests. Key, in this regard, was establishing institutions that guaranteed the property, legal and trading rights of Britain's burgeoning merchant trading community in the periphery. To put this realignment of global economic power in its favour on the necessary institutional footing, the British ultimately relied upon military might to consolidate economic control. They waged two Opium Wars (1839 – 1842 and 1856 – 1860), which were justified on the grounds of protecting British subjects' liberty, i.e. their right to undertake commerce on foreign shores, in response to China's attempt to close down the trade. These conflicts cruelly exposed the weakness of China's military in the face of the foremost Western colonial power. As table 3 shows, these were just the first of a series of colonial interventions that beset China from 1842 to 1945. It became known as 'the century of humiliation' as China found itself almost universally defeated in these wars, making the polity especially amenable to militant nationalism. I discuss in the next chapter how Imperial China was unable, and it seems at times unwilling, to respond to these geopolitical pressures. The reason for this lay in how the existing social structure of tributary class

power had become incorporated as a *de facto* client economy of British capitalism. Each military defeat introduced new measures that attenuated the inability of the state to respond.

Colonial powers' technical superiority was also illustrated in these conflicts time and again. In this regard, Britain again led the way for others to follow in the First Opium War. Its new fleet of iron warships made use of steam, as well as sail power, and were armed with the Congreve rocket. The origins of the latter device reflected the global sources of Britain's imperial might, for the forces of the East Indian Company had first encountered the technology in their humiliating defeat to the Indian Kingdom of Mysore in the Battle of Pollilur in 1780. In an exemplified rendition of combined development, the British took the original Mysorean designs and improved on them by applying modern engineering techniques (Cheong 1978, 40 – 43). The Congreve rocket became a fearsome weapon used to great effect on land and sea in their wars with France (1803 – 1815) and the United States (1812). The Chinese fleet was simply no match for these accomplishments, even though their deficiency can easily be overstated. Known as *junks* their large wooden sailing ships had a long history, ultimately stretching back to the second century AD, but they were comparable in quality to the European ships that dominated international trade between 1750 and 1800. At the time of the conflict Chinese *junks* had also become heavily armed with carronades, a short-range cannon produced in Britain from the 1770s to the 1850s. China had actually invented the cannon ('the eruptor') in the thirteenth century (Needham 1987, 263 – 270), but in the nineteenth century their engineers mimicked the design of the contemporary British weapon. One officer's memoirs of the First Opium War even praised the high-standards of iron work in the Chinese version of the weapon (Narasimha 1985). If this illustrates how the Chinese state was not entirely unresponsive to the Western threat, the conflict nonetheless underlined the lapse in their competitiveness, for the British now used the Congreve rocket and long-range cannons from afar.

Table 3: China's 'century of humiliation': military conflicts with foreign powers, 1842 – 1945

Conflict	Against	Result	Immediate Consequences
First Opium War, 1839 – 1842	Britain	Defeat	Abolition of Canton system, opening of four further ports to foreign trade, British parity in formulation of tariffs, cessation of Hong Kong.
Taiping Rebellion, 1850 – 1864*	n/a	Victory but at huge cost (est. range from 20 – 30 million deaths).	'Self-Strengthening' movement, Qing Restoration, late Qing dependency on colonial powers.
Second Opium War, 1856 – 1860	Britain, France, United States	Defeat	Opening of a series of further ports to foreign trade, permanent diplomatic residence for France, Britain and Russia in Beijing, 8 million Taels reparations paid to France and Britain, legalisation of Opium trade, establishment of freedom of religion in China.
Sino-French War, 1884 – 1885	France	Defeat	Destruction of Southern Chinese Navy, French annexation of Vietnam, opening of southwestern China to foreign trade.
First Sino-Japanese War, 1894 – 95	Japan	Defeat	Korean independence from China, Japanese annexation of Taiwan, reparations of 200 million taels, Liaodong Peninsula leased to Japan (but passed to Russia, 1895).
Boxer War, 1900 – 1901	Britain, Russia, Japan, France, United States, Germany, Austria Hungry, Italy	Defeat	Provision for stationing foreign troops in Beijing, 450 million taels reparations, near-abolition of tariff and fiscal independence to guarantee payments.
Russo-Japanese War, 1904 – 1905**	Japan, Russia	De facto a defeat	Russian withdrawal from Manchuria. Manchuria and Korea recognised as 'Japanese sphere of influence' (Korea annexed formally by Japan, 1911), Liaodong Peninsula leased to Japan.
First World War, 1914 – 1918	All major colonial powers and China and Japan (both sided with Allies)	De facto a defeat	Transfer of German possessions in Shandong to Japan and backlash of May Fourth Movement.
Sino-Soviet Conflict, 1929	Soviet Union	Defeat	Restoration of Manchurian Railway to joint Sino-Soviet control.
Japanese invasion of Manchuria, 1931	Japan	Defeat	Creation of Japanese puppet state of Manchukuo, 1932 ruled by last Qing emperor, Puyi.
Sino-Tibetan War, 1930 – 1932	Tibet (de facto independent 1912-1950)	Victory	Status quo restored (i.e. Tibetan demands for redrawing of borders militarily defeated).
Kumul Rebellion, 1932, and Soviet invasion of Xinjiang, 1934 and 1937.	Soviet Union, White Russians, and Xinjiang rebels	Defeat	Soviet control of Xinjiang
Second Sino-Japanese War, 1937 – 1945)	Japan, China with some Soviet and US advisors	Chinese / allied victory	Japanese withdrawal, second stage of Chinese Civil War begins (1945 – 1949).

* Included in this table due to the role of the 'Ever Victorious Army', made up of Chinese soldiers but led by European officers, in quelling the troubles. ** China neutral but war fought on Chinese territory to the shame of its increasingly nationalist urban populace.

British industrial power was therefore crucial to defeating the Chinese forces. Their technically proficient armoury decimated Chinese forces at the Second Battle of Chuanbi by fighting from long-range, leaving eleven out of fifteen Chinese ships sunk, as the carronade required close proximity combat. A British report put their combat fatalities in the *war* at 69, and 451 wounded, and estimated, possibly with a certain exaggeration, that Chinese deaths were in the region of 18,000 to 20,000 (Perdue 2010). It was due in no small part to the awesome impact of the Congreve rocket on Chinese vessels. A British officer's account describes vividly its terrifying effect on the enemy:

> One of the most formidable engines of destruction which any vessel, particularly a steamer can make use of is the congreve rocket, a most terrible weapon when judiciously applied, especially where there are combustible materials to act upon. The very first rocket fired from the Nemesis [(the first British ocean going iron warship that used steam and sail power)] was seen to enter the large *junk* against which it was directed, near that of the admiral, and almost the instant afterwards it blew up with a terrific explosion, launching into eternity every soul on board and pouring forth its blaze like the mighty rush of fire from a volcano. The instantaneous destruction of the huge body seemed appalling to both sides engaged. The smoke, and flame, and thunder of the explosion, with the broken fragments falling round, and even portions of disserved bodies scattering as they fell, were enough to strike with awe, if not with fear, the stoutest heart that looked upon it (Bernard and Hall 1844, 271).[11]

Both in its symbolism and legal outcomes the war represented the final rupture of the core assumptions of 'the Middle Kingdom' – the imagined centrality and celestial authority of the Confucian state – as harsher global realities were imposed, requiring a new set of institutional arrangements and a radical redrawing of mental-conceptions of the world. The Treaty of Nanjing (1842/43)[12] that followed British victory granted them the island of Hong Kong in perpetuity, imposed swingeing reparations on the Chinese Court totalling $15 million, and, moreover, was the first of the infamous Unequal Treaties that gave European powers (followed in 1895 by Japan) increasingly unbridled access to the Chinese domestic market. The Canton system came to an end and five Chinese ports were opened up to foreign trade. A central concern of these treaties was the principle of so-called 'extraterritoriality'; the issue of whether British subjects in

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[11] A British officer also gave an intriguingly similar description of their defeat at the Battle of Pollilur in 1780 at the hands of the Indian-made Mysorean rocket on which the British rocket had originally been based: 'The rockets and musketry from 20,000 of the enemy were incessant. No hail could be thicker. Every illumination of blue lights was accompanied by a shower of rockets, some of which entered the head of the column, passing through to the rear, causing death, wounds, and dreadful lacerations from the long bamboos of twenty or thirty feet, which are invariably attached to them' (Narasimha 1985, 11).

[12] The text of the treaty was drafted upon China's defeat in 29 August 1842, but both sides only exchanged the ratifications at Hong Kong on the 26 June 1843.

China, principally merchants, should be subject to Chinese jurisdiction or alternatively that of the British Crown. 'International settlements' were also established by Western powers in the Treaty Ports where the imperial powers had substantial legal jurisdiction, with hybrid Chinese-foreign courts created which were in practice dominated by the colonists (Feuerwerker 2008, 129). For all these reasons it would be misleading to see this as a conflict over opium alone. It was rather an expression of the antagonistic 'combination' of the capitalist world economy with the archaic tributary mode:

> In retrospect, it is apparent that opium was the immediate, but not the ultimate, cause of the war. Without it a conflict between China and the West would still have erupted as a result of their differing conceptions of international relations, trade and jurisprudence. Far deeper than the opium question was the incompatibility of the Chinese claim to universal overlordship with the Western idea of national sovereignty; the conflict between the system of tributary relationships and the Western system of diplomatic intercourse; and the contradiction between self-sufficient, agrarian China and expansive, industrial Britain (Hsü 2000, 192).

China was not alone in having its old order unseated by British capital. A transformation in institutional relations was occurring globally as polities adjusted to the new realities of capitalist globalisation. As Britain's economic interests encompassed the globe from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the mid-nineteenth century, the clamour for such 'extraterritorial rights' proceeded apace. Legally, the epitome of this process was the Foreign Jurisdiction Act of 1843 that stated 'by treaty, capitulation, grant, usage, sufferance, and other lawful means, Her Majesty the Queen has jurisdiction within diverse foreign countries' (Kayaoğlu 2010, 44). Though only applied to British subjects this authority was henceforth considered equivalent to the legal position of the Crown in formally annexed territories (ibid). But while this was couched as authority over British actors abroad, in reality it gave subjects of the Crown *immunity* from sanction by the existing jurisdictions of the Global South and East. From our modern standpoint we will spontaneously see this as an extraordinary infringement on national independence. Yet the historical polities to whom these laws were intended to relate did not always operate with a territorial notion of governance. In the Ottoman Empire, the legal code was based on Islam, but had always allowed for the existence of non-Muslim subjects of an Islamic state (*dhimmī*) that had their own legal systems. Extraterritoriality was therefore less culturally alien in its formal prescriptions for the Ottoman elites. Yet, as its practical reality, of rendering Westerners conducting exploitative trade practices unaccountable, became apparent, it elicited a rise in anti-

Western sentiment. The cruel irony of the system lay in how it undermined states' ability to develop the strong fiscal structures whose absence had originally been used to justify the imposition of extraterritorial legal authority, creating a cycle of intervention (Kayaoğlu 2010, 45 – 46).

The Ottoman case illustrates how the response of elites was culturally conditioned by their existing understanding of the rules of governance and over whom these rules extended; how the polity conceived of its existence in ethnic, political and cultural terms, and the relationship of this to its territorial claims. Imperial China's approach was thus novel. As Immanuel Hsü notes above, Confucianism held its state to be in a position of *universal overlordship* (Hsü 2000, 192) and this made extraterritoriality anathema to its conception of state authority. The Imperial legal code was not only considered absolute and universal across time, but was also not confined to a particular ethnic or spatial notion of China as such. Confucian legal strictures were accordingly not limited to one ethnic or religious denomination. On the contrary, Imperial China had proven capable of *absorbing* different ethnic invaders while retaining its core political structure. In essence, then, the system was relatively tolerant of aliens, so long as they submitted to the rules and authority of the Confucian order. But what certainly could not be countenanced was aliens within the territory of the empire refusing to submit to its absolute legal-moral code and accept the judgement of its authorities. This imperial logic of power thus had a strong *territorial* element to it and so it is unsurprising that military action was needed to impose *extra*territorial principles.[13] In spite of this cultural hostility to the imposition of extraterritorial principles, the Chinese state remained unable to rise to the 'whip of external necessity', i.e. the imperative in the face of military and economic pressure to undertake internal social reform in order to 'catch up' with its now radically more advanced British rival, and defend the polity from foreign incursions.

3. 7 The humiliating imposition of 'backwardness'

Colonialism was therefore crucial to Chinese underdevelopment and not merely due to the informal subtleties of financialization. Backwardness was imposed by military force, concluding in the unequal treaties that established a free trade regime for foreign

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[13] Many thanks must go to Maïa Pal for impressing upon me in conversation the significance of the divergent response of the Ottoman and Chinese political elites to the formal legal structures of 'extraterritoriality' and the important implication that the notion of law in Imperial China observed a spatial/territorial logic of power.

goods. China's industrial capital would thus enjoy none of the protections that native industry benefited from during Britain's early capitalist expansion in the eighteenth century. Consequently, the domestic class structure following the British intervention – financially in tea production and militarily in gunboat diplomacy – was simultaneously *capitalist* yet *remarkably unaltered.* For the smallholding Chinese peasantry growing dependency on the market took place within the same contractual relations to landlords enshrined in the early Qing and the pressure of population growth on rural incomes they experienced would have been familiar to their ancestors. In this sense, we can summarise the combined social formation of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as a *post-tributary colonial-capitalist* economy, a product of the interaction between a declining Qing Empire and ascendant British capital. While domestic Chinese actors intersected with foreign interest groups, in a certain sense China's fate *was* determined by colonial intervention. It was this 'whip of external aggression' and the failure of the Confucian state actors to undertake reform in the face of it that created the opening for a distinctively new anti-colonial subject to emerge in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In chapter 4 I chart the rise of this collective subjectivity that created a genuine, organic sense of Chinese national identity for the first time, one that was crucially dissonant from the collapsing Qing regime and therefore had the task of forging a nation-state afresh.

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The imagined community of 'China' as combined social development: from humiliation to the Chinese Revolution

> Insofar as the past has been transmitted as tradition it possesses authority; insofar as authority presents itself historically, it becomes tradition
> *Hannah Arendt*

> The Chinese nation is known throughout the world not only for its industriousness and stamina, but also for its ardent love of freedom and its rich revolutionary traditions… During the thousands of years of recorded history, the Chinese nation has given birth to many national heroes and revolutionary leaders. Thus the Chinese nation has a glorious revolutionary tradition and a splendid historical heritage
> *Mao Zedong*

4.1 Modernity as 'a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal'

The story I sketched in the previous chapter outlined how China's pre-modern division of labour became incorporated into the exploitative mechanisms of global capitalism. At this stage, when we move onto the terrain of consciousness, ideas and meanings, it is important to stress how the 'scientific' nature of the exposition hitherto might unwillingly disguise the deep feelings of social injustice and collective traumas that capitalist colonialism gave rise to within the polity. Largely due to British support for the 'Open Door', China was never formally incorporated into an empire at the high water mark of European colonialism in the late nineteenth century. Yet, nonetheless, the system of extraterritoriality the powers imposed on the polity led to it suffering appalling colonial practices, with a strict racial hierarchy of white privilege discernible in the life of the treaty ports. Each stage in the military and economic deepening of these colonial-capitalist relations, was thus accompanied by a parallel metamorphosis in the mental-conceptions of the world held by Chinese persons constructing narratives to resist this subordination. In their concrete forms such experiences were unique, but the 'foreign' repertoires of intellectual thought Chinese actors latched onto and the injustices they suffered reflected a global sensibility; a set of feelings that emerged from social modernisation yet also reacted against the colonial and racist assumptions of the world order. Marshall Berman once described the sense of 'being modern' as a 'mode of vital experience' that arose from the acceleration of social change. Rapid development breeds social turmoil, yet also encourages new hopes and fears, giving rise

to great promises as well as harsh struggles. It is a global sensibility, because modernity ruptures all existing modes of thought, but the way in which it achieves this dominance is full of contradictions:

> Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish (Berman 1983, 15).

The seemingly unending convulsions of modern world history suggest that this transformed sense of 'the possible and perilous', is lodged deeply within the cultural and psychological reproduction of capitalist modernity. For this to be so, there must be more processes at work than simply a contradictory alignment between the universal values of liberal Enlightenment thought (and the hopes they generated when transmitted from the intellectual to the public sphere) with the harsher realities that capitalist market dependency imposes on our social reproduction. The way in which hope and fear become so directly intermingled in modern societies arguably reflects the risk-laden nature of the modernist enterprise; that, whatever our goals and aims may be, to aspire and strive in these new conditions is to endanger, as Berman puts it, 'everything we have, everything we know, everything we are' (ibid). To argue, as he does so eloquently, that this sensibility *cuts across all boundaries* of geography and ethnicity (ibid) is quite true. Yet, perhaps it is also an insufficiently radical appraisal of the way that modernity reshaped the anthropological assumptions of human communities the world over. How it *forged*, that is, *newly imagined* geographical and social boundaries and kindled entirely novel ethnic 'memories'. It is this formation of collective subjectivity and the allure of mythological narratives of salvation that I am principally concerned with in this chapter. I wish to show how certain cultural and ideological impressions became imprinted on the minds of Chinese actors and how these assumptions underpinned its post-1949 state formation. By 'collective subjectivity' I mean not only the specific political actors whose conflicts characterised the Chinese Revolution, but also the formation of a culturally coherent and widely adhered to, yet inevitably contested and exclusive, notion of 'China' itself. For the sake of simplicity I have till now spoken apparently un-problematically of 'Imperial China', but, even leaving aside the Anglicism of this idiom, it should be noted that the implication there existed a geographically bounded conception of 'China' in the dynastic epoch is a little misleading. 'The Middle Kingdom', as its subjects termed it, may have observed certain

territorial logics of power, but it considered its domain universal *a la* 'The Celestial Empire'. Its rulers thought of the polity as the cradle of civilisation according to celestial authority and not 'Chinese'. As I argue below, a 'Chinese' national identity only crystalized in the late nineteenth century. To understand the circumstances in which this imagined community was constructed is to have understood a key aspect of the PRC. Crucially, from its first genesis this national consciousness existed in a dissonant relation to the Imperial state and, in light of the latter's disintegration, fostered a strong desire for national unity that was reflected by political actors. The communists answered this aspiration for statehood, but simultaneously absorbed a nationalistic set of politics that powerfully foreshadowed its latter day trajectory (Johnson 1962).

I argue in this chapter that China's nationalist mythology constructed a contradictory and unstable anti-colonial ethos: for it was always predicated on a *loss of Chinese privilege* in international affairs and the attendant ambition to re-establish this geo-social power. It was the organic incorporation of this outlook into the Communist Party that created the Maoist amalgam of ideological forms, fusing Soviet Stalinism with Chinese nationalism. By turning to the politics of patriotism, the Maoists did not create a national imagery 'from scratch', but drew upon existing narratives and imagery that had emerged with the rise of Chinese identity from the 1890s onwards. One can therefore establish a line of continuity between features of Chinese political nationalism *per se* and the nationalist underpinning to PRC policy after 1949. I develop this argument through a critical appropriation of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (Anderson 2006), seeing the emergence of nation-ness as a features of the uneven and combined development of the modern international order. The argument develops through several stages. Firstly, I look at the transformation from 'messianic time' to 'homogenous empty time' in Imperial China's encounter with global capitalism. Secondly, I reflect on the 'culture of imperialism' that plagued the world between 1870 and 1945, arguing that Chinese nationality emerged amongst a modern layer of society that responded to the intensification of colonial threats, but also saw the accumulation of colonial power as a measure of social progress. Thirdly, I locate the sociological conditions for this process within the spatially concentrated, expansive capitalist development of China's Treaty Ports and highlight how this identity was formed *externally* to the existing Qing ruling class. Fourthly, owing to these historical conditions, I show a tendency developed to amalgamate the notions of 'race' with 'nation' as *minzu* and draw out the significance of this for nation-state formation within

the PRC. Finally, the last three sections analyse cleavages in China's conscious political nationalism; exploring the split between messianic and pragmatic discourses, the rise of the Kuomintang, and the use of political nationalism by the Maoists.

4.2 Imagined national communities: transformation toward 'homogenous empty time'
All societies undergoing the transformation into nation-states created myths that reified their identity into timeless abstractions. 'Nationalism' as Ernest Gellner put it, 'was not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist' (Gellner 1964, 169) and, indeed, the paradox of nation states lies, ultimately, in their 'objective modernity… vs. their subjective antiquity' (Anderson 2006, 5). In *Imagined Communities; Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* Anderson's attempt to solve the paradox involved a double process: a novel *theoretical presupposition* that fed into a thoroughly *historical treatment* of the problem. He presupposed, 'in an anthropological spirit', the *imagined* nature of all historical communities that go beyond mere face-to-face contact; arguing they inspire a shared sense of belonging and identity amongst individuals who could never possibly all meet one another (Anderson 2006, 5 – 6). He thus used a *transhistorical* abstraction, 'the imagined community', to demystify the *specific* nation-state form and deny it the transhistorical status that it claimed, exposing it as 'a cultural artefact of a particular age' (Anderson 2006, 4). Anderson emphasises the cultural aspects, but insists capitalism was central to nation-ness (Anderson 2006, 37). This is no contradiction, because with Marx, Trotsky, Gramsci, and others, he offers a non-deterministic treatment of the capitalist system, seeing it as a form of *social* reproduction, i.e. a system at once cultural and economic, which disrupted existing identities and provided the means and desire to reshape them around new territorially bounded forms of consciousness and political organisation. Print-capitalism – as a form of cultural production and sphere of capital accumulation – plays a central role in Anderson's argument, intermingling with the expansive but centrifugal power of capitalist production, and the fact of linguistic diversity amongst human communities (Anderson 2006, 42 – 43). While for Anderson there *is* a specific genesis of 'nation-ness' in the late eighteenth century, he does not offer a 'big bang' theory, instead arguing that these changes became interwoven with a long-evolving crisis of archaic dynastic identities.

Anderson's use of 'imagined community' as a presupposition has obvious methodological parallels with the re-articulated vision of 'combined social

development' as a transhistorical abstraction that captures the compulsions found in intersocietal processes (Matin 2012; Rosenberg 2006; Rosenberg 2010). In effect, Anderson argues that at a certain stage of development humans create imagined boundaries that apportion a collective identity to a social group regardless of whether all the individuals within the group ever meet one another. In his analysis of the modern, 'nationalised' imagined community, Anderson also uses formulations that put stress upon the causally significant interactions across societies, in a manner also complimentary to the theory of uneven and combined development. Nationality, nationalism, nation-ness, however one chooses to put it, was he argues, created in the collective imagination 'towards the end of the eighteenth century' as a result of 'the spontaneous distillation of a complex *crossing* of *discrete* historical forces' (Anderson 2006, 4, emphasis added). Their universal dispersion across human territories and peoples reflected the fact 'that, once created, they became *modular*, capable of being transplanted with varying degrees of self-consciousness to a great variety of social terrains, to *merge* and to be *merged* with a correspondingly wide variety of political and ideological constellations' (Anderson 2006, 4, emphasis added). Given how nations have become the dominant, indeed universal, form of territorial organisation, they clearly have this duplicative quality. But it poses a question as to *why* this concept has proven so durable when so many others have not 'modulated'. Indeed, Anderson tends to eschew analysis of the pressures and influences that led to societies creating a plurality of national imaginations. The Andersonian account of the origins of nations could therefore benefit from an intellectual encounter with the theory of combined development to capture the processes giving rise to this modularity.

In chapter 3, I described how the uneven spatial dispersion of human communities across Eurasia had resulted in competing claims to cultural universality in lieu of the intensified form of interchange that has characterised capitalist modernity. Anderson helps us to augment this analysis further by probing the nature of archaic universal claims that were not, and could not be, rooted in a global claim of territorial jurisdiction – for no such knowledge, or even concept, of 'the global' really existed – but in a mode of apprehension of time that imagined the historical community to be eternal (Anderson 2006, 22 – 25). This feature of pre-modern societies, common to both Imperial China and Medieval Christendom, was founded upon their ascription of existence to a divine providence, and meant that time was apprehended as *messianic time*, where no distinction is drawn between the past and the future but both are instead

imagined to exist within an 'instantaneous present' (Anderson 2006, 24, see also; Auerbach 2003; Benjamin 1968, 263; Bloch 1989, 84 – 86). In other words, as Erich Auerbach puts it, 'the here and now is no longer a mere link in an earthly chain of events, it is simultaneously something that has always been, and which will be fulfilled in the future' (Auerbach 2003, 74). A feature of this socially constructed imagination is therefore the 'juxtaposition between the cosmic-universal and the mundane-particular', i.e. the dream of eternity existing alongside the harsh daily grind of agrarian villages for survival, and the divine authority claimed by fallible human elites (Anderson 2006, 23). These mythologies gave 'certain meanings to the everyday fatalities of existence (above all death, loss and servitude)' and offered 'in various ways, redemption from them' (Davidson 2007). As Benjamin argued, modernity radically unseats these apprehensions of time and space, replacing them with what he called 'homogenous, empty time' (Benjamin 1968, 261 – 262). In this new socially constructed imagination, time is measured by 'clock and calendar' (Anderson 2006, 26). Actors imagine the activity of others, whom they are likely to have never met, as a simultaneous movement of a shared sociological organism *through time* to an uncertain, i.e. 'empty', future. The sense that the shared identity – be it the nation, a class, and so on – can have a degree of agency over their destiny underlines this major disjuncture between the modern and the pre-modern. For Anderson it is this shift in the mode of apprehension that provides the cultural origins for the nation. The rise of nationhood is seen as conditional on the collapse of three imagined 'certainties' of dynastic societies: that (i) a script language offered special access to ontological truth; that (ii) society was naturally organised around 'high centres' (monarchs etc.) whose governance drew legitimacy from celestial sources; and that (iii) there was a fundamental unity between cosmology and actual life (Anderson 2006, 36). It does appear to be the case that these qualities, understood in general terms, were pervasive in the pre-modern world, but they varied in their concrete expressions and these historical specificities conditioned the form of their eventual rupture. In Imperial China the form of imagined certainties (i) and (ii) have a particular importance. Recall how it was believed that the divine only blessed rulers that upheld social order, denoting a *conditional relationship* between the dynasty and its subjects (Myers and Wang 2002, 606). This actually helped foster the appearance of structural permanence for the 'high centre', because dynastic transitions invariably left the core institutions of tributary rule intact. Moreover, entry into the ruling class was via an examination in Confucian scripture whose teachings were considered timeless and truth

absolute in the spirit of Anderson's point (i). Together this gave the 'certainties' of the Confucian imagination greater durability, as they directly correlated with access to the class elite, and, as such, attenuated an apprehension rooted in *messianic* rather than *homogenous, empty* time.

Anderson argues that globally the erosion of these certainties took place across the *longue durée.* New discoveries in natural science and human life, economic development, expanding global communications, and a closer apprehension of the world's geography, combined to drive 'a sharp wedge between cosmology and history' which required 'a new way of linking fraternity, power, and time meaningfully together' (Anderson 2006, 36). Nationalism is therefore seen as answering a deep crisis of meaning in Christendom encapsulated by the Reformation unseating the shibboleths of Roman Catholic authority. These cultural transformations were themselves intermingled with the nascent forces of capitalist modernity and for Anderson the most important of these processes was the rise of print-capitalism (Anderson 2006, 38 – 39). The novel ruptured the conception of time as simultaneity by introducing a calendrical mode of apprehension in narrative form (Anderson 2006, 25 – 26). But the newspaper was specifically critical, for its 'single most important emblem', the date at the top of the page, symbolised the 'steady onward clocking of homogenous empty time' (Anderson 2006, 33). 'The very conception of the newspaper' writes Anderson, 'implies the refraction of "world events" into a specific imagined world of vernacular readers' (Anderson 2006, 64). Crucially, printers were private entrepreneurs and sought to expand their markets, aligning with the protestant movement around the Reformation to break the monopoly of Latin script, which, in turn, made possible the creation of a literate public sphere that extended beyond the traditional clerisy (Anderson 2006, 40). This unity between a nascent form of mass culture and private capital was subjected to the mediation of a fragmented European geopolitics that was crucial in determining the form of national consciousness. Unlike in Imperial China where the state and ruling class were fused and the use of Confucian scripture was integral to their integrated system of administration, Latin penmanship did not correlate with a trans-European political form and consequently different states created their own administrative vernaculars (Anderson 2006, 40 – 41). These processes proceeded largely unconsciously – reflecting mutations in European life arising from the fusion of capitalism with the absolutist states (Anderson 2006, 44 – 45). The complexity of the European process, involving military conflict, centralising state tendencies, the rise of

mercantile capitalism, etc. arguably reflects a key difference to China: the absence of a relatively unitary dynastic empire.

The relationship between Anderson's account of the origins of nation-ness and uneven and combined development appears to be complex. In one sense, Anderson follows an intuitively similar methodological procedure. Advanced capitalist societies pioneered lexicographic reform, print-capitalism, and developed culturally cohesive national identities. These changes created new pressures on other societies and how they came to terms with them was rich with contingency. These 'late developers' sought to emulate the most successful within their own conditions. But they drew upon their own cultural history, reflecting the ethnic and social memories within their geopolitical community, in order to *reimagine* the social and geographical boundaries of their societies afresh. Anderson's focus on the 'modular character' of nationalism usefully augments Trotsky's conception of how late developers emulate more advanced powers with an explicitly ideological and cultural dimension. It emphasises the type of community that aspiring states 'would like to be'. *Imagined Communities* however leaves the sociological processes that led to the differential repetition of 'nation-ness' un-theorised. Anderson writes, for example, that the concepts of 'nation' and 'revolution… are inventions, on which patents are impossible to preserve. They are there, so to speak, for the pirating' (Anderson 2006, 156). He refers to the military conflicts between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Democratic Kampuchea (Cambodia), and the PRC (ibid) to illustrate the contradictory way different polities internalise and make use of these concepts for their own ends. Left open, however, in his remarks, is why some concepts become modular and others do not, and what pressures result in their differential use. Anderson does not offer a theorisation of the sociological dynamics of intersocietal competition, and the hybrid forms of cultural concepts and class relations that create national communities. An Andersonian vision of the origins of nations arguably requires an engagement with uneven and combined development to correct this intellectual absence. The reverse, however, is also true. Uneven and combined development needs a theory of 'imagined communities'. As I show below, Chinese nationality can be seen as an Andersonian rupture with messianic time in which print-capitalism and lexicographic reform formed critical dimensions of the process. I analyse this, however, through the lens of uneven and combined development, moving from the whip of external necessity, through the combined

sociological conditions, and drawing out how the resulting national consciousness was an 'ideological amalgam'.

4.3 The messianic apprehension of time in Imperial China

Imperial China testifies to how the crisis of absolutist states took place resolutely across the *longue durée* of history. Dynastic regimes still dominated the geopolitical landscape at the *fin de siècle* of the nineteenth century and the struggle against colonialism would be an even longer process. Whereas by the late eighteenth century Europe saw the beginnings of modern public society, with attendant forms of national consciousness, and in the New World consciously nationalist movements were establishing a novel republican form of governance, in China the strength of the Confucian imagination meant there was no similar development of a national imagery in this period. Considering its late Qing history 'from below' one can see visibly how Chinese subjects remained locked in a social imagination rooted in messianic time. Participants in the Taiping Rebellion utilised Western, Christian vernacular, which reflected the influence of missionaries long active in China. Their leader Hong Xiuquan, who obtained his copy of the bible from missionaries in Guangzhou, 'claimed to be the reincarnation of a son of Jehovah and that in a dream Jehovah had given him a sacred sword and told him to cleanse the world of corruption and suffering' (H.-F. Hung 2011, 186). However, despite this biblical appropriation – a cultural influence testifying, of course, to the growing intersection of Chinese and Western life –, and their creation of new figurative icons, the core narrative was almost identical to the White Lotus Rebellion (ibid). By invoking the Mandate of Heaven – and seeking to deprive the Qing of this celestial mantel – they perfectly encapsulated *simultaneity* in the apprehension of time; with past, present and future united by an instantaneous divinity. Little wonder, then, that once the Taiping rebels had conquered Nanjing they declared:

> …When disorder reaches the extreme, then there is order, when darkness reaches its extreme, then there is light; this is the Way of Heaven. Now, night has fled and the sun has risen! We only wish that all our brothers and sisters on earth would rush from the demon's treacherous gate and follow God's true way (cited in Hung 2011, 187).

The rebellion was a vast anti-absolutist uprising and the Taiping shared with the White Lotus Rebellion some progressive discourse: they subverted traditional gender roles through women's participation; they mobilised opposition to Qing tax rises on poor peasants; and, influenced by Christian social reformism, they declared themselves in

favour of equality (H.-F. Hung 2011, 186 – 187). However, ultimately, the conflict saw 600 cities change hands, often with brutal massacres, and the Taiping record of governance once in power was atrocious (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 209 – 211). Remaining in besieged cities they made no attempt at rural management and their religiosity generally eschewed economic planning and foreign relations (ibid). They abandoned egalitarian practices by establishing pseudo-nobilities amongst leaders replete with private armies, hareems and new ritualistic costumes (ibid). Their time in power was largely characterised by the 'slaughter and destitution' they inflicted on their subjects (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 211). In all these senses, their success and momentary appeal tells us much more about peasant hardship in the late Qing crisis, than it does about any political astuteness on the part of the Taiping leaders. In its melange of Confucian and Christian ritual this collective imagination was an amalgam of cultural forms, reflecting the particular constellations of thought thrown by a declining polity's interchange with the West. However, one certainly does not find in the mental-conceptions conjured up by the Taiping rebels an imagined vision of Chinese identity. Instead we find a consciousness that was still rooted in the salvations of *messianic time* and therefore pre-modern in the Andersonian sense.

Why this was so requires some explanation, particularly against the backdrop of *integrative* Qing-era reforms that developed a regional division of labour and vibrant internal market. To answer this riddle Anderson's argument on nation state formation in the Americas is instructive. He argues that economic development and new mercantile interests coupled with the liberal values of the Enlightenment, were important anterior determinations for the rise of national consciousness – the latter above all provided 'an arsenal of ideological criticisms of the imperial and *anciens regimes'* –, but could not create 'in themselves the kind, or shape, of imagined community to be defended from these regimes' depredations' (Anderson 2006, 65). In the New World, nationalism arose from the fusion of linguistically and culturally cohesive creole functionaries of the new statelets with print-capitalists (i.e. mass cultural producers) that played the decisive historical role in forming national consciousness (ibid). This is the most concrete element of Anderson's explanation. Those agents, that is, whose activity provides the decisive final 'push' within a process that involves a series of contingent interactions between capitalist relations, the print medium, geopolitical fragmentation, and linguistic diversity, which together conspired to impel dispersed human societies to create a patchwork of unique national imageries (Anderson 2006, 42 – 43). Capitalist

modernisation confronted a politically and socially fragmented world of many societies, each with their own geopolitical identity. This historical context of uneven development, coupled with the centrifugal pressures of capitalist production itself, does impart a certain 'fatality' to the origins of nation-ness. However, a cautious stress on the contingent, historical nature of the process is needed, one that recognises the differential ways that actors can respond to these global realities. Some scholars have argued the relation between capitalism and nation-ness is simply one of necessity, owing to the spatially concentrated and uneven nature of capitalist production (Callinicos 2009a). The idea, in short, that 'if states did not exist capitalism would have to create them' (Harvey 2006, 164). It is not clear, however, how such statements account for contingency. How to explain, for example, why a plurality of statelets emerged in Latin America in contrast to the territorial cohesion of the United States. For combined development theory such contingencies are 'anticipated' by the theoretical framework, and explained by working through the ways in which agents responded to the pressures of the 'outside' world (Cooper 2013). This imparts an historical open-ness to the question, requiring empirical investigation to explain the contrast between the experience of southern and northern America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Other scholars that have criticised Anderson's for drawing a too 'soft' link between capitalism and nation-ness focus on the role played by internal markets within early modern polities. Davidson highlights how it was with 'the creation of trade networks that merchant capital began to link up dispersed rural communities both with each other and with the urban centres to form an extensive home market' (Neil Davidson 2007). This proliferation of exchange within a territorially unitary polity fostered, he argues, a national consciousness (ibid). Problematically, however, this description could easily apply to mid-Qing China. Yet, this expansion of inter-regional trade and a division of labour with a special role for merchants (and accordingly a thriving urban-life) *did not* give rise to national consciousness. It instead generated new, often subversive, archaic identities. Recall how I noted in chapter 3 that far from acting as a vanguard for a Chinese national identity the merchant diaspora promoted plague god cults, i.e. an imagination firmly rooted in messianic time. Both these actors and the doctrines of the Confucian state remained wedded to traditional consciousness and it was therefore new social agents that developed an imagined vision of 'China'. Print-capitalists and the emergence of intellectual cultural producers outside of the state provided the critical 'push' in the last decade of the nineteenth century. But the narratives of 'nation', 'race',

and 'empire', they drew upon weaved together a series of native and 'foreign' discourses. An interesting feature of its 'late development' of nation-ness lies in how it was undertaken consciously, rather than subconsciously, as these layers saw 'a national spirit' as necessary in order to react to external threats. Indeed, they were animated with concern by the threats that the outside world posed to China's sovereignty, and understood this 'whip of external necessity' far better the Court that controlled economic policy and remained aloof from cultural transformation.

4.4 Chinese national identity as combined development: (i) colonial fear, colonial emulation?

Chinese subjects developed a series of narratives of salvation through their incorporation into international society in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A new urban-based class were alert to international realities as world events were now embedded in the consciousness of the polity thanks to the written vernacular and booming publications industry. A new reading public thus existed who felt deeply *Chinese* yet also shamed by their newly imagined community's status in international affairs. Although, in this interplay between the local and the global, the polity's imperial history weighed heavily on their minds, how they came to understand the vocabulary of nationality, colonialism, and race largely mirrored their use in international society. It is impossible to think of each these elements as anything but central to the world order that crystalized between 1870 and 1945, often referred to as the era of 'High Imperialism'. In characterising this epoch, Hobsbawm's observation that *many* felt the allure of 'national chauvinism', but *'no doubt almost all'* were 'deeply imbued with the fundamental racism of nineteenth century civilisation' (Hobsbawm 1989, 160) is chilling yet largely apposite. But his conclusion that racism represented a means by which an *inegalitarian* international community with an *egalitarian* ideology, liberalism, reconciled itself to its inequalities (Hobsbawm 1989, 251 - 252) is, perhaps, only partly true. The social struggles and cultural changes the world has seen since, which have partially moved a *still inegalitarian* civilisation beyond the strict racial hierarchies of this age, and seen racism thereby mutate into different forms, suggests an important role for the cultural imagination. In any case, racism was certainly organic to the modern day, i.e., capitalist, colonialism pioneered by Britain. Indeed, the seemingly cosmopolitan 'cult of progress' that animated the minds of the new rich in the *belle époque* (Hobsbawm 1989, 262 - 276) was juxtaposed to, and fatally denigrated by, this

drive to colonial annexation. Whether justified by the 'soft' racism of the 'civilising mission' or 'harder' notions of white supremacy, the success of states such as Britain that pioneered capitalist empire building created a dangerous role model, which late developers sought to replicate. The zero-sum game that resulted had catastrophic outcomes for the world's people.

Britain established a 'model of emulation' for aspiring powers with several interlocking elements. It used force ('gunboat diplomacy') to open markets for its exports, encouraged financial liberalisation to secure the hegemony of the City of London under the aegis of 'free trade', and turned to empire building to boost its imperial prestige and create jurisdictions favourable to these capitalist interests (McMichael 1985; McMichael 2004, 1 – 34). This fusion of colonialism with a liberal integrationist approach to the world market gave British imperialism an 'atavistic quality', which incorporated 'mercantilist relations despite its antimercantilist pretensions' (McMichael 2004, 10). The other states aspiring to emulate Britain (France, Germany, the United States, later Japan and Russia) did so in the novel conditions this created. As such, there could be no 'simple repetition' of the colonial trade triangle between Britain, China and India or even something similar. By the early twentieth century, capitalism was not only more integrated spatially – it had also ascended to new heights developmentally. There had been a whole swathe of changes triggered by the Second Industrial Revolution: novel workplace management techniques, more depersonalised ownership structures, a new role for money capital and the stock market, labour-saving technology, and whole new industries (chemicals, wood pulping, etc.) (Hobsbawm 1989, 43 – 45). In this new global order, Britain still dominated but modernising competitor states could draw on its existing achievements and avoid repeating earlier stages by adapting existing achievements to native productive capacity. Consequently, the United States and Germany became more competitive in the new advanced industries (ibid). This *unevenness* in global production fed into a parallel *connectedness* in finance and trade as the City of London remained the preeminent source of investment. Britain accounted for 44 per cent of all global foreign investment – a dominance completely unparalleled either before or since – and boasted a steamer fleet alone that was 12 per cent larger than every other merchant shipping fleet in the world (Hobsbawm 1989, 51). In short, Britain fell behind industrially but its financial and trading strength made it central to the world economy.

This meant that Britain's economic interests were more global than every before, going far beyond the more narrow commercial interests invested in its Empire.

Britain's shifting position testified to how changes within capitalism increasingly created a paradox in the dominant colonial worldview, because the advanced economies became very dependent *on one another.* Hobsbawm observes that around 80 per cent of European trade and investment across the nineteenth century was with other developed countries (Hobsbawm 1989, 73 – 74). Insofar as it *was* directed overseas it tended to focus on the rapidly expanding European settler colonies: e.g. Canada, Australia, South Africa, Argentina, and the United States (ibid). Colonies were integral sources of raw materials and export markets, but they were shunned by capital investment (Callinicos 2009b, 154). Indeed, the practices that inhibited the growth of Chinese industry were taken to new extremes in actual colonies. 'Fear of emulation' (Harvey 2005, 139 – 140) was a central concern of ruling elites in the imperialist countries. Opinion tended to divide between globalising financiers and protectionist industrialists, but, these arguments resolved themselves in practice with capital export only permitted in the carefully selected spheres that helped boost 'home' manufacturers (Webster 2006, 751 – 755). New railways opened up export markets and loans to the colonial states were used to import British goods. To this can be added, the advantage that local producers in India and other colonies were rendered uncompetitive by the tariffs and taxation regimes the British imposed (Parthasarathi 2010).

Undoubtedly, the political economy of classical imperialism materially benefited ruling elites in the home countries. However, China illustrated its inherent contradictions. Since the 1870s a great dash for colonial possessions had taken place across the globe. Against the backdrop of the Long Depression colonies could guarantee preferential terms of trade for the colonial power and act as a buffer against protectionist moves by rivals. The 'Scramble for Africa' initially caught Britain off guard, but it soon led the way, adding 4 million squares miles to the Empire between 1875 and 1914 (Hobsbawm 1989, 59). France would likewise add 3.5 million to its own, and Germany, Belgium and Italy around 1 million each (ibid). Hopes for large export markets were 'often disappointed' (Hobsbawm 1989, 66), but the dash for empire observed a perverse rationality. Empire building was woven into the cultural assumptions and institutional organisation of this evolving world system and this imposed a 'zero-sum-game' logic on international affairs; if colonial power x did not annex territory y then they would inevitably lose out to their rival z that did. China

illustrated the deep contradictions within the system, because capital largely *flowed out* of its economy to colonial powers and large export markets could never develop – at least not after the Second Industrial Revolution had brought a new array of *expensive* products to the world market – in conditions so heavily characterised by systematic underdevelopment. Chinese rural production accounted for 65 per cent of domestic product and 79 per cent of the labour force in 1933 (Feuerwerker 1983a, 63). Slow population growth rate reflected a high birth rate combined with a similarly high but fluctuating death rate. This was due to the peasantry's very low standards of living, poor public health controls and susceptibility to natural and man-made disasters (Feuerwerker 1980b, 70). A large export market could not develop in these conditions without both new investment in industry and central state control of tariffs and fiscal policy that the Unequal Treaties largely precluded. Neither did the colonial powers funnel capital investment into industry within their spheres of influence. This meant the scramble for extraterritorial rights between 1897 and 1902 (see table 4) anticipated a large future market that could not emerge given the deeply unfair constraints that rentier semi-colonial conditions put on domestic output.

Table 4: The 'Scramble for China', 1895 - 1902

Flashpoint	The 'humiliating' outcome
Sino-Japanese War, 1894 – 1895	Cession of Taiwan, Peasadores and the Liaodong peninsula, legalisation of foreign ownership of domestic industry, large war indemnities, Korean independence and the end of its status as tributary state.
'The Triple Intervention', and secret Qing alliance with Tsarist Russia, 1895	Intervention of France, Germany, and Russia restore Liaodong peninsula to China.
The 1897 'Scramble for China' gathers pace, 'threat of partition' looms	Germany seizes Jiaozhou and granted 99 year lease; Russia occupies Liaodong peninsula on pretext of defending China from Germany; Britain secures 99 year mandate extend territories in Hong Kong to Landau Island and the Northern Territories, a 25 year mandate in Weihaiwei, and Yangtze valley 'sphere of influence', France 99 year lease Guangzhou Bay and 'sphere of influence'; Japan Fujian 'sphere of influence'.
Boxer War, 1901 – 1902	Huge war indemnities, stationing of troops in Beijing, legalisation of the 'Open Policy' in China.

In the most general sense, these contradictions signified a disjuncture between the needs of industry and finance for a world market and the 'social imagination' of colonial-racism that politically configured the world order. Global market integration was organically connected to the centralisation of capital in large firms that were intimately linked with the financial system – a process that many Marxists emphasised

(Hilferding 2006; Hobson 2006; Lenin 1967). However, while these economic tendencies have proceeded apace over the last century, the world has also witnessed a parallel shift in the cultural and institutional assumptions underpinning the geopolitical organisation of the international economy. These changes underline the central role of colonial annexation, justified by racist narratives, to the period from 1870 to 1945 of 'high' or 'classical' imperialism (Callinicos 2009b, 144 – 164). Empire building was a crucial *measure* of geopolitical standing and this suggests a suitably important role needs to be given to the *culture of imperialism* in determining the type of emulation aspiring powers sought. For Trotsky the 'privilege of historical backwardness' referred to how late developing states drew upon the achievements of the more advanced and therefore did not have to repeat the same economic stages afresh (Trotsky 1967b, 22). Capitalist integration made possible this 'levelling out' of 'stages of development', but in the process utilised such 'anarchistic methods' that it 'set one country against another, and one branch of industry against another, developing some parts of world economy while hampering and throwing back the development of others' (Trotsky 1928). As a description of enduring features of the dynamics of capitalist development these remarks more than hold true. Capitalist states persistently compete with one another, levelling out disparities only to then intensify competition and heighten instability. However, the contemporary 'model of emulation' envisioned by aspiring states today has shifted in important ways. For late developers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century the annexation of territory was seen as a necessity. Leading imperialist states extracted advantage from their empires, requiring colonial incursions on un-colonised territories to compete, and going hand in hand with the narratives of racial supremacy that justified such extremist sanctions. The concepts of 'empire', 'race' and 'nation' – mental-conceptions with which subjects apprehended the world – were material realities that shaped, and gave meaning to, this epoch in global history. This suggests that one needs to weave into the conception of combined development how emerging powers not only draw upon the technical and social achievements of others, but also the cultural ideas and values specific to a particular historical form of the international system and its 'pioneering' states.

In this sense, colonial-capitalism, like the nation-state, had a 'modular character' (Anderson 2006, 4). It was liable to be repeated, resulting in its differential repetition of the colonial enterprise by aspiring states. To explain why this was so, one needs to understand the 'conditions of compulsion' that existed within an international political

economy structured on concrete institutional and cultural lines. States that were seeking to emulate the prestige and power of the British Empire did so in the new conditions that colonial-capitalist integration had established (Anderson 2006, 156 – 157). These changes meant that 'history', as Trotsky put it, could 'not repeat itself' (Trotsky 1978, 59). For whereas Britain imposed industrial capitalism on a world for which it was largely alien, now powerful capitalist-colonial empires confronted each other in a battle for markets, which, due to the role territorial acquisition played, increasingly came to resemble a zero-sum-game. An economically integrated world with a polycentric distribution of new industrial powers morphed into a series of territorialised colonial rivalries. Even the United States – often regarded to have eschewed empire – practiced it 'at home' on a vast scale, involving the annihilation of the native American population, and wars with Mexico and Spain (Boyce 2012, 82; Callinicos 2009b, 152; Overy 2011, 482 – 485). Indeed, arguably the 'have not powers', Germany, Italy, and Japan simply wanted to emulate in their own continents what the United States had successfully achieved in North America. In doing so, they developed their own versions of 'manifest destiny', of ethnic superiority analogous to 'WASP'[14] discourse and of settler colonialism mirrored on the European experience. In Japan, this took the form of a 'divinely ordained Japanese cultural infallibility manifest in the august person of the Emperor himself' (Sheftall 2011, 58). Given how deep these assumptions of colonial-racism ran, it is difficult to imagine how the catastrophic breakdown between the two world wars could have been avoided. The 'failed settlement' at Versailles was, in this sense, but one feature of a deeper set of contradictions. The remarkable fluidity of international relations, and the tendency to view alliances as episodic, illustrates this deep geopolitical instability. The British hegemon, for example, pondered an alliance with Germany against the United States. The country initially formed an alliance with Japan to check Russian expansion in Asia only to then block with Russia and France against Germany and Austria-Hungry. It then experienced tense relations with France in the inter-war years over German appeasement, and played a key role in isolating the Soviet Union, but then allied with the communist state during the Second World War.

China stood at the centre of these contradictions as the main site of geostrategic conflict in the decades prior to the First World War (Anievas 2012, 16). The polity was divided into formal 'spheres of influence', each one attached to a colonial overlord and
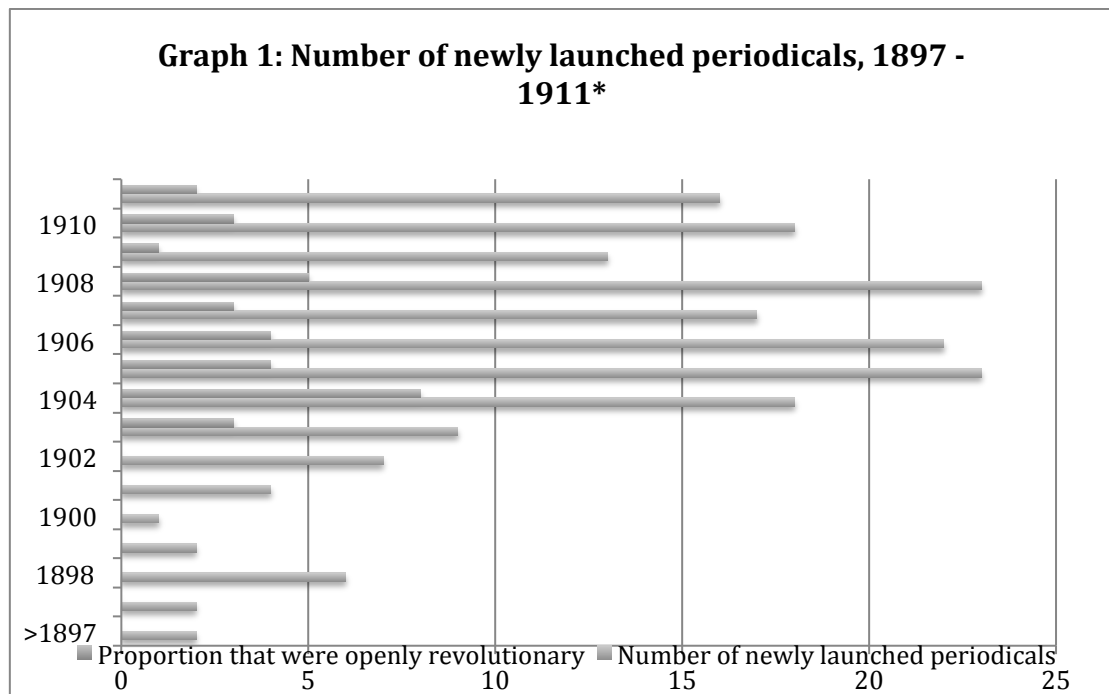
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[14] 'White Anglo-Saxon Protestant' referred to a closed group of elite Americans with English Protestant ancestry.

the rise of Japan destabilised the existing balance of power in East Asia. The fallout was ultimately global, as Japan's defeat of Russia in 1905 emboldened German colonial ambition in Europe and formed part of the egregious slide into the First World War (Anievas 2012, 16 – 17). The intensity of this colonial encroachment around China and the seeming powerlessness of the Qing in the face of such a threat created a powerful impetus for Chinese subjects to push for revolutionary change. Modernisation was increasingly recognised as the only means by which China might be able to retain its territorial integrity. The Hundred Day Reform of 1898 was a response to defeat at the hands of Japan and the 1897 'scramble for China' (see Table 4) that followed, both of which pushed the balance of power in the Court in favour of reformists (Tanner 2009, 398 – 399). The Confucian examination was finally reformed, along with other measures designed to create a more efficient state administration, but these moves quickly led to a coup by conservatives around the Empress Dowager (ibid). Their fatal support for the Boxer Rebellion led to yet another military defeat, huge indemnities and the de facto end of China's fiscal independence. So large were these repayments to the allied victors that even if the Qing had attempted a large-scale industrialisation drive in the 1900s they would have almost certainly lacked the capital to do so without defaulting on their external obligations (Riskin 1987, 15). Against the backdrop of this colonial encirclement a schism developed between the modernist 'public society' – i.e., those that imagined 'China' to be a shared agency and therefore firmly framed their consciousness within 'homogenous empty time' – and those, such as the Boxers, who aggressively struck back against colonialism but within the logic of messianic time and thus without credible methods or goals.

It took a long period of socio-economic interaction between Qing China and the West to give rise to a modernist layer of intellectuals that were independent from the scholar-gentry ruling class, but when they did emerge they fostered the creation of the national imagination. The modernists saw the need to generate a public opinion with new means of cultural production, principally the magazine and newspaper, and to provide for themselves and their offspring a modern education with a global outlook (Lee 1983, 336). The turn to create these periodicals correlated extremely closely with the geopolitical events, in 1895, 1897, and 1904/5 (see Graph 1). This combination of colonial incursion and domestic radicalisation was undoubtedly crucial to the eventual disintegration of the Qing dynasty in 1911. Numerous newspapers emerged with the sole purpose of covering the Russo-Japanese war, a conflict of great interest to China's

literati for it pitted a modernising Asian nation against a foe perceived to be one of Europe's most powerful autocracies (Schiffrin 2009, 171). The humiliating reality – that China remained neutral in a conflict taking place on its territory – created a powerful 'whip of necessity', but only the modern urban society, and not the collapsing Qing dynasty, proved responsive to it. This is why, as Graph 1 shows, many of the journals emerging in 1904 were explicitly revolutionary and fervently sought a *Chinese – and not* absolutist, dynastic *and, crucially, Manchu* – state to defend the newly imagined sensibility of 'national interest'.

Graph 1: Number of newly launched periodicals, 1897 - 1911*

Proportion that were openly revolutionary ▪ Number of newly launched periodicals

Source: Kaske 2008, 184 – 185
* Kaske also gives a reliability breakdown on the figures that I have not included in this version of the graph.

The fear of an imperialist contagion, whose end point would be the total annexation of China, disturbed the thoughts of the 'new Chinese'. This community was not only domestically located in the Treaty Ports: modern migration patterns had made it a 'global' identity. For whereas peasants could remain in this period relatively untouched by the social forces that were creating a sense of 'China', those who moved abroad, whether rich or poor, were immediately placed within this identity and could understand it relatively in a world of nationalities. The number of students studying in Japan grew steadily (see Table 5) and the successful modernisation undertaken by their neighbouring power provided a source of inspiration for the Chinese. Students studying in Tokyo formed the 'Resist Russia' movement, even attempting to establish a

volunteer corps to support the war effort, and their dark warning that 'once Manchuria was lost foreign flags would soon be raised over the eighteen provinces of China proper' (Harrell 1992, 135) reflected the angst-ridden nature of the new national imagination. Such concerns were hardly unjustified given the global context and they had an enduring impact on the national psyche.

Table 5: Chinese students in Japan, 1901 - 1915

1901	40
1902	30
1903	6
1904	109
1905	15
1906	42
1907	57
1908	623
1909	536
1910	682
1911	691
1912	260
1913	416
1914	366
1915	420

Source: Jansen 1980, 351

This intellectual layer of society that had a direct experience of 'the outside world' emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century. Overtime Sun Yat-sen became its most influential public figure. Born in a village in Guangdong, he moved to Hawaii at the age of thirteen and received an Anglican schooling (Jansen 1970, 60). He returned to Guangdong as a Christian who associated Confucian ritual with social backwardness, and was promptly sent away to Hong Kong when he 'scornfully broke two idols to show his contempt for them' (ibid). Many of those like Sun that experienced the tumultuous energy and rapid change of the colonial nations, found the timeless bureaucratism of Imperial China, 'deficient in government organization, scientific and education progress and material standards of living' (ibid). The new nationalists aspired to be Chinese, but this identity was also forced upon them by their otherization as 'alien' within the foreign lands they encountered. They also developed a sense of Asian community and solidarity, reflecting both their shared Confucian heritage and a commonly held hostility towards Western colonialism. Indeed it was the indifference the Qing authorities showed to Sun's petition urging them to adopt the Meiji slogan, *fukoku kyōhei* ('rich country, strong army') and pursue fiscal and economic reform, which pushed him to draw revolutionary nationalist conclusions (Jansen 1970, 61 – 62). Sun would live to embody all of the contradictions of the anti-colonial subjectivity as it became manifest within the imagined communities formed in polities that fell afoul of colonial-racism. He developed a passionate hatred for Western imperialism, but China's ethnically Manchu rulers became the principal target of his anger as their leadership led to repeated humiliations, lacing his nationalism with a racial element that would come to characterise Chinese nation-ness (Jansen 1970, 204). He also looked to Japan as a potential friend, for they had successful withstood colonial incursions, even though their

'pan-Asianism' was heavily marked by the politics of colonial emulation – clearly manifested in Taiwan and Korea by the late 1890s. Sun's hopes of a pan-Asian alliance would, of course, be more than disappointed. Significantly, however, the narrative he wove as late as November 1924[15], which dreamed of the rise of 'Great Asia' and stressed the superiority of Asian culture and virtues (Jansen 1970, 210 – 212), underlined how even anti-imperialists internalised the dominant outlooks of imperialism in international society by making the 'rise to power' of a new, obliquely colonial, system the central yardstick of progress for the anti-colonial struggle. Indeed, in *The International Development of China,* Sun openly advocated Han-Chinese settler colonialism in Tibet, Mongolia, Manchuria, and Xinjiang, and asserted this would allows the people of these regimes to come to terms with their common, Chinese, *racial* identity (Powers 2004, 104). Both in its appeal to race and seemingly expansive, colonial ambitions, Sun's outlook symbolised enduring problems of Chinese nationalism that would characterise communist party rule too. In chapter five, I discuss how the CCP reengaged on its commitment to national self-determination shortly after taking power (see pp. 219 – 220). This position was rooted in the same narrative as Sun's 'Great Asia' that emerged out of the cultural assumption of the colonial world where territory became 'politicised' as a source of power.

The status of Taiwan in PRC geostrategic claims encapsulates this orientation and is worth reflecting upon when considering the origins of Chinese nationhood in the geopolitical context of the 1894 – 1911 period. Taiwan was ceded to Japan as a result of the first Sino-Japanese War in a state of extreme social underdevelopment and without a 'national consciousness' in the Andersonian sense we are discussing here. Given the polity only won independence from Japan with the latter's defeat in the Second World War, i.e. a half a century later, it was for several decades assumed that the anti-colonial struggle there would take a *Taiwanese* form. The Kuomintang government when it arrived on the island was, in some respects, alien and actually antagonised the local population, sparking mass social unrest in 1947 (Wachman 2008, 100). The Chinese communists were initially clear on the right of Taiwan to self-determination. Indeed, in 1936, during his famous interview with Edgar Snow, Mao had described Taiwan in the same terms as Korea and stated, 'we will extend them our enthusiastic help in their struggle for independence' (cited in Wachman 2008, 85). It is telling that Mao did not at

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[15] Sun gave this speech on the 28 November 1924 and died on the 12 March 1925.

this time extend the principle to Japanese occupied Manchuria, which would have brought him and the CCP into *significant conflict* with the aggressive nationalist sensibilities of the polity at a time when the communists were arousing public sympathy. But, nonetheless, this makes for a striking contrast to his remarks from 1959 that are couched *firmly* in colonial-style realism:

> We have thrown out the North American imperialists from this continent but they are holding out in Taiwan. We have warned them to get out of there but they refuse… The USA does not object to Quemoy and Matsu being given back to us, but in return it wishes to retain Taiwan for itself. This would be an *unprofitable deal.* We had better wait; let Chiang Kai-shek stay on Quemoy and Matsu, and we shall get them back later, together with the Pescadores and Taiwan. *Our territory is spacious, and for the time being we can get along without these islands.* It is unimportant if they do not return Taiwan to us for another hundred years (cited in Wachman 2008, 113 – 114, emphasis added).

These remarks are heavily imbued with the assumptions of an earlier age, i.e. the classical period of colonial capitalism where territorial expansion, and the trading of colonial 'possessions' amongst the major imperialist powers, was an everyday occurrence. It illustrates the transformation that occurred in the CCP after the Long March and correlates closely with Mao's own rise to power in the party. A central conclusion to draw from this analysis is the role of *colonial emulation* in the formation of Chinese national consciousness. There were tendencies, far from absolute but real nonetheless, amongst the layers that created and reproduced a national identity to imagine it as aspiring to the same goals of territorialised imperial power as the colonial empires that they had set out to challenge. This reflected the nature of the transition from dynastic empire to imagined national community, for the latter stood in a paradoxical relation with the former. As we shall now outline, 'China' emerged outside of the Qing state for sociological reasons, reflecting its different relationship to urban capitalist culture. However, the new Chinese also identified with the polity over whom the Qing held sway, made a political claim on its territory, and identified the dynasty as 'foreign' due to its Manchu ethnicity. This, as I will come on to discuss, laced the notion of 'Chinese' with an enduring racialized element.

4.5 Chinese national identity as combined development: (ii) sociological conditions
The Taiping Rebellion was not the only uprising to beset China in the mid nineteenth century. It was convulsed with a series of peasant rebellions with devastating human costs; the population of China in 1850 was c. 410 million but by 1873 it had fallen to c.

350 million, as social and economic hardship fed into vast violent uprisings (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 215 – 216). The tragedy of the sacrifice lay in the archaic character of these failed revolutions. They lacked comprehension of the whirlwind of social forces now contributing to their hardship and with a dynastic conception of the world they could not be expected to develop a modern policy that materially answered their own social trauma. Put in contrast with other geopolitical communities faced with the challenges of modern capitalism globally this is not surprising. More puzzling is the inertia of China's scholar-gentry ruling class despite the polity's integration into global capitalist markets. Some sections of the Qing Court did become alert to the threat that colonialism posed as they suffered successive defeats in war, but their conclusion, at least in part, was to retrench into and emphasise dynastic fundamentals. The officers that had repressed the revolts of the mid-century initiated the 'Self-Strengthening' movement and won official backing from the Court in the Qing Restoration. But its support for modernisation was limited to military and technical improvements (armaments, steamships, etc.) and this was combined with seeking to strengthen Confucian institutional and kinship norms (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 216 – 218). This was a patently doomed policy from the outset. Military spending required expanded capital production if the policy was not to bankrupt the state and render it dependent on foreign credit – an outcome that ineluctably transpired (Tanner 2009, 397). The problem was that the ruling gentry-bureaucracy remained deeply hostile to commerce and industry, fearing 'mines, railroads, and telegraph lines would upset the harmony between man and nature (fengshui)' and 'disturb the imperial ancestors' (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 219). Even though provincial administrations tended to be more sensitive to new economic realities, the bureaucratic oversight of the Qing state continually thwarted modernisation. Large-scale capital investment projects required official oversight leaving them vulnerable to corrupt rentier practices (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 219). One extreme example saw the equivalent of $50 million ear-marked for the navy spent on the Empress Dowager's palace – a material factor in its military defeat to Japan in 1895 (ibid). Stories like this abounded and with China forcibly 'opened' its domestic capital enjoyed no protections from foreign competition either. The economy was thus blighted by a post-tributary condition. It was integrated into global capitalism, but retained a bureaucratic ruling class at the apex of the state.

Political concerns for tradition intermingled with class interests and together meant the state would play *no role* in forging a Chinese national identity. Ideologically,

China's rulers did not adopt the principles of the Meiji slogan, 'rich country, strong army', which defined sovereignty in opposition to an aggressive world and sought to generate a public mood that inspired patriotic sacrifice. Instead the Imperial Court persisted with a Confucian worldview that claimed *universal* overlordship (Hsü 2000, 192). This meant, for example, that in the First Sino-Japanese War a 'modern state in which nationalism bound the government and people together in a common purpose' was pitted against one for whom 'government and people by and large formed separate entities', dramatically altering China's capacity to mobilise for the war effort (Hsü 1980, 108 – 109). In the absence of such national cohesion the Qing state was unable to 'command the behaviour of citizens' and – as a result of extraterritoriality – had partially given up its claim to 'legal paramountcy' (Rosenberg 1994, 129). By the close of the nineteenth century internal social order was restored, but only at the expense of a shift in power away from the Court towards local provinces. After the mid-century breakdown of order the provinces developed their own militaries, creating centrifugal sites of power that would later morph into warlordism (Liu 1978, 425 – 433). Two provincial naval squadrons even refused to fight in the war with Japan, pleading 'self-preservation' (Hsü 1980, 340). These processes underline how there was an absence of *sovereign capitalist power* in conditions of *capitalist penetration* of the polity. Capitalist sovereignty implies that the state constitutes itself in an external relation to production and civil society as an 'autonomous' political sphere (Rosenberg 1994, 128). The result is not a 'neutral' standpoint, but a form of class power that consolidates capitalist rule by insisting upon, and coercively upholding, a privately owned and controlled sphere of production (Rosenberg 1994, 84 – 86, 126 – 139; Wood 1981). Instead Confucian power upheld the *primacy of bureaucratic tutelage* in relation to private production. Historically this had suppressed native capitalist tendencies. But by the mid to late nineteenth century it meant that new capitalist layers either looked to the provincial states or colonial powers for protection. The hybridity of this social amalgam – of a decaying archaic state form juxtaposed to semi-colonial capitalist penetration – formed through China's combined development was undoubtedly unique, but the political conclusion was all too familiar. Like so many other of the polities in the south and east that were emerging out of struggles with colonialism, China was caught in a Catch-22 situation. It had a divided and weak capitalist class unable to establish the institutional basis, via either revolution or reform, for secure, native industrial development. Their 'advantage', if it can be called that, lay in the fact the Qing state

was disintegrating under the twin effects of geopolitical incursions and the centrifugal pressures unleashed by capitalist development. However, the form this took would result in decades of civil warfare amongst rival peasant armies.

These sociological conditions of combined development played a decisive role in making the formation of 'nation-ness' dissonant from the Qing state. The actors who sought to inspire the procreation of a national sensibility were certainly bourgeois in the broad conception of the term: encompassing administrative elites, middle class professionals, as well as capitalist property owners (Wood 1984, 19). Most of all, these were modern urban classes whose purview was international in scope. By the 1890s the Treaty Ports had undergone a considerable transformation, and their regional economies exhibited an explicitly capitalist dynamic of expansive development and with it new social classes and spatial surroundings. To the fore came China's new social groups: comprador-businessman, whose interests now straddled the new service and consumer economies as well as the traditional pastimes of foreign trade; salaried professional workers, such as teachers, journalists, accountants, lawyers, and doctors; not to mention a small but nonetheless visible urban proletariat (H. Chang 1980, 275). This transformation in the class structure elicited a parallel set of changes in spatial surroundings in the spirit of modern urban life: 'Western-style buildings, street patterns, and city services of gas lighting and water supply, plus steamship transportation and foreign trade, were all connected with (or extensions of) the world outside China' (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 226). Remarkable, in some respects, is how slowly these changes took to translate into the cultural arena and create new modes of apprehension that could distil a national consciousness. Only by the 1890s did these shifts translate into a Chinese identity proper, despite the more rapid economic interchange with the West seen since the empire's defeat in the Second Opium War.

What accounts for so long a delay? The answer lies in the blockage the Qing state represented to what Anderson calls, in the European context, 'the Lexicographic Revolution': where local administrative script-vernaculars were adopted by absolutist states to meet practical needs of governance amongst their polities and thus broke the Latin dominance of script language (Anderson 2006, 84). In China, Confucian scripture still had a monopoly as the language of state administration, but it was *not* a spoken vernacular and was only learnt by those seeking a place in the officialdom (Kaske 2008, 27). In medieval Europe, a similar situation had existed with the Latin lexicographic monopoly. A crucial difference lay, however, in the role that access to script knowledge

played in the class structure. In Imperial China, the ability to read Confucian script expressed ruling class power, not just a scholarly privilege. If one considers how the examination-system was the means of entry into the ruling class, then one can see that the *purely lexicographic* character served to sustain an elite dynastic status and identity.[16] Steeped in Confucian teachings and ritual that preached a superior insularity (coupled with considerable socio-economic privilege this knowledge imparted), the Chinese literati connected the lexicographic status quo to their own social power. To introduce lexicographic reform that aligned the written word to spoken vernaculars would undermine their elite status. This jealous defence of the status quo also fed hostility to all things modern and Western. The Jiangnan Arsenal, which was established in the 1860s to translate the literary products of Western science, could only carve out a small market for its publications (H. Chang 1980, 276). Neither could the schools established at the same time (as part of 'Self-Strengthening') to offer training in Western language, sciences and technical expertise gain recruits amongst the youth of the ruling elite (ibid). Against these cultural and social constraints it took time for a national sensibility to emerge. Even within the treaty ports modernisation was inhibited by the semi-colonial and post-tributary condition. A 'time lag' in the maturation of a national consciousness and sensibility resulted, but it did ultimately emerge amongst a section of the new, cosmopolitan social groups at the end of the nineteenth century. Alert to global developments and shamed by the response of the Qing to the competitive challenges of the new world order, these intellectuals linked the failure of 'Self-Strengthening' to the absence of a Chinese public opinion that could pressure dynastic power. This national sensibility confronted the Qing order and would become a struggle *against* the gentry-elite and *for* the alignment of a written Chinese form with vernacular language.

This layer was eminently a cultural feature of modern capitalism. Coastal cities now exhibited an expansive, capitalist cycle along with a 'modern mass media—Chinese journalists, newspapers, and magazines—and a new intelligentsia of writers and artists not oriented toward careers as government officials' (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 226). Intellectuals like Lu Zhuangzhang connected lexicographic

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[16] There are obvious parallels here with the relationship between Latin and the traditional Catholic scholarly elite in medieval Europe. But, in addition to the special class role of Confucian scripture in China, a further distinction lies in the territorial cohesion of the Middle Kingdom and the geopolitical plurality of Europe, which led dynastic states to establish their own administrative languages base on local vernaculars for practical purposes; 'essentially a matter of unselfconscious inheritance or convenience' (Anderson 2006, 84).

revolution to the development of the broad literacy needed for national cohesion (Kaske 2008, 94). Lu 'described the people as the vital organs of the state connected to its head (the ruler) and limbs (the officials) by virtue of their aptitude' and so 'only a literate people could make China stronger because it allowed the organism to function in a perfect way from top to bottom' (ibid). Such remarks represent archetypical elements of modern conservative ideology, but they were revolutionary in the Confucian context. Lu had *naturalised* ruling elites into a single imagined organism, 'China', and the literary revolution he pushed for was designed to bring it into being and thus end the system where rulers and ruled were separate entities. *Baihua,* a simplified form of Chinese intelligible to those without a classical education, was promoted as the new script (Kaske 2008). A series of periodicals consciously concerned to 'create a public opinion' and generate pressure for reform were launched in the 1890s (Lee 1983, 452 – 453, see also; Kaske 2008, 161 – 232). But this aspiration alone was insufficient without the material basis for mass cultural production: capitalism. 'Nothing served to "assemble" related vernacular', in China like elsewhere, 'more than capitalism, which… created mechanically-reproduced print languages capable of dissemination through the market' (Anderson 2006, 44). In the small but growing market, the largest national newspaper, *Shiwu Bao* ('The Chinese Progress') sold more than 10,000 copies (Chang 1980, 334). Circulation figures would rise astronomically in the 1920s, but the conception of 'China' was formed in this earlier moment as the new intelligentsia pioneered a vocabulary that cohered a national imagery. Indeed, this national identity formed in the 1890s was sufficiently strong to survive the deep divisions of the next decades. This, it should be emphasised, is despite the paucity of China's industrial development which remained sclerotic, even in the thoroughly capitalist Treaty Ports. Anderson is surely right to suggest that the strong industrial development achieved by the United States was an important factor in its development of a cohesive nationality (Anderson 2006, 63 – 64) and the strength of the Chinese imagination is accordingly remarkable given its economic paucity. Rival national identities based on localities never seriously challenged it (*pace* Japanese attempts in Manchuria that were ridiculed), despite the polity's post-1911 collapse into warlordism.

The emergence of 'China' in the social imagination was eminently a process of combined development. It was neither a wholly socio-economic or cultural development. These two aspects existed in a dynamic inter-relation, which overtime gradually unseated dynastic forms of consciousness and hierarchy. This shift in the

apprehension of time – towards 'homogenous empty time' and a conception of China as a collective force moving through it – emerged through the polity's interplay with the wider world. Britain's crushing of the Qing in 1842 foreshadowed decades of foreign incursions. Considering these events from our contemporary standpoint it might seem surprising that a series of decisive military defeats would not quickly result in a political revolution or radical reform (as is well known, there are numerous examples of this in the twentieth century, notably Russia in 1905 and 1917). The 'time lag' illustrates how actors, i.e. new culturally modern social groups, had to emerge that apprehended the meaning of these events and the threats and opportunities found in the world beyond the Confucian realm. It was these changes that created the foundation for the political struggles of modern China. Sun and Mao are individuals that shaped the new China in dramatic ways, but they emerged within and out of this sociological process. Sun, for example, shot to prominence on the national scene in 1896 when he was captured by the Chinese Legation in London 'and almost smuggled back to China for certain torture and death', only escaping this fate thanks to the British authorities (Jansen 1970, 64, 203). The incident won him fame in China but, in doing so, underlined the degree of social change in the polity. If this incident had occurred two decades earlier then there would have been little apprehension of its significance inside the country. Occurring at a moment when the transformations in Chinese urban life had given rise to the newspaper, the world event could now be refracted into the minds of the newly emerging 'imagined community'. As such, it was this urban capitalist transformation, with the associated revolutions in communications and media, concentrated global events into the localised community of the Treaty Ports to be apprehended by these new layers. But this modern 'citizenry' – in outlook, if not legal status – did not forge an imagined identity around 'Shanghai', or 'Nanjing', but considered themselves to be *Chinese.* Their choice reflected the territorial unity of the Confucian Empire, which provided a geographical reference point around which a new cohesive identity could be formed. These pre-existing territorial bounds and long history undoubtedly shaped the Chinese imagination. But the novelty of Chinese nation-ness lay in how the cultural heritage was now apprehended historically, rather than timelessly, and the identity assumed to be common to the whole community, thus transcending the stratified identities of the dynastic age. The creation of the written vernacular *baihua* was important to this process, even though the identity of 'China' allowed for a degree of linguistic diversity, with Mandarin the dominant language amongst the Han-Chinese

majority. The genesis of a nation, however, requires more than an identity statement. A mythology is needed to give meaning to this new collective imagination. As I will now discuss, such myths draw upon overtly modern repertoires of thought. However, the sensibility they construct is projected backwards into the past and the boundaries that are drawn between the 'inside' and 'outside' in this mythology are rich with potential for narratives of supremacy and ethnic difference to emerge.

The New Culture Movement, which had its origins in the late nineteenth century turn to mass cultural production, but rose to real prominence in the 1920s with the rise of anti-imperialist agitation, was beset by uncomfortable juxtapositions between emancipatory discourses and the use of racist repertoires of thought. Once 'politicised', i.e. turned into active attempts at social change, then the scope for ethnic intolerance was naturally great. This was reflected in anti-Manchu racism, which was a pre-existing feature of Chinese society as a 'natural' consequence of the ethnically stratified political system but became spliced with the overtly modern racist discourses of 'Social Darwinism' imported into China from the West. Before considering China's political nationalism we should first reflect upon the precise nature of the mythology that gave meaning to the new national community.

4.6 Chinese identity as combined development: (iii) 'myth of descent' as ideological amalgam

If one irony of the genesis of nation-ness lies in its 'objective modernity versus subjective antiquity' (Anderson 2006, 5), then another, no less significant, contradiction lies in how the local character of the national identity – i.e. its imagined concentration in a specific space – emerges through intersocietal interaction ('combined development') as the community's *negation* of 'the outside'. Kees van der Pijl argues that this expresses a human community in a state of self-alienation:

> Humanity engages in the process of socialisation as distinct communities, the groups in which it emerges from nature. The transition from animal species to historical humanity relies on a myth of descent from another time; a cosmogony that is universal, even if each community has a separate story of how it got here from eternity. Alienation, then, is inherent in the 'involuntary' way in which humans enter into social relations – both in the productive sphere and in relations of ethno-cultural difference. Through the lens of alienation, different communities are perceived as foreign, a condition lifted out of history and naturalised. Once modern states assume the sole right of handling foreign relations on the basis of their territorial sovereignty, 'international relations',

understood as relations among states that are nominally equal, come to be viewed as the normal state of affairs (van der Pijl 2010, 4).

Van der Pijl captures how societies treat their socially constructed boundaries, such as territorial sovereignty, as a timeless essence and not historical product. Consequently, the imagined inside/outside relations become attached to a mythology of the past considered *external* to history ('the myth of descent'). These sensibilities reflect the fragmented nature of human existence (i.e., the existence of many societies) and by viewing others 'through the lens of alienation' can lead to dangerous forms of 'otherization', such as pseudospeciation, ethnic generalisation and xenophobia. This darker side of the modern world has always been juxtaposed in our imagination to other dimensions pressing in the opposite direction: towards, that is, the breaking down of this alienated condition. Experiencing other cultures, cross-border solidarity, seeking to emulate the social achievements of other communities, and new internationalist identities, are also all part of 'being modern'. The compressed way that we experience space and time in capitalist modernity – where an unprecedented scope for interaction amongst communities produces just as great a tendency for reifying ethno-cultural differences – has intensified how we comes to terms with 'involuntary alienation'. To found a modern nation is by definition to create a 'myth of descent', which requires, in turn, a cultural amalgam of 'foreign and domestic', 'archaic and modern' discourses. In China, the ideals of sovereign territoriality, the rule of law, citizenship, and so on, trickled into the polity as it became conscious of international society, but other concepts of the modern world were equally manifested: its creation of racial hierarchies, exploitative economics and colonialist geopolitics.

'Race' and 'nation' were concepts that were both bound up with the alienating dimensions of modernity, but they had different intellectual pathologies. 'Nationalism thinks in terms of historical destinies', writes Anderson 'while racism dreams of eternal contaminations' of a once ethically pure race (Anderson 2006, 149) and accordingly seeks some form of racial hierarchy or 'purification' of the polity. 'Race', when it emerged as a modern political category, actually obscured ethno-cultural differences with typographies such as 'White', 'Black' and 'Yellow'. Yet, despite this, it was still able to integrate the new, modern cleavage of racial difference into pre-existing ethnic lines of demarcation. This could be seen in China where 'theories' of a hierarchy of races were drawn upon to justify, and give meaning to, the rising tide of anti-Manchu sentiment. Anti-Qing agitation had for centuries been laced with ethnic hostility to the

Manchu people and because 'nation-ness' emerged externally to the Qing/Manchu state there was a resulting tendency to identify 'China' with the Han-Chinese race. In other words, national identity became racially exclusive. As Rana Mitter explains:

> …The Chinese state and Chinese nation have both proved unstable, changeable and even elusive entities over the last century and a half. Notably, the introduction of "nation" as a form of political identity in China in the late nineteenth century was highly problematic. The neologism *minzu*, the term finally widely accepted as a translation of "nation", was infused with a racial element which has led to its becoming a taboo term in contemporary Chinese political discussion. Yet that racial overtone, used by thinkers including Sun Yatsen, separated it from pre-existing terms such as *guo* or *guojia*, which encompassed a more territorially bounded, racially uninflected concept of "country" or "state" (Mitter 2003, 123).

Minzu[17] was attractive because the Qing dynasty insisted they were *not Chinese.* The situation makes for quite a contrast with Europe where ruling elites had naturalised into nations. Romanovs became Russians, Hanoverians discovered they were English, Hohenzollerns that they were Germans, and in each case the elite conceded that they were first *amongst* a community with a *shared, common* identity (Anderson 2006, 85). But the Qing dynasty was far too conservative to countenance a reimagining of their status. They had woven their Manchu ethnicity into the cultural and institutional life of the state and, until the mid nineteenth century, they had maintained an ethnic majority in their Manchurian homeland by force (Isett 2006). The Manchu elite was therefore considered to be, not only above, but also *separate* to the subjects over whom they ruled. Contrastingly, national identity is imagined as egalitarian, because there is no stratified hierarchy of identities within the nation. The expectation that the individual will sacrifice for the common good (due to the shared identity), in turn, fosters the idea of patriotism, and the possibility of being accused of lacking it. Once this imagination is in place even rulers can be accused of lacking patriotism. But this consciousness, and the corresponding forms of capitalist cultural production it is predicated on, was alien to the Qing regime. It was quite logical in this context (though not, of course, in any way progressive) for nationalists to define the nation on Han-Chinese ethnic lines. Feng Tzu-

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[17] Some writers have argued that the idea *minzu* implies a racial inflection is wrong. Shanshan Lan argues that *min* means people and *zu* means lineage, neither of which are necessarily racialized, and together *minzu* can mean nation, people or ethnicity. Translations of Sun's work have instead tended to translate *minzu* as race when it does not automatically have this meaning. However, given that there was an association of nation with the Han-Chinese ethnicity, that Lan accepts Sun's nationalism 'contained a large dose of racial pride', and that he often conflated *minzu* with *zhongzu* (racial lineage) in his own speeches, then the overall argument I make is unaffected by this controversy (Lan 2012, 38 – 39).

yu, a writer of the new culture, perfectly expressed this widely held view after the Boxer War when he bemoaned the support the Boxer Rebellion had given to the Manchu regime:

> Our people constantly speak of the shame of being slaves to foreigners, yet they are not aware of the humiliation of being enslaved by the Manchus. They constantly speak of ousting the foreign races, yet they do not know enough to resist the alien Manchu race (cited in Harrell 1992, 104).

Such was the allure of racialized nationalism it crossed the immature but real boundaries between left and right forming at this time. For instance, in 1903, in a quite shocking passage, Tsou Jang, a 'leftist' and radical author of the bombastic tome, *The Revolutionary Army,* declared himself in favour of the genocidal extermination of 5 million Manchus in China:

> Let us sweep away the absolute monarchy which has lasted for thousands of years. Let us cast off the slave nature… Let us slay and exterminate more than five million of those beastlike Manchus. Let us wipe off the disgrace of this tranny and cruelty which has been going on for 260 years (cited in Harrell 1992, 148).

This appalling literary gesticulation did not simply reflect the fusion of 'nation-ness' with the ethnically laden social divisions of Qing China. Racialized narratives of domination were a ubiquitous feature of the modern world and this helps explain why the ethnically inflected concept of *minzu* survived the downfall of the regime and was a continuous theme of the New Culture Movement. Indeed, the Chinese inflection of race with nationhood consciously mirrored the growing popularity of Social Darwinist discourse across international society (Dikötter 1992). The writer Yan Fu imported Social Darwinism into China in the nineteenth century and it had an enduring impact on the New Culture movement (Dikötter 1992, 98 – 107). The pseudo 'scientific' doctrine, which animated the rising tide of global racism in the inter-war years, held a particular attraction for the polity's nationalists, because of its superficially radical break with Confucian notions of social harmony. The world was now conceived as a raw struggle for survival and this reactionary ideology thus purported to explain the humiliation of the polity as lying in the 'un-Chinese' cultural characteristics of the Qing. This racism undoubtedly denigrated the moral development of China's anti-colonial subject. Some New Culture writers openly engaged in pseudospeciation – treating the Manchus and other nomadic peoples as 'sub-human' – and argued the ability to colonize or withstand attempts at colonization indicated the superiority or inferiority of the race (Dikötter

1992, 106 – 107). Not only did this damage the anti-colonial argument by effectively ascribing substantial legitimacy to the colonial endeavour, but it also meant that China became envisioned as an aspiring colonial power. Like all such mythologies these racialized elements of the New Culture movement were highly contradictory. They combined a 'totalistic antitraditionalism', which was rooted in political and racial hostility to the Qing dynasty (Lin 1979, 55) with the elaboration of a timeless mythology of the Han-Chinese people. By rooting the anti-colonial subject in the idea that the Han-Chinese race had suffered a loss of power and prestige, national liberation became judged according to the restoration (or not) of that power within the international system. This process of nationality formation therefore perfectly encapsulates van der Pijl's conception of the 'myth of descent' (van der Pijl 2010, 4). Each society develops their own story of how they 'discovered', rather than *imagined,* national consciousness, which then, in turn, establishes socio-ethnic boundaries to homogenise the identity as the negation of the outside *and* its 'alien' manifestations within the polity (ibid).

It would be wrong, however, to view the New Culture Movement as one-sidedly 'racist'. It gave rise to a veritable plurality of political outlooks, progressive as well as reactionary. Anarchism, guild socialism, feminism, fascism and liberalism, 'to name but a few' all competed to win the hearts and minds of the urban masses (Mitter 2004, 104). In light of this diversity, and the presence of emancipatory hopes and discourses, it would be unfair to see racism as holding a vice-like grip on these cultural producers. However, equally, the hold of the ethnically inflected concept of Chinese nation identity as *minzu* and the ubiquity of political nationalism – with the imagery of humiliation combined with the goal of a strong nation-state – was extraordinarily strong. The movement 'forced an argument about how China should deal with its Confucian past' (ibid), but it was one characterised by unease and trauma due to the difficulties of constructing a 'myth of descent' in the context of the 'century of humiliation'. Confucianism had, of course, been fundamental to the ordering of the stratified identities found in 'the Middle Kingdom'. It was therefore lodged within the real history and collective memory of the polity, but modernisers would often see it as a defeated cultural order. Insofar as it was the *form of appearance* of the tributary class relations now swept away by capitalism, they were hardly unjustified in doing so. The New Culture Movement exhibited this existential tension; of what *is* and *was* the 'new China' being born or rediscovered (Mitter 2004). Different tracks were taken in

response; either to resurrect Confucian teaching in a modified form or emphasise how a radical rupture with the past was need to achieve *national salvation*. For both sides, however, Chinese identity was resolutely strong. Indeed, the identity established itself as a 'necessity', i.e. it became a social construction that imprinted a nationality onto individual agents.

Nationalist ideology was, in contrast, discursively constructed through political argument, but its allure arose from the collective psychology induced by the colonial encirclement of China. In the Japanese context, Sheftall argues that a fear of 'desymbolization' emerged out of the 'psychological condition of existential bewilderment' as the modernism of foreign shores was imposed on existing native lifeworlds (Sheftall 2011, 56). A similar process arguably occurred in China. Recall how Chinese students in Japan at the outbreak of the war with Russia feared 'foreign flags would soon be raised over the eighteen provinces of China proper' (Harrell 1992, 135). This imagined future underlines how materially grounded fears of colonisation were expressed in *desymbolization anxiety*. A national imagery was formed in response to this threat and was therefore novel and modernistic yet looked to traditional imagery as a source of meaning in the face of 'existential bewilderment'. Both Japan and China were ancient polities whose new national imaginations drew – in complex and often conflicting ways – on long historical lineages of development. This was important in giving these national imageries particular strength and cohesion. It also made these polities 'hypersensitive' to desymbolization threats (Sheftall 2011, 59) and the logical response of *re-symbolization* provided ample opportunity for racist and colonial aspirations for the nation. Reflecting the contradictions within the imagined community, the symbols were contested. Sun, for instance, opposed the Five Colour Flag used by the Chinese Republic government between 1912 and 1918, because each colour – including the yellow that was identified with Manchu rule – was thought to symbolise a separate ethnic identity which he held to be anathema to his project of *minzu* cohesion. These exemplifies the inherent tensions of forming a 'myth of descent' that tries to establish bounds for group cohesion.

This outline is useful for understanding the ideological tasks of Chinese communism once they took power. For Mao the *resymbolization* of national identity through the creation of a powerful state with attendant national imagery was as important as economic reconstruction. Between 1949 and 1952 the CCP won considerable support amongst the middle class intelligentsia by delivering the

Kuomintang's programme of reunification, reconstruction, national pride and territorial integrity. Resymbolization, therefore, achieved 'lift off' with 'a national flag, a national anthem, the pervasive use of red as a symbol of communism, the creation and dissemination of images of revolutionary heroes, and most important, the figure of Mao Zedong, the "Great Helmsman"' (Powers 2004, 105). However, in its standardisation this also closed down the plurality seen in the New Culture Movement (Mitter 2004). Neither was the process of instilling uniformity only *political*, i.e. simply reflective of the way that the communists mimicked the political form of 'state socialism' pioneered in Stalin's Russia. It also gave rise to the same tensions of *ethnic* cohesion implied by Sun's use of the term *minzu* – if national cohesion was understood as minzu cohesion, i.e. as ethnic cohesiveness, then where would this leave the identity of minorities? The logical outcome was to force adaption to Han-Chinese culture and this approach fitted organically with the monolithism of the Stalinist party:

> One of the problems the communists faced in their programme to instil a nationalist consciousness among the Chinese people was the fact that within China's borders there were a number of minority peoples who did not identify themselves as Chinese and whose own emerging national consciousness emphasised their differences from the Han and resistance to assimilation. In combating this, the communists adopted the nationalists' notion that all minorities constituted part of the Chinese race, and they embarked on a programme of cultural assimilation through which, it was hoped, the differences between the races would wither and disappear, leaving in the end a coherent, monolithic and unified culture that, naturally, was based on the Han model (Powers 2004, 109).

This expressed the turn of the Chinese communists to political nationalism – a process I outline in the last section of this chapter. However, for now it is sufficient to note the symmetry between this CCP policy in power and the *logic* of Sun's use of the ethnically inflected conception of the nation, which in its practical application had to involve assimilation. The cultural monolithism that the CCP already held to, due to the influence of Soviet Stalinism, complemented this approach. Having embraced nationalism and rejected plurality – i.e., rejected the concept there could be many different identities that could be incorporated into the Chinese nation – the CCP was left with no choice, but to impose a form of Han Chinese uniformity and assimilation in its resymbolization efforts. It is precisely because Mao adopted Chinese nationalism that Sun's notion of *minzu* becomes important. The CCP did not start from a blank slate and imagine the nation afresh, but they inevitably 'took', so to speak, the China that was created in the 1890s. In the next section, I discuss how this Chinese nationalism also

exhibited a general tendency to the division between messianic and pragmatic discourses seen after 1949. Before exploring this historical schism, let us first summarise the origins and enduring significance of the emergence of Chinese nationhood on its political nationalism:

- The 'whip of external necessity' in the form of the 'scramble for China' and the Russo-Japanese War led the new urban middle classes to consciously seek to 'create a nation' that could stand up to the wider world.
- These actors emerged out of urban capitalist development, which provided the means in the form of print-capitalism to cohere a national imagination. This process was, thus, external to the Qing ruling class, who were the same social stratum deemed to have betrayed the people.
- The transition from tributary empire to semi-colonial economy conditioned the form of the Chinese national imagination: it aspired to the restoration of 'lost' power and identified the colonial project as the yardstick of social progress in much the same was as the Japanese did. Reclaiming Qing territory, including colonies such as Taiwan, was a logical result of this.
- Furthermore, the Manchu ethnicity of the Qing dynasty led to Chinese nationhood being defined on anti-Manchu lines (reflecting the origins of 'China' as external to the dynasty), and this had implications for the Han Chinese assimilation imposed by the PRC after 1949.

4.7 Two forms of Chinese nationalism: messianic idealism versus pragmatic paternalism

China's discourses of 'national salvation' emerged organically out of desymbolization anxiety and –like the concept of race – crossed divisions between right and left. The radical Lu Xun's short story 'Diary of a Madman' (1918) became characteristic of the insecurity that blighted the emergent Chinese identity. He depicted the Chinese as a nation of cannibals, whose only hope lay with its children not yet assimilated into this immoral culture (Mitter 2004, 109 – 110). In this narrative, one finds therefore a myth of descent in which the imagined historical identity ('China') is considered wholly negative. A key message of Lu Xun's work is the importance of not tolerating moderation in the face of evil, and, hence, the Chinese people are considered culpable for their acquiescence to corrupt dynastic rulers (ibid). Interestingly, young people are seen as the only hope for the nation's salvation; their inexperience allows them to act as

a blank slate and remake the national community in their image. Denunciations of Confucian culture complimented this outlook and they suggest a real, genuine, feeling of self-loathing pervaded a section of the New Culture Movement (ibid). This is not unique to China's experience, as national communities that emerged from dynastic empires in which their ethnic identity had been repressed have often constructed a similarly negative myth of descent. But the Chinese case was particularly acute. Extreme metaphorical representations could also easily justify a lack of toleration for 'moderate' viewpoints, particularly those thinkers seeking to resuscitate Confucian values (ibid). These elements of the New Culture Movement are correctly regarded as foreshadowing the messianic discourses of Maoism, particularly during the Cultural Revolution. In the latter, the nationalist ethos can be seen as therefore appealing to an existing sensibility and outlook within urban society where the frantic mobilisations were concentrated. This illustrates the complexity, and potential instability, of nominally cohesive national narratives. Unable to find salvation in the past these actors instead intensified their promises and hopes for the future, encouraging themselves and others to make great sacrifices to realise it. This is an overtly modernist mode of apprehension in which the past and future can become radically dis-aligned as a 'nation' aspires to a *radically different* destiny (Benjamin 1968, 261 – 262). But, the irony, of both these earlier discourses and the fanaticism of the Maoist period, was their frequent use of traditional repertoires of thought, aesthetics, and narrative. Cannibalism, i.e. Lun Xun's chosen metaphor, was, for example, the ultimate traditional sign of moral decay (Mitter 2004, 110). There was an element of irony in such literary choices, but they also reflected a fatality; the vernacular form and the substantive content could not be easily separated, and appeals to the familiar aided communicability.

This element of Chinese nationalist discourse was heavily characterised by a secular and revolutionary form of millenarianism; the idea that out of great suffering a critical moment was approaching when the national community would be completely transformed (Yu 2009, 45 – 47). It drew obvious parallels with the long history of millenarian discourses in China that were rooted in messianic apprehension of time, but by apportioning agency to the people to recreate their own futures, rather than investing hope in a celestial coming, the discourse was given a modern content. Its paradoxes were illustrated during the Cultural Revolution. One of the consequences of Mao's injunction to 'energetically destroy' the 'four olds' (ideas, culture, customs, habits) (cited in MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 113) was the drive of the Red Guards to

change the names of manufactured goods where the Western term had simply been incorporated into the Chinese language, and replace them with 'meaningful Chinese names' (cited in ibid, 115). A further instruction stated that 'those who have [personal] names with feudal overtones will voluntarily go to the police station to change their names' (cited in ibid). A simultaneous opposition was therefore established that fused xenophobia with anti-traditionalism in the name of forging a radically new 'instantaneous' present. As Raymond Williams observed such a 'systematic utopia' can easily spill into its opposite, a 'systematic dystopia' if, that is, it closes down cultural plurality, and thus leads, 'its very processes and impulses, including above all planning, to the exact opposite, a more repressive, a more arbitrary, a more standardised and inhuman order' (Williams 1983, 12). The messianic elements of the New Culture Movement, by conceiving the acceptance of a particular type of new, Chinese identity as the primary agency of political change, foreshadowed the intolerance that the Cultural Revolution showed to all forms of artistic and cultural expression that did not subscribe to the 'Red China' symbolism propagated violently by its Red Guards. In light of this trauma, it is hardly surprising that a shift towards a more pragmatic approach to Chinese national culture resulted.

The more pragmatic, traditionalist nationalism also finds its roots in the New Culture process. Indeed, it was easier, perhaps, for those who strived for a form of nationhood that rejuvenated, rather than rejected, classical teachings to give a more internally consistent vision of Chinese modernity where the 'myth of descent' was founded in a critical appropriation of the polity's history (Mitter 2003, 124 – 132). Zou Taofen, for instance, took a more conventional approach to the conjuring of national imagery. In the transition between the Qing and Republican eras he argued an identity with the country[18] persisted across these ages which was based on fundamental *Chinese* qualities: loyalty, filial piety, trust and righteousness, benevolent love, and peace and stability (cited in Mitter 2004, 115). His mere invocation that these ethical principles should not simply be preserved but also 'developed and expanded' (ibid) indicate the amalgam of new and old, invoking as it did a conception of progress, change and ascending development through time. These themes would be taken up by Chiang Kai-shek, who took over the Kuomintang in 1925 when Sun died, in the 'New Life Movement' launched in 1934, ironically coinciding with the repression of literary

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[18] In this extract he used the racially uninflected term *guo* and thereby referred equally to the pre-modern state.

commentators, including Zou (Mitter 2004, 115, xvi). Zou's writings have a paradigmatic quality for the New Culture Movement because of the eclectic mix of influences that he drew upon. Like other writers, Zou was influenced by the Social Darwinism that had such a ubiquitous hold on the intellectual climate. However, adapting this doctrine to the social harmonist teachings of Confucianism was a challenge. Herbert Spencer's Social Darwinism was, strictly speaking, *a*moral (Mitter 2004, 130). Its original invection preached an inevitable clash amongst racially and cultural homogenous groups within which the individual was subordinate to the collective and moral values largely seen as an illusion (ibid). Zou therefore looked to Thomas Huxley for a flexible vision (ibid). This allowed him to incorporate the Confucian idea that the 'cultivation of the self' by the individual was essential to the ethical state of the collective (ibid). This, in turn, also permitted conceptualising international relations according to the familiar liberal-realist identification of the atomised 'man' with the geopolitical 'state' (Waltz 1954) and the conflict which is viewed as inherent within this realm provided a theoretical underpinning for the fear of China's national 'extermination' – *a la* the native American peoples – that gripped the minds of the New Culture intellectuals (Mitter 2004, 130, 124). It might be difficult for us to view this as plausible – given the radically different sociological conditions of combined development, particularly in the form of colonial penetration, found in China and North America –, but such fears were not entirely ungrounded in the China of the 1920s and 1930s. Zou was very far from a marginal figure and it is reasonable to see his writings as a partial indicator of the cultural mood in China's urban centres. Indeed, he testifies to how national intellectual figures were able to emerge within an expanded public sphere and gain a considerable personal profile and following. *Life* magazine, a periodical on culture, politics and modern life, which Zou edited until 1933, had a circulation of between 1.5 and 2 million, and his popular 'Readers Mailbox' advice column propelled the magazine to this level of influence (Mitter 2004, 63, xvi, 55).

Fear of extermination and the sense China was surrounded by 'Social Darwinist' enemies on all sides went far beyond a literary audience and became a corner stone of China's national psyche (Hu 2000, 47). Indeed, in its essentials, Zou's worldview was incorporated into the pragmatic nationalism of the CCP. The 'shared memory of victimhood in a rapacious world' fed into a resolutely realist approach to foreign relations; in this vision, the world is seen as conflict ridden, inter-state relations are conceived as zero-sum games of manoeuvring for national-interest, and economic

development becomes instrumental to national cohesion and unity (ibid). A traditional pragmatism rooted in a philosophy of moral cohesion is not, however, a modern day adaptation to political reality, but has origins in Chinese communism that precede the seizure of power. Most famous of these is Liu Shaoqi's pamphlet, *How To Be A Good Communist,* which devoted several chapters to the moral 'self-cultivation' of the individual communist, which he saw as realised through obedience to the socialist collective, and employed classical notions of modesty, filial piety, loyalty and discipline – although equally was at pains to attack the 'formalism' of these qualities in Confucian thought (Liu 1939). In the Cultural Revolution, the pamphlet was heavily attacked in the spring of 1967 (Andreas 2009, 113 – 114) and Liu himself was effectively killed in 1969 from illness after having been denied medication. Liu was posthumously 'rehabilitated' in 1980 and his famous pamphlet declared 'revolutionary'. This allowed a particularly conservative reading of his famous text – which, contrary to the attacks of the Red Guards was also replete with the normal 'class struggle' rhetoric – to underpin their modern-day policy (Dittmer 1998, 288 – 289). By identifying the one-party rule with national cohesion and socialism, the text promoted loyalty, obedience, hard work and modesty, amongst individuals within the polity as essential to the ethical mission of the collective. This was a nationalist posture in the conservative mould. However, the extent of the departure can be easily exaggerated, for it represented a return to the 'norms' of Chinese communism prior to 1958. Recognising the split in the CCP during the Cultural Revolution as a schism that drew upon alternative varieties of Chinese nationalism – competing messianic and pragmatic varieties – should not, in this sense, blind us to the fact that they were contradictory elements of a single nationalism. This will become clearer, in the last part of this chapter, as I consider these themes of *jiuguo* in China's two revolutions, and how the principal political actors, nationalists and, later, communists – both ultimately fighting for a strong and territorially cohesive *nation state* – would articulate them.

4.8 Nationalism as combined development: (i) Kuomintang dreams of 'China's Destiny'
At this stage in the argument it is necessary to recall how in chapter three I described the centrifugal pressures unleashed by the semi-colonial integration of Imperial China into the global economy. By the turn of the nineteenth century, these processes were driving the Empire to destruction. The Qing did not pursue an aggressive strategy of modernisation, but, through the course of self-strengthening, they did de-centralise

military power to the provinces to stabilise their regime. This purely military, rather than economic, attempt at modernisation also led the Qing to create the New Army under general Yuan Shikai. He had 80,000 troops at his command in 1911 (Li 2012, 316).[19] Despite having been conceived as securing the power the Qing Court, each of these elements represented new concentrations of political and social power potentially hostile it. The 'scramble for China' and the creation of a public opinion in China's urban centres that was dismayed by their failure led to the collapse of the Imperial order. 'Internal corrosion', as Harold Isaacs famously put it, 'had already reduced the dynasty to a cipher. Only a tiny push was needed to erase it. The revolution of 1911 generated enough energy to produce this tiny push, no more' (Isaacs 1961, 19). China's revolution of 1911 was indeed of an entirely different scale to 1949. It involved, at most, 10,000 followers of Sun in the Tongmenghui, China's first revolutionary nationalist political party (Dillon 2012, 141). Their agitation amongst the rank and file of the New Army did play an important role, and once Yuan withdrew support from the Imperial Court, the end of the regime was inevitable. This decision, however, followed declarations of 'independence' from the provinces. Observing that the regime was disintegrating, Yuan could either launch a civil war to defend a collapsing and hated dynasty, or he could try and manoeuvre to secure his power – he chose the latter. He passed away in 1916 after having attempted to establish a new dynasty around his own primogeniture. His legacy was to hand China to marauding warlord armies, each one led by former military governors of the old regime. In the countryside, warlords reshaped the lives of the peasantry for the worst, leaving communities in 'the grip of famine, flooding, banditry, warring generals, marauding soldiers, rioting peasants, opium addicts, and gamblers' (Yeh 2008, 119) and cohering a national imagination gripped by anxiety and anger at systemic injustice. Systemic banditry by the warlords made internal economic reform impossible, leaving the Beijing centre dependent on international credit markets, whose support was conditional on meeting its egregious international treaty obligations (Feuerwerker 1983b, 102). Disintegration, thus, emerged out of the specificities of Imperial China's combined development. Colonial capitalism had effectively manipulated elements of its existing class structure – specifically its

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[19] Compare these figures to the huge fighting forces assembled by both the CCP and Kuomintang three decades later. In the autumn of 1945 the communists commanded a regular army of 1.27 million troops and had, in addition to this, irregular militias numbering another 2.68 million (Li 2012, xxx). In the same year, following Japan's sudden surrender and prior to the renewal of the civil war, the Kuomintang commanded 4.3 million troops (ibid).

commercialisation and rentier-bureaucratic state – to render the economy uncompetitive. After 1911, the same 'clientelist' imperialism proved favourable to a political economy of warlordism based on organised extortion, theft and banditry. A 'negative feedback loop' resulted as internal divisions played into the hands of foreign powers. In short, nationalists that had longed for a strong China able to withstand the pressures of the wider world had won a merely nominal victory in 1911.

Across this period, however, the national consciousness established in urban areas only grew stronger. The profound 'feeling of national unity' (Sheridan 2008, 320) even gripped the minds of the warlords that never attempted to create locally defined forms of imagined community to secure their power on a permanent basis. Beijing was a nominal constitutional centre prior to the formation of the Kuomintang government in 1928 and its symbolic importance lay in how it created a sense there was a meaningful entity, China, which was legitimate, even if it was momentarily blighted by social disorder. None of China's warlords had any interest in seriously challenging a foreign power, an action implying ideological motivation that they lacked, and this meant the Treaty Ports were partially protected from the worst aspects of the warlord era. Cultural industries flourished in the 1920s, the period where *Life* magazine (see p. 153) made its breakthrough. Warlords, in contrast, had neither the cultural producers nor the inclination to create positive propaganda around localised identities, but merely sought to manoeuvre for narrow self-interests. It was in these conditions where a fervently nationalistic public emerged that despaired at the plight of their country. Even during the 'Nanjing decade' of Kuomintang rule the country remained in a state of disintegration. As late as 1936, i.e. after successful campaigns against the communists, the Kuomintang only brought eleven of the eighteen Chinese provinces under the control of the central government (Eastman 1991, 149 – 150).

Japanese imperialist intervention fundamentally reshaped China's national consciousness and laid down an awesome challenge to the Kuomintang, which they failed, fatally undermining their authority in the eyes of Chinese public opinion. Until the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931, Chinese nationalism had relied upon a purely negative imagery: a backlash against the successive humiliations cruelly imposed on the nation by the 'outside' (Mitter 2000, 3). The invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931, however, provided a new positive imagery of heroic Chinese resistance fighters opposing a specific colonial foe (ibid). It also meant that nationalist agitation had to shift from opposing the partial incursions of Western settlements to the actual colonial

annexation of Chinese territory. Anti-Japanese consciousness animated public society and numerous new movements emerged to campaign for resistance. The Northeast National Salvation Society (NNSS) was formed in 1931 to lobby, petition, distribute propaganda, and provide practical support to the Manchurian resistance (Mitter 2000, 133). It was groups such as these – at once political actors and cultural producers – that formed the 'myth of Manchuria', i.e. the vision of the struggle against Japan as a fight to save the nation and reclaim territory rightfully China's. The NNSS also gave a progressive meaning to the concept of *jiuguo* ('national salvation') by combining it with the notion of *datong* (the commonwealth of nations) to appeal to an enlightened vision of China at peace within the international community (Mitter 2000, 161). The rise of this internationalist discourse in public society also led to critiques of the racism that characterised Japanese colonialism (Mitter 2000, 167). Once coupled with the fact that the CCP in this period also defended the principle of national self-determination, this illustrates how colonial aspiration was but one tendency in Chinese nationalism.

How to negotiate the relationship between restoring internal order and confronting Japanese aggression was the central fault line for the Kuomintang. Achieving *minzu* unity was the defining aspiration and source of legitimacy for Kuomintang rule. Indeed, the way in which this trumped other objectives or considerations reflected many of the assumptions of the post-1890 nationalists China. Early nationalists were fascinated by Western states' capacity to act 'as one body' and inspire patriotism to service elite power (H. Chang 1980, 281). Chen Zhi, for instance, praised the English parliament for its capacity to, 'combine the monarch and the people into one body, and channel the ruling and the ruled into one mind' (ibid). This formula is telling because it invokes a conscious hierarchy of values. Democracy is useful only insofar as it favours the goal of *minzu* unity, thereby exhibiting in an early form the tendency 'to assimilate democracy into nationalism and to view the former as no more than an ingredient in the latter' (ibid) that was exemplified by the Kuomintang. The need to defend the imagined community was therefore more important than individual rights and freedoms within it. Similar conclusions were also drawn when it came to staking out the borders of the imagined community of China. Propaganda routinely emphasised 'that they not only sought to defend the far-flung borders that the Chinese Republic had inherited from the Manchu empire but also intended to reunify the whole nation and to defend its sovereignty' (Lin 2006, 12). This dream of destiny, to 'eliminate China's humiliating status and restore China's glorious past' (ibid), led them

to prioritise restoring internal, domestic order above all else. Despite its nationalist motivation, the policy of non-resistance in Manchuria alienated China's nationalist public sphere and undoubtedly played into the hands of communists. However, despite their military impotence, Chiang developed colonial ambitions for the Chinese nation. In his pamphlet, *China's Destiny,* written as China was accepted into the allied alliance, and nominally afforded 'great power' status, he rejected all minority national claims and gave an overtly racialized vision of 'China':

> … Our various clans actually belong to the same nation, as well as the same racial stock… That there are five peoples designated in China is not due to differences in race or blood, but to religion and geographical environment. In short, the differentiation among China's five peoples is due to regional and religious factors, not to race of blood. This fact must be thoroughly understood by all our fellow countrymen (Lin 2006, 141).

The 'elasticity' of the racist imagination lay in how it could permit such 'adaptations' to political expediency. Sun had initially argued that China was home to five races and envisioned the Han-Chinese as a leading element within a unified state including interior polities such as Tibet (Lin 2006, 13). Chiang had the same aims – the territorial unity of China embracing the historical boundaries of the Confucian empire –, but his crude intervention signalled to his allies that the principles of national self-determination they were promoting amongst polities occupied by axis powers had no bearing in China. The denial of racial specificity was designed to undermine any claim to nationality, reinforcing the notion of the nation as *minzu* but on the lines of cultural assimilation. Chiang further argued that China's territorial claims extended to 'the Himalayas, the Pamirs, the Indochina Peninsula', as well as Tibet, Xinjiang, Outer Mongolia, and Tannu Tuva (Lin 2006, 141). The backdrop to this colonial aggression lay in Chiang's successful conquest of the ethnically Muslim, north-western territories, including the de facto independent Xinjiang, back into the KMT fold, emboldening the colonial ambitions of the regime (Lin 2006, 142 – 143). In essence, Chiang offered a vision of anti-colonial nationalism turned colonial nationalism and, in doing so, came to similar conclusions as Sun. Affection for the achievements of Japanese imperialism, had been a critical factor in Sun's rationale, and this reflects the way in which colonial-racism pioneered in the West was internalised ruling class ambitions in Asia. Indeed, back in 1905 a section of Chinese students had called for Sino-Japanese solidarity against Russia in explicitly racial terms as 'Yellow-race solidarity against the White race' (Schiffrin 2009, 172). Anti-Japanese consciousness generally hardened in the

period since and Sun was unusual in persisting with pan-Asian notions into the 1920s (Schiffrin 2009, 172 – 180). However, *China's Destiny* illustrated that even having experienced appalling colonial injustice at the hands of Japan during the war, Chiang and other Chinese elites still dreamed of an Asian continent dominated by China. It illustrated how Chinese nationalism was heavily imprinted with the mythology of lost privilege in international affairs; this once powerful empire needed to be restored to its 'proper standing'. This was, of course, an imagined sensibility, a 'myth of descent', for China now confronted a radically different world: a capitalist international system of nation-states and competing empires – with each nation imagining their own place in the future, rather than the 'messianic' ordering of a universal celestial empire. Chiang Kai-shek would not live to realise the hopes of *China's Destiny*. He died as leader and figurehead of the merely nominal 'Republic of China' whose Kuomintang government was now consigned to the island of Taiwan. But the significance of his remarks lies in the influence they had on the *Chinese nationalist,* as opposed to *Kuomintang*, political agenda.

4.9 Nationalism as combined development: (ii) Chinese communism, Chinese nationalism?

In this chapter, I have demonstrated how nationalism emerged in Chinese public society out of the polity's combined development and subsequently dominated its political life. Notions of a 'two-line' struggle between the Kuomintang and the CCP are of only limited use, because they tend to camouflage the common ground that existed between the two parties. They both actively sought to provide an outlet and voice for the rising tide of nationalist sentiment. Nationalism, in this sense, did not emerge within the PRC as a 'deviation' from the internationalism advocated by conventional Marxist doctrine, but was always fundamental to the life-blood of Maoism. The themes of national salvation and the restoration of power and prestige in the international order featured prominently in the legitimising narratives woven by the CCP across the 1930s. Indeed, the relationship between the CCP and the ethos and politics of nationalism had an 'organicity' which, as I will explore further in the next chapter, became interwoven with the class dynamics of the Chinese Revolution, giving it a significantly altered content and trajectory to its Russian inspiration. Communism in China emerged out of the New Culture Movement and often expressed the two forms of nationalist discourse I have outlined, i.e., a messianic anti-traditionalism (Lin 1979), occasionally bordering on

loathing for the national self, and a more conventional, conservative national mythology, both of which, in their differing ways, were used to give meaning and coherence to the imagined community. For Mao specifically nationalism appears to have been a continuous influence on his political thought, imparting to it a consistency and certain 'novelty', which distinguished it from the merely instrumental use of ideology for bureaucratic purposes that characterised Stalin's relationship to political thought. There are numerous examples to testify to this influence of nationalism on Mao's thought. In 1937 he recalled how he had come across a pamphlet in his school days, which opened with the sentence, 'Alas, China will be subjugated', and painfully outlined its losses to Japan and the threat of its total dismemberment (cited in Zhao 2004, 96). Recounting this several decades later, Mao declared, 'he began to realise that it was the duty of the people to help save' China (ibid). A piece that he wrote in 1912, i.e. prior to his turn to communism, picked up on similar nationalist themes, expressing fear of China's extinction, hostility to corrupt rulers, and dismay at the people's lack of enlightenment (ibid). This typical expression of 'desymbolization anxiety' continued to characterise his writings after his turn to communism.[20] In 1920, in a letter to Xiang Jingyu, one finds the same fear of China's extinction, and his conviction that 'blazing a new road and remaking the environment' was the only possible pathway to national salvation (ibid). Mao, like Sun and many New Culture writers, used the notion of *minzu* unity, but gave it a class-based, rather than racial, emphasis (Mitter 2000, 130), constructing a mythology around the heroic struggles of *Chinese* peasants that symbolised the nation. However, despite not engaging in the open racial politics of Sun, Mao was willing to talk in terms of Han-Chinese ethnic superiority. In 1939, for example, he argued, 'the history of the Han people… demonstrates that the Chinese never submit to tyrannical rule, but invariably use revolutionary means to overthrow or change it' (Mao 1939). Mao qualified this by calling for a union of all China's national peoples on the basis of equality (ibid), but he, nonetheless, identified the image of resistance and rebellion with an imagined *ethnically defined* community. Moreover, CCP propagandists' use of the concept across the 1930s gradually closed down space for cultural diversity. The 'myth of descent' they propagated moved from the heroic struggles of the peasantry under the enlightened leadership of the communist party and

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[20] Mao became a Marxist in the winter of 1918 to 1919. See Schram 1986.

towards the birth of a socialist China, and it became a form of cultural life and imagined identity from which no deviation was allowed.

Nationalist tendencies can be found in Mao's political thought across the 1930s. However, a decisive change came with the consolidation of the Yan'an government in 1936-37 and Mao's defeat of Wang Ming, the CCP leader closest to Moscow, at the Sixth Plenum of the CCP CC in 1938. This gave the party the freedom to develop a monolithic 'myth of descent'. Mao justified this in leftist terms by preaching the *Sinification* of Marxism. Although he couched this in the familiar categories of uneven social development (and a focus on peculiarities of circumstance that would not have been out of place in some of Trotsky's writings), he turned the original meaning 'on its head':

> There is no such thing as abstract Marxism, but only concrete Marxism. What we call concrete Marxism is Marxism that has taken on a national form, that is, Marxism applied to the concrete struggle in the concrete conditions prevailing in China, and not Marxism abstractly used…. Consequently, the Sinification of Marxism—that is to say, making certain that in all of its manifestations it is imbued with Chinese peculiarities, using it according to these peculiarities— becomes a problem that must be understood and solved by the whole Party without delay…. We must put an end to writing eight-legged essays on foreign models; there must be less repeating of empty and abstract refrains; we must discard our dogmatism and replace it by a new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people (cited in Hung 1994, 226).

In the hands of Trotsky and other internationalists, uneven development had problematized the dynamics of social revolution in backward countries by looking through the lens of intersocietal difference. This had, in turn, informed a strategy attuned to these particular circumstances, but one that retained substantively similar aims and goals. Mao's innovation directly inverted the meaning of the original concept. By saying that Marxism had no general theoretical underpinning outside of the national context (the rejection of 'abstract Marxism'), Mao was free to develop a 'Sinified' vision of Marxism in which 'its manifestations' were 'imbued with Chinese peculiarities' (ibid). In other words, the strategy was not *made appropriate* to the circumstances, but its substantive content would shift with the demands of national salvation. Opposition to dogmatism and the invocation of a 'new and vital Chinese style and manner, pleasing to the eye and to the ear of the Chinese common people' (ibid) expressed classical New Culture Movement themes, specifically the role of mass culture as a force for national cohesion. From the desire for an imagined national community

flowed the aim of a *nation*-state. For Lenin and Trotsky the Russian Revolution had partly been a 'wager' (L. Lih 2009) on the German Revolution coming to the aid of the fledgling workers' republic (Rosenberg 1996, 10). 'At all events, under all conceivable circumstances', Lenin wrote quite emphatically, 'if the German revolution does not come, we are doomed' (cited in ibid). These internationalists took it as given that a transnational state would be formed, one encompassing both Russia and the German workers' republic they hoped for. For Mao, in contrast, there was absolutely no possibility that the CCP would seek to establish trans-national forms of governance with the Soviet Union. In 1937, asked directly if a Sino-Soviet republic was his aim, Mao replied, 'We are certainly not fighting for an emancipated China in order to turn the country over to Moscow!' (Schram 1986, 844). In lieu of any workers' democracy a Eurasian socialist republic would have required the domination of one national, monolithic party over the other, and, in this sense, Mao's indignation is hardly surprising (especially given how, at the time of the interview, brutal purges and show trials were taking place in the Soviet Union). One can see in the PRC, like in its Soviet cousin, how one-party rule was inherently nationalistic. A dictatorial party rising to power within a nation then became dependent on sustaining that power via a nation-state. In this respect then, as I argue in chapter five, it might be argued that Stalinism in China *actively required* a fusion with nationalism.

Stalinist doctrine appealed to, and provided legitimacy for, an existing nationalist disposition within the polity. Both parts of this amalgam of ideological forms – the encounter of Chinese nationalism with Soviet Stalinism – existed in a complimentary, mutually reinforcing relationship to the other, particularly based upon the form of state they envisioned. Mao's 'On New Democracy', for example, was explicitly 'based on Stalin's theory' *and* openly nationalist in its aims and goals, 'to build a new society and a new state for the Chinese nation' (Mao 1940). 'Our aim in the cultural sphere', he wrote in a similar vein, 'is to build a new Chinese national culture' (ibid). Mao's piece was first published in the newly launched CCP magazine, *Chinese Culture,* and its central theme – breaking free from the past and imagining the national community on new and enlightened lines – was entirely consistent with the wider *oeuvre* of the New Culture Movement. Despite his focus on the peasants, Mao retained a formal commitment to 'proletarian leadership' in the national revolution, but he defined this purely in terms of party leadership, allowing him to 'import' a doctrinal

attachment to a one-party state that was then fused with the premises of Chinese nationalism.

Communist rule in the 'base areas' permitted the CCP to put this outlook into practice long before they assumed power. Newspapers and journals played their part, but, to reach out to the illiterate masses, spoken forms of cultural production, such as drama and storytelling, were utilised. By the Yan'an years a systematic 'drama movement' existed to inspire patriotism and foster socialist consciousness amongst the people. It drew upon famous New Culture plays, such as Cao Yu's *Thunderstorm* and Ouyang Yuqian's and *The Death of Li Xiucheng (Li Xiucheng zhi si)* as well as foreign works, such as Gogol's *The Inspector General and* Ostrovsky's *The Storm* (C.-T. Hung 1994, 223 – 224), reflecting the patchwork of local and global influences that had become concentrated in the ideology of Chinese communism. The CCP's new cultural producers put a socialist twist on the 'myth of Manchuria' (Mitter 2000) that allowed them to foster a national consciousness in the areas relatively untouched by Japanese occupation. In his visit, Edgar Snow described seeing a play called *Invasion,* which brought to life tales of Kuomintang cowardice and the people's resistance against Japan in Manchuria. In one scene, he recalled how 'farmers rush forth with their spears, women and children come with their knives, and all swear to "fight to the death" against the Erhpen-kuei [Riben gui]—the "Japanese devils"' (cited in Hung 1994, 223). After the Rectification Campaign of 1942 putting on a play of foreign or urban providence became strictly forbidden (Hung 1994, 224 – 225). The new policy was justified by a series of dictums, such as 'learn from the masses' and 'all correct leadership is necessarily from the masses, to the masses' (Hung 1994, 224). This allowed Mao to cultivate a romantic vision of the peasants 'as the font of virtue and struggle' (ibid) and the policy was designed to encourage a sense of self-worth by infusing familiar experiences of Chinese peasant life with a positive imagery of moral purpose and heroism. Its nationalism romanticised a distinctive form of *Chinese* peasant traditionalism as the basis of *minzu* unity. And its Stalinism ensured that it was imposed monolithically as the only permissible imagined community.

Mao's peasant upbringing and relative dissonance from the global communist movement put him in a position to capitalise on the nationalist tendencies within the polity, but also became a means to associate his individual persona with the mythology of rising peasant resistance to Japanese aggression. Mao took total control of the CCP with the Rectification Campaign of 1942 and a 'cult of personality' developed around

him (Vajpeyi 1994, 19). He was now venerated as an equal of such luminaries as Marx, Lenin, and Stalin, and, in 1945, the new party constitution even declared that the party guides its work, 'entirely by the teachings which unite the theories of Marxist-Leninism with the actual practice of the Chinese Revolution – the thought of Mao Zedong' (cited in ibid). In a similar manner to how Chinese nationalists' assimilated democracy into nationalism, Mao assimilated communism into nationalism, and, in the process, identified the Chinese nation with his own all-powerful personality. However, the type of *minzu* community Mao's CCP imagined purported to look to the cultural experiences of the peasant classes and generalised from them rather than seeking to resurrect elite Confucian norms. Even though in works such as *How To Be A Good Communist,* the Confucian influence was palpable and useful insofar as it provided a theorisation of obedience and loyalty (Liu 1939). In 'Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art', Mao advocated a renaissance in traditional *yangge* – a popular form of song-and-dance based folk entertainment from North China (Hung 1994, 230). This went hand-in-hand with the repression of critically minded intelligentsia, the use of participatory phraseology served to disguise how a propagandistic vision of cultural production was imposed. The 'learn from the masses' notion did, however, indicate a real shift towards the resurrection of traditional art forms, those familiar to peasants' daily life, which were now ascribed a positive moral purpose. Traditional Beijing operas were also revived. The Beijing Opera Society sought to challenge the 'out dated idea that Beijing opera has nothing to do with revolution' and 'infused the old dramatic form with new political content' (C.-T. Hung 1994, 233). The incorporation of communist aesthetic into these nationalist performances, with tales of heroic anti-imperialist struggle for the socialist cause, symbolised the overall amalgam. However, it also expressed the classical New Culture *problématique* of trying come to terms with China's past traditions and modes of life in the face of such extraordinary social change. It therefore encapsulates the potential complexity of the national imagination with its ability to amalgamate contradictory elements. Whereas Zou, in his original attempt to revive past traditions, focused on old elite discourses, Mao looked to *subaltern* layers. One can see why amongst a desperately poor peasantry tales that invoked a proud history of rebellion and deep moral rectitude provided a degree of redemption from their daily life. But the cultish and messianic aspects of this re-symbolization process would only grow once the CCP took hold of the reigns of state power.

4.9.1 The rise of Chinese nationalism in the longue durée

In the next chapter, I explore the sociological conditions – moving from the global to the local – that allowed the Maoists to triumph out of the crisis of colonial capitalism, arguing that the intervention of Japanese imperialism coupled with Mao's turn to the countryside propelled them to power. I also locate this within an explanation of the seemingly modular character of Stalinist ideology – its capacity, that is, for repeated and differential repetition across the world order in the last century. For reasons that I have only touched upon in this chapter – the 'special relationship', so to speak, between the 'state socialist' regimes and the nation-state system – Stalinism was an ideology of particular amenability to the rising tide of nationalism amidst the fracturing of the colonial empires. In this chapter, I have illustrated the origins and typography to which Mao and his followers assimilated their ideology. In doing so, their ability to introduce modifications in the imagination was real, but nonetheless limited. There was an existing national imagination, the contours of which emerged within the conditions of combined development that drove the Qing Empire into the abyss of history. The upshot of this was simple: by taking the course of political nationalism, the Maoists were choosing to adopt a programme for change involving assumptions and aspirations that were crystallized in China during the geopolitical crisis of the 1890s. These can be summarised thus:

- An end to 'humiliation and suffering', a desire for a strong and powerful nation-state able to stand up the wider world, and to 'restore' the stature of earlier imperial times.
- A commitment to winning back all China's lost territory from colonial aggressors.
- A resulting tension in the recognition of the right of self-determination for national minorities within China that was resolved in practice by *de facto* abandoning the commitment upon taking power.
- A further tension between a millenarian, revolutionary nationalist vision, and the pragmatic, paternalistic conceptions that involved a realist approach to international relations.
- A reciprocal interrelationship between the cultural monolithism flowing from the adoption of the norms of Stalinism and the assimilationist logic of a Han-Chinese notion of *minzu*.

This nationalist evolution emerged within the complex conditions of compulsion and emulation established by combined development; as capitalism confronted a de-centred world of multiple territories and peoples, it compelled and inspired their re-forging around the nationally bounded identities that were made possible by new forms of cultural production. In the next chapter, I show how nationalist politics was intimately connected to the rise of 'state socialism' – so much so that one could reasonably claim, 'if Chinese nationalism did not exist then Chinese Stalinism would have to invent it'. This would, however, elide the real historical process; for the 'stickiness' of national identity, with its dark, nascent potential for nationalism, was crucial to the failure of the Soviet experiment itself. It was an irony of history that China's revolution in nationalist consciousness in the 1890s and after – once it fed into the politics of Chinese communism – actually disadvantaged leaders of the CCP that were prepared to accept Moscow's dictates, i.e. those who were *more Stalinist than nationalist.* Instead it benefited those, principally Mao, prepared to assert the 'national interests' of *Chinese* communism more assertively. Reflecting upon the Chinese Revolution in these terms sheds light upon the legitimising narratives that continue to shape politics in the PRC. Indeed, the achievement for which Mao is still revered in today's China is national unity. The politics of 'national salvation' continues to shape and underpin the discourse of political elites. In the next chapter, I explain the sociological process that has resulted in this being the case, and thus show why an undefeated communist party would introduce a series of capitalist market reforms in China.

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The long march of Maoism in the age of extremes: 'market socialism' and the search for national salvation

> Socialism isn't only about defending against one's enemies,
> against the old world it is opposing; it also has to fight
> within itself against its own reactionary ferments
> *Victor Serge*

> Modern China is the product of nineteenth-century western
> imperialism, crossed with the influence of the Russian
> revolution. Unfortunately it was not the Chinese workers who
> laboured in the western-owned factories in the treaty ports, or in
> the South African mines, or on the western front in the
> First World War, who have survived to enjoy whatever glory or
> profit may have accrued from the Chinese revolution
> *E. H. Carr*

5.1 Legacies of combined development in the longue durée

Across the previous two chapters, I mapped the class and cultural dimensions of China's interchange with capitalist modernity. The significance of these conditions to our research question lies in how they shaped the politics and sociology of the Chinese Revolution and the contradictory form of state that the founders of the PRC established. I have until now focused on the interchange between the class structure and the mental conceptions that actors formed to give meaning and cohesiveness to the life of the polity. In other words, I have moved from 'class' to 'nation', showing how Chinese national consciousness emerged under the hammer blows of colonial aggression, and in conditions of systemic underdevelopment. The final turn in the argument takes us to the contradictions of twentieth century 'socialism', building upon the intimations developed hitherto on the nature of Maoism. The argument I have presented throughout has developed according to an 'ascending' narrative explanation; neither element of the conceptualisation – deep underdevelopment and the vice-like grip of Chinese nationalism on actors – is 'dispensed with' as one moves closer to 1979. *Longue durée* historiography seeks to trace the historical processes that led to the emergence of a particular constellation of social relations. Once these historical linkages have been established one should continually question and appraise how these long-maturing elements continue to shape latter-day events. For this exercise to be worthwhile, however, one has to identify, with sufficient concreteness, the specific conditions and mental-conceptions that had such an enduring hold and then assess how they relate to the moments of 'grand historic rupture' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 67). The

Chinese Revolution is categorically such a transformative shift. It decisively altered the arc of historical development by reconfiguring China's class structure and international relations. Yet, in the narratives the CCP drew upon and the class actor, the peasantry, that played a decisive historical role, it emerged out of the unique circumstances of China's combined development. Chinese nationalism provided the dominant visual imagery and discursive repertoires legitimising the seizure of power. In this regard, it is useful for us to recall how Marx argued that at great moments such as these – when individuals 'seem to be occupied revolutionizing themselves and things, creating something that did not exist before, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis' – human subjects so often tend to 'anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service' (Marx 1969, 398). Marx is intimating here at the allure of *resymbolization* in the face of *desymbolization* anxiety, which so heavily characterised how Chinese persons came to apprehend modernity. The dramatic and relatively 'compressed' transition from powerful dynasty, to impoverished nation, and, then, to people's republic, provided no shortage of inspiration for the 'conjuring' of past spirits to the 'service' of resymbolization. Mao's founding proclamation of the PRC reflected this, because it was the resurrection of 'China', and not socialist goals, which formed the preeminent narrative:

> The people throughout China have been plunged into bitter suffering and tribulations since the Chiang Kai-shek Kuomintang reactionary government betrayed the fatherland, colluded with imperialists, and launched the counter-revolutionary war. Fortunately our People's Liberation Army, backed by the whole nation, has been fighting heroically and selflessly to defend the territorial sovereignty of our homeland, to protect the people's lives and property, to relieve the people of their sufferings, and to struggle for their rights… (Mao 1949).

To make this address on the steps of the Gate of Eternal Peace, the entrance to the Forbidden City, gave a deliberately symbolic impression that the greatness of China's dynastic past had been realigned in its revolutionary present. From this point on the CCP no longer merely gave an organic expression to the nationalist *aspirations* of the polity. Its leaders could point to the *actual achievement* of territorial cohesion and a strong state able to stand up to the West. This gave them genuine legitimacy. But, although they had put an end to warlordism and the domination of the landlord class, they inherited a desperately poor, war-ravaged economy. How to achieve the desire for national greatness – i.e., for the restoration of prestige that was such an elementary part of the country's nationalism – within these conditions, was the challenge that the

Maoists set for themselves. How they answered it, and the resources they had at their disposal, reflected the sociology of the Chinese Revolution. As I will show, Maoism, seen as a fusion of Stalinism and Chinese Nationalism, contained the seeds of its crisis-ridden relationship to 'socialist' production and the resolution of it as *capitalist nationalism.* CCP-rule endured despite these changes because it put ever-greater stress on its position as the living embodiment of national unification. This was an ideological choice made to discursively construct legitimacy for one-party rule, but it provided a compelling justification for their power to millions of people due to China's real, material history. The Qing Empire had left behind a polity that was extraordinarily underdeveloped and, to a considerable degree, lacked economic control of its own destiny. An industrial working class, the traditional gravedigger of the classical Marxist imagination, was almost, though not entirely, notable by its absence. These conditions pushed the communists towards a peasant-war strategy. But their success was heavily dependent upon the decision of the Japanese to invade Manchuria in 1931 and China in 1937. This allowed the Maoists to seize the mantel of 'national saviours' and take power.

In broad outline, this is the argument put across in the next three sections. I develop it through the work of Deutscher, despite his writings on Maoism being far from extensive. They consist of two short essays, 'Maoism its Origins and Outlook' and 'The Meaning of the Cultural Revolution' (Deutscher 1984b, 181 – 220) and, in addition to this, some fragmentary remarks contained in his three-volume biography of Trotsky (Deutscher 2003a, 265 – 283; 2003b, 421 – 424). However, arising directly from his use of the concept of uneven and combined development, his writings had the considerable merit of looking for the source of Maoism's unique physiognomy in the web of interactions and processes found in global politics. Deutscher also considered it elementary that to understand Maoism 'in power' the historian had to trace the anterior conditions from which it emerged, thus throwing light upon its implicit departure from orthodox Marxism and its inevitably contradictory relationship with Soviet Stalinism. Despite the brevity of his analysis, this approach makes for a striking contrast with Western Sinologists that have tended to focus wholly on analysing the social context *after 1949* to explain the dynamics of Chinese politics in the communist era. Deutscher was more 'distant' from China and its history than these writers; he was no China specialist and the exceptional insularity of the PRC in its first three decades imposed obvious limits on his understanding. But Deutscher was also closer to the conflicts

within the communist movement that spawned Maoism as a distinctive current. He placed Mao within the debates on strategy that were epitomised by the Trotsky-Stalin split, and thus analysed Maoism through the lens of socialism.

It was quite inevitable that the Chinese Revolution drew immediate comparisons with its Russian predecessor, for its political system was directly and consciously modelled on the one-party Soviet state and the new regime readily availed itself of this ideological inheritance. For critically minded Marxists, such as Deutscher, who were concerned to understand, rather than legitimate, this new power, the commonality and difference of the two revolutions was the central enigma. The Russian Revolution was primarily a workers' insurrection – with backing from the peasants largely coming in the form of the army rank and file's rebellion – whereas its Chinese successor was a peasant war in which the working class played little part. This contrast naturally reflected a disjuncture in circumstances and not merely the political choices made by the communists. Recall how, in chapter 3, I discussed the radical disparity between the late Tsarist industrial revolution and economic development in the Qing and Republican periods (see pp. 106 – 107). Whereas the landscapes of Petrograd and Moscow were transformed as they established themselves as centres of heavy industry, Chinese industrialisation was insignificant in comparison. I will not repeat the comparison I have already provided except to say that late Tsarist Russia was as much as *ten times* more industrialised than Republican China. To capture this underdevelopment through comparison is potentially distorting. But, nonetheless, keeping in mind this important qualification, China was probably still less developed in 1933 than the United States had been in 1820 when 70 per cent of its labour force worked in agriculture (Feuerwerker 1983b, 35) and 35 per cent of the population of the southern states were enslaved (Bergad, 119). China's contractual mode of rural exploitation naturally diverged from America's capitalist slavery, but hardship still abounded. Peasant indebtedness – with interest at rates of 100 to 200 per cent per annum – was chronic and debt was used to meet basic subsistence needs and pay rent (Feuerwerker 1983b, 87). This reflected how the subsumption of labour to usury-capital I discussed in the tea industry (see pp. 103 - 104) was now generalised across rural China. Industry was concentrated in the coastal regions and not labour-hungry, so there was no wave of urbanisation with only steady, not mass, migration into the cities (Feuerwerker 1983b, 62). Due to the historical inheritance of smallholder tenancy system and the pressures of

over-population this created an explosive condition: a very large 'egalitarian', i.e. almost universally poor, peasantry.

In these conditions there was, indeed, a remarkable *evenness* of poverty across rural China. But this was overlain, in turn, by the contradictory division of China into a series of warlord territories that deepened further the injustices of peasant life. Warlords were 'neither Confucian generals ... [with] allegiance to the throne nor officers of a national army pledged to defend the country's honor and interests' (Chen 1972, 214) and terrorised the peasantry as a new *rentier* class. Military accumulation, not traditional status, was the basis for their power. They sought funds for their own 'personal aggrandizement', to cultivate patronage networks and 'provide the army with its weapons, supplies and pay' (Sheridan 2008, 291). Taxes, administrative charges, the formation of monopolies, simple extortion, opium and gambling, became the favoured means of warlord rule (Sheridan 2008, 291 – 292). Provincial administrations consequently existed in an almost perpetual state of near-bankruptcy across the warlord period (ibid). Warlord armies became a visible, 'modern' agency in rural communities, which uprooted time-honoured conceptions of authority and power, only to simultaneously displace them with a violent form of organised banditry. Many peasants joined them in the face of grinding rural poverty. The warlords at least guaranteed food and for the aspiring but uneducated military service offered the prospect of self-betterment (Sheridan 2008, 291). By 1916 there were half a million soldiers serving warlords in China, but over the next decade this would rise to 2 million by 1928 (ibid). This patchwork of decentred regional warlord fiefdoms provided a wealth of opportunities for foreign powers to manipulate political life and made the question of establishing a unified and cohesive form of governance quite critical for the nationalist actors. In a sense, the two competing nationalist forces, the Kuomintang and the CCP, shared a desire for genuinely 'combined' Chinese development in the face of the anarchic divisions that blighted the country. Modern in their provenance, emerging in the spatially concentrated cosmopolitan city-life and wanting a legitimate, unified nation, the two nationalist forces had much in common. But they took a radically different approach to the injustices of the countryside. The Kuomintang feared the peasants and sought to subjugate their mobilisation through coercion. In contrast, the communists saw in the chronic suffering of this vast peasant class a great opportunity for revolutionary agitation.

It is worth reflecting upon the significant contrast between these sociological conditions and those that pushed the Russian polity towards revolution between 1914 and 1917. Trotsky repeatedly emphasised in *The History of the Russian Revolution* the role the highly centralised state power of Russian Tsarism played in shaping the country's industrialisation. Capitalist layers were dependent on the state for protection and as a source of loan-capital, but their private property rights were securely upheld in the late Tsarist period. This secure investment environment did not exist in Republican China to anything like the same degree. Rentier bureaucratic interests hindered capital accumulation and the state structure was characterised by an extreme decentralisation of power. Challenging this rentier ruling class and creating a unified state were therefore two sides of the same coin, and it made sense to look to the peasants to achieve these aims through insurrectionary struggle given they were the majority class. This perspective of armed agrarian revolution was quite compatible with a 'bourgeois' programme for modernising the country. Indeed, communism made no special claim to lead the peasants. Neither was the CCP decision to model the political economy of the new state on the Soviet Union pre-determined. A peculiar outcome of combined development – a genuine concatenation of local and global processes – resulted in a victorious Maoist Revolution appropriating the Stalinist model of development and putting it to the service of Chinese nationalism.

In this chapter I outline this historical process through five steps. Firstly, I begin by showing how the decay of the Russian Revolution was a tragedy of uneven and combined development. Bolshevism's success in the country owed to the disjuncture between its small, spatially concentrated, but economically powerful and politically radical, working class, and its ruling, backward Tsarist aristocracy, whose wealth and power was rooted in agrarian backwardness. These conditions contrasted with Western Europe, but this 'Russian exceptionalism' also laid the seeds for the Soviet Union's isolation and decay. Secondly, I go on to argue that Stalinism embraced the politics of social patriotism and national egoism and, consequently, its core ideological assumptions proved particularly amenable to the flowering of national imaginations in the last century. Thirdly, I analyse Stalinism's contradictory relationship to Chinese communism; from the origins of Asian socialism and its speedy radicalisation; to the 'dress rehearsal' of the revolution of 1925 to 1927; and the enigmatically Maoist 'turn to the countryside'. Through these processes Maoism crystalized as Chinese peasant nationalism spliced with Soviet Stalinism. Fourthly, I show that the success of Mao's

strategy was conditional on the deep crisis of colonial capitalism and, as such, power 'fell into the hands' of the Maoists in much same way as it had done for the Bolsheviks. Fifthly, moving to the record of Maoism in power, I argue that the divisions within the CCP are best understood as conflicts within Chinese nationalism, reflecting a schism between the messianic and conservative discourses of the New Culture Movement. Bureaucratic command planning succeeded in industrializing China, but it could never fulfil the goal of national greatness that the CCP so fervently desired, and this made a shift to market capitalism logical and necessary.

5.2 A challenge to colonial power: the hope and decay of the Russian Revolution

No single event in the twentieth century would prove to have more significance for its overall trajectory than the Russian Revolution. 'It is not an accident', remarked of his own work, 'that the history of the Short Twentieth Century', as he defined it,[21] 'virtually coincides with the lifetime of the state born of the October Revolution' (Hobsbawm 1994, 55). Seen in the *longue durée* the rise of Bolshevism emerged out of a particular condition of combined social development. Socialist consciousness, which had developed rapidly amongst Europe's working classes since the end of the nineteenth century, infused into Russia carried by a cosmopolitan layer of Marxist intelligentsia. The latter found in their home country a new working class seething with radicalism amidst the rapid industrial modernisation of the late Tsarist period. Modernity had reshaped urban life and provided the raw material for a new way of thinking that was diametrically opposed to absolutist rule. There are, however, good reasons for why Hobsbawm extended the remit of the *Age of Extremes* a mere three years to encompass the eruption of the world's first ever 'Total War'. A conflict fought, that is, not for short-term, episodic goals, but for the fundamental reordering of the international balance of power and for this reason had almost ineluctably extended to the global arena by the time of its conclusion in 1918 (Hobsbawm 1994, 21 – 53). The disintegration of Russia in the face of the extreme ravages of the First World War provided the circumstances that led to power falling into the hands of the Bolsheviks. But it also testified to an epochal change that undermined the social imagination of colonial racism. Until 1914 colonialism was already widely seen as an unjust and, at least potentially, a barbaric enterprise, but the scale of the bloodletting introduced an

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[21] 1914 – 1991

anti-colonial and pacifistic sensibility amongst the domestic populations of the home countries. This also provided the opening for the revolutionary left. Chauvinism, expressing the dark grip of the national imagination, had characterised the reaction of the European social democratic parties to the war, but the bloody conflict soon uprooted this consciousness. By 1917 the Russian radical movement was infused with internationalism – a mindset quite different to the Chinese Revolution that would be partly inspired by it. In China, for historical reasons with which we are now familiar, a quasi-colonial form of nationalism emerged *in response* to the injustices the polity had suffered at the hands of colonial powers. Whereas in Russia, the discourse of 'Great Russian' chauvinism, while certainly still present in the minds of broad swathes of the urban, as well as rural, population, was nonetheless identified with the bloodbath of the world war. Lenin's address to the German workers, published in the anti-war newspaper *Jugend Internationale* in 1918, gave a straightforward and typical expression of this internationalist imagery and vision. 'The socialist revolution that has begun in Russia is, therefore, only the beginning of the world socialist revolution', Lenin argued, before proceeding to list its aims as 'peace and bread', the overthrow of capitalism, recovery from the war, and 'the complete victory of socialism' (Lenin 1918). This radically democratic ideal of the new world order was encapsulated in the revolutionary slogan, 'All Power to the Soviets'. In this vision, the soviets, a form of direct democracy rooted in the workplace, were to provide the basis for a new type of public state that coercively upheld, not the privatisation of economic life, but its radical socialisation on the basis of human need. This idealism, in the positive sense of the term, i.e., the idealism of the utopian visionary, was to be severely tested by the Russian Civil War, its appallingly destructive impact on industry, and the isolation of the new regime as the European workers' upsurge dissipated in defeat.

It was, indeed, with the isolation of the state that the seeds of the revolution's social decay were born. Social revolution was possible in Russia because, as Trotsky put it, the Tsarist Empire was 'the weakest link in the chain of imperialism' due to 'its extreme backwardness' (Trotsky 1932). But the unevenness of social development that had once provided profitable avenues for these revolutionaries now revealed different qualities. The division of the world order into a series of fracturing empires and emerging polities, each with newly imagined national aspirations for sovereignty, posed a challenge to the aspiring transnational state. It was a test amplified further by the rise of fascism and the intensification of antagonisms amongst the colonial powers in the

inter-war years. The fledgling Soviet state sought to navigate these new conditions by creating bonds of political solidarity with anti-imperialist movements. Meanwhile, the imperial powers placed a *cordon sanitaire* around the revolutionary state, denying it trading links and the normal protocols of international diplomacy. Given these states dominated the global economy and, with their formal and informal empires, regulated access to its markets, this exclusion was a serious material problem for the workers' state. Externally imposed isolation compounded the internal corrosion of soviet society. The social and economic backwardness that had paradoxically made the path of socialist experimentation possible now put considerable barriers in the way of its progressive realisation. The economy remained overwhelmingly rural, making it harder to develop a cosmopolitan culture with a global outlook and creating steep difficulties for industrial modernisation. It is hard to exaggerate the social costs the Civil War had inflicted upon an already war-ravaged society; the price of victory was enormous. Inflation was out of control and state finances suffered from extreme dysfunction. A de facto barter economy had developed with wages paid in kind in response to hyperinflation (Carr 1966, 233). There were *no* state budgets from mid-1919 to early 1921 (Carr 1966, 251). Attempts by the state to impose its monopoly on distribution had failed utterly with the black market responsible for two thirds of the food supply and for four times as much food grain as the official sources (Nove 1969, 62). Industrial production had collapsed to just 21 per cent of 1913 levels. Agricultural output was at 60 per cent of the 1913 level (Nove 1969, 68, 94). The population of 40 provincial capitals had plummeted by an average of 33 per cent since 1917. In the urban heartlands of Moscow and Petrograd this measure came to 44.5 and 57.5 per cent respectively (Carr 1966, 197 – 198). In these conditions, the survival of the state increasingly came to be seen as an end in itself and source of justification for the deep bureaucratisation that fostered a new form of elite power.

The impoverished political and economic landscape created organic tendencies for an authoritarian form of rule; a 'temptation', so to speak, arising from the need for 'order' in the face of disintegration. The tragedy of twentieth century socialism lies in the way that a general vision of socialism, which involved highly authoritarian one party rule, became established and justified according to *general principles,* despite emerging in these barren and *exceptional* circumstances. This took shape in the period of 'War Communism', which was a policy of extreme centralisation of power (military, economic and political) within the hands of the Communist Party in face of the

exigencies of the Civil War (see Flowers 1997). War Communism, as the above description of the economy testifies, was a failure. Sweeping nationalisation and the creation of a myriad of institutions were unable to raise output in the economy. Many Bolsheviks hoped that War Communism would realise a rapid advance to collectivism under the steel discipline of a party-state. Although the New Economic Policy (NEP), which restored a state-led form of *capitalist* development, recognised that a step back from such ambitions was needed, the political architecture of one-party rule survived in tact. Soviet democracy was at best sporadic during the Civil War. Its multi-party element was de facto abolished in 1918 when the Mensheviks and SRs were semi-illegalised (Brovkin 1991, 231 – 232). A drive to state professionalization in the organisation of the economy went alongside eroding democratic freedoms.[22] The more idealistic elements of the Bolsheviks reacted against the new authoritarianism.[23] Some dissidents also took up arms. An uprising of sailors at Kronstadt demanded democratic rights for the workers, free elections to the soviets, and a fairer agreement for the peasantry. They invoked the discourse of a 'Third Revolution' that had been popularised amongst the discontented by a new layer of anarchist agitators (Deutscher 2003c, 426). Rejecting the 'last warning', made by Trotsky himself, for an 'unconditional surrender', the rebels were duly crushed by the armed power of the Soviet republic (Deutscher 2003c, 427). Caught in the ineluctable logic of their ardent belief that only Bolshevik rule could deliver a socialist transition a wave of repression soon ensued. The SRs and Mensheviks, who had only been half-repressed in the Civil

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[22] A rapid contraction in the size of the urban working class and the deadly sacrifice that its more socialistic layers had made in the Civil War eroded the material basis for working class control of industry (Flowers 1997). Labour discipline was increasingly enforced 'from above' through a series of coercive labour codes, concluding in 1920 with a forced labour scheme, in clear contradiction to socialist principles (Flowers 1997). Trade unions were operationally integrated into the People's Commissariat of Labour and membership of them made compulsory for all workers (Barry 1979, 267).

[23] In 1920, Alexandra Kollontai and the Workers' Opposition formed a minority faction in the Bolshevik party opposed to these infringements. They called for the unions to be fully independent bodies, for the return of workers' control in industry, highlighting how a new layer of unaccountable technocrats had coalesced in the state (Kollontai 2009). Importantly, Kollontai directly linked the attacks on freedom of speech to the social decay of urban life fostered by top-down control. 'The harm [of bureaucracy]' she wrote, 'lies in the solution of all problems, not by means of an open exchange of opinions or by the immediate efforts of all concerned, but by means of formal decisions handed down from the central institutions' (Kollontai 2009). Workers in the production line were excluded from decision making in favour of the rule of 'one person or…an extremely limited collective' above them and 'freedom of thought and opinion', encouragement of 'self-activity' (ibid) was effectively proscribed. In prophetic remarks, she concluded that this erosion of the democratic life of the Soviet state was the 'greatest danger to the future existence of the Communist Party itself' (ibid). Whether Kollontai imagined a bureaucratic take-over of the party from within or its overthrow by this new elite from without, her basic concern that the emancipatory vision of the revolution was being extinguished proved to be a prescient one.

War, were punished for openly supporting the uprising and outlawed for good (Deutscher 2003c, 431 – 432). Isolation on the world stage fed a deep paranoia towards the people as a siege mentality developed in the ruling party. Even the mildest forms of opposition were seen as a potential incubator for counter-revolution and could not, therefore, be tolerated (ibid). Following the unravelling of this logic, oppositions within the party were banned and their literature became contraband in wider society (ibid).

Trotsky would become a famous critic of this bureaucratisation. However, his anti-Stalinism would always be coloured by the fact he not only provided direct oversight for many of these early policies, but had also given them a theoretical justification in various writings from this period. For example, in his pamphlet *Terrorism or Communism,* Trotsky celebrated how the Labour Ministry, 'collects numerous staffs of employees, to a considerable extent from the ranks of the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois educated classes' (Trotsky 1920), which oppositionists had warned was running out of control, cementing careerism and creating a nascent privileged elite that inhibited the self-activity of the working classes (Kollontai 2009). More significantly still, Trotsky argued that 'general control' is 'concentrated' in the 'hands of the party' and 'the *last word* belongs to the Central Committee of the party' (Trotsky 1920, emphasis added). He insisted that 'the *exclusive role* of the Communist Party' in the state 'is quite comprehensible', legitimising this with the type of tautology that would become all too common in the 'official' justifications for Stalinism across the twentieth century: 'the revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat pre-supposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of a party' (ibid, emphasis). Trotsky would spend the last seventeen years of his life challenging such assertions, but in the debates following the Civil War, he argued, without hesitation, that the dictatorship of the *party leadership* was the main defence of the revolution. Deutscher would later rue how 'at the very pinnacle of his power, Trotsky, like the protagonist of a classical tragedy, stumbled. He acted against his own principle and in disregard of a most solemn moral commitment' (Deutscher 2003c, 405). Deutscher added, by way of explanation, how it was 'circumstances, the preservation of the revolution and his own pride' that 'drove him into this predicament… yet in acting how he did he shattered the ground on which he stood' (ibid). Indeed, Trotsky would personally experience the corrosive potential of the one party rule he once advocated. How important this one moment, this set of connected political choices solidifying one-party rule, was to the wider course of history is an open question. Deutscher may well be right that free soviet elections in

1920 'would have certainly swept the Bolsheviks from power' (Deutscher 2003c, 420). In any case, twentieth century history does, however, testify to the legacy established by this precedent. The defining feature of the new 'state socialism' was a one-party state, and the absence of democratic mechanisms of control resulted in dictatorship. In Russia, this took hold extremely quickly once democracy was annulled. Stalin was appointed general secretary of the party a year later to enforce the ban on factions and assumed wide discretionary powers (Deutscher 2003a, 30). Overtime – indeed, in as little as two years – Stalin had transformed the system of central appointment of party officials by the general secretary into a system bureaucratic patronage (Deutscher 2003a, 90 – 91). Officials were not accountable to the base units, over which they presided, and instead owed their position and privileges within the bureaucratic structure to Stalin alone. As a consequence, state power was narrowed to the dictates of one man and the idealism of the October Revolution was destroyed. This model went 'modular' in the twentieth century, as aspiring communist actors embraced the Stalinist one-party state system.

Although one party rule was consolidated in this earlier phase, bureaucratic command planning only properly took hold in Russia during the 1930s, and required a radical shift from the NEP policy. The latter had, by reintroducing capitalist market principles, created a class of wealthy peasants ('kulaks') and petty traders ('NEP men') outside of the direct control of the state. The Bolsheviks had conceived the NEP era as a compromise that risked the creation of class inequalities deeply antithetical to collectivist principles. With tragic irony this had led them to put ever-greater stress on the role of the authoritarian party-state as the guardian of socialist principle against the 'alien' class forces created by the retreat into NEP (Deutscher 2003c, 431 – 432). Stalin and the state bureaucracy had initially persisted with this policy until 1928. However, having allowed free market tendencies to take flight, he made one of his characteristic 'turns' with the first Five Year Plan in 1928 that abolished private property in land, imposed agricultural collectivisation and launched a rapid programme of industrial modernisation. The plan succeeded through a brutally enforced 'revolution from above', turning a subsistence level predominantly rural economy into a modern industrial one in just a matter of years (Hobsbawm 1994b, 381 – 385). This constituted a state-led variant of what Marx, in the chapter on 'so-called primitive accumulation' in Capital described 'as nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production' (Marx 2013, 786). David Harvey has since re-elaborated the concept to encompass the plurality of processes involving theft, pillage or expropriation that

characterises the most predatory dimensions of capital (Harvey 2005). In Russia, in the 1930s, a distinctive form emerged that was both closer to and more distant from these conceptions. Rather than the gradual process of surplus redistribution to fund industrial development violent coercion rapidly drove peasants from their land, seizing grain and destroying livestock in the process. Their relation to the means of production had been uprooted and was now mediated by an alienating social power. But, unlike in the origins of capitalism, they were not rendered dependent on the market for their reproduction. It was, instead, the dictates and brutal coercion of the Stalinist state that determined these labourers' relations to production. This provided the economic element of 'state socialism', which existed in a reciprocal relationship to one party rule. Taken together this political can be summarised as the centralisation of political economic power under the auspices of an authoritarian state (Saull 2001; Saull 2007).

5.3 Understanding the rise of Stalinism: substitutionism, nationalism and the 'Third World'

It was through this historical process of uneven and combined development that Soviet Russia, cut off and isolated from the wider world by a *cordon sanitaire,* gave rise to a new, despotic elite. Combined development was not experienced as the successful consummation of international revolution, but through a colonial intervention designed to lock the polity out of global networks of production, trade, communication, diplomacy and media. The architecture of bureaucratic rule was justified by the need for internal order in the face of internal and external threat. The absence of democratic control in the system of political and economic centralisation led to a structure of privileges for a bureaucratic elite, of the kind of described in China in chapter one. Russia gave 'lift off' to this political economy that proved particularly attractive to post-colonial states. The Soviet elite readily utilised the discourse of communism, but were deeply conservative in practice; above all else, they were concerned to uphold their power, which meant sustaining the status quo. Stalinism was, thus, born out of Russia's social and economic isolation. The new elite derived their privileges from the centralisation of economic and political power within the state, and this conditioned their economic policy. Once NEP had created social and class forces hostile to the statist development on which the new bureaucracy depended, they used military coercion to impose the command planning. Trotsky's writings from 1919-1920 set the tone for future justifications: the party elite were acting on behalf of a working class

movement that could not speak for, and organise, itself. In his youth, Trotsky had, ironically, actually coined a term for this: 'substitutionism' (Trotsky 1904). Defined by Deutscher as, 'the action of a part of a group of leaders which represents, or stands in the stead of, an absent, or inactive, social class' (Deutscher 1984a, 199), substitutionism was a central feature of Stalinism, which was grounded in an elitist philosophy party leadership. As such, Trotsky's polemic against those who warned of this danger in the 'War Communism' debate (Trotsky 1920) was a barely concealed attack on his younger self. Back in 1904, amidst bitter divisions in Russian Marxism, Trotsky claimed Lenin's vanguard party model would extinguish the democratic, self-activity of the working class, displacing it by a party elite. His words prophetically described the process of Soviet bureaucratisation that developed rapidly in the 1920s:

> These methods lead… to the party organisation "substituting" itself for the party, the central committee substituting itself for the Party organisation, and finally the dictator substituting himself for the Central Committee (Trotsky 1904, also cited in; Deutscher 2003c, 74).

Whether this was a fair critique of Lenin (Lenin 1902), or was confirmed by the practice of the Bolsheviks' in the years prior to the October Revolution, has been contested (L. T. Lih 2006).[24] However, it is indefatigably the case, that the decision to close down soviet democracy and put faith in the party leadership alone, even if it was only meant as an emergency measure, was certainly 'substitutionist'. Regardless of the intentions, the fact remains that the likelihood 'of dictatorship is implicit in any regime based on a single, irremovable party' (Hobsbawm 1994, 389). The one-party regime took shape in Russia in the years after the Tenth Congress in, but its pace quickened once Lenin died. This saw Stalin turn communism into a secular religion that worshiped a single leader. In other words, this *Stalinization* provided a consummate realisation of Trotsky's warning of 1904, and established a model, at the level of actually existing state power, for others states and communist movements to emulate.

China would take this course in 1953. It centralised political power into the hands of the party upon taking power and moved to a system of bureaucratic planning after the Korean War. I discuss the specificities of this political economy in the last

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[24] Hobsbawm's observation that the 'Bolshevik Party… behaved much less like a military staff and much more like an endless debating society' (Hobsbawm 1994, 386) arguably more closely resembles the real history, which saw a plurality of tendencies and opinions coalesce within Lenin's fighting organisation. The Marxist centre of German social democracy (L. T. Lih 2006), and not the Jacobins of the French Revolution, was Lenin's greatest influence, even if he had been willing to embrace the charge of 'Jacobinism' Trotsky had levelled at him in 1904 (Deutscher 2003c, 74 – 75).

section of this chapter. For now, having outlined the core features of the Stalinist paradigm as it was constructed in the Soviet Union, some general, preliminary remarks are necessary. This political economy differed radically from the capitalist states of the West. In this regard, it is useful to recall one's earlier discussion of the nature of state power in capitalist societies (see page 138). I argued that a capitalist state establishes a clearly defined boundary between a private sphere of economic life, embracing production, consumption, and ownership relations, and a political sphere of state management (Rosenberg 1994, 84 – 86, 126 – 139; Wood 1981). In this political economy, the norm for virtually all states today, the state does not claim special ownership rights over production, but, in general, only uses tax and monetary policy to encourage (private) economic activity. The mirage this involves presents economic life as de-politicised, yet, at the same time, the 'political' sphere of society upholds private property rights through a monopoly on the use of legitimate force. The state in Stalin's Soviet Union operated according to radically different economic assumptions. A bureaucratic dictatorship utilised command planning to incorporate all three domains of the political, economic and military into the orbit of a single, despotic state (Saull 2001; Saull 2007). This affords no right of privately owned production, and, thus, no freedom for capital to exploit labour by rendering individuals dependent on markets for their social reproduction. If seen in these terms, then the historical antagonism between 'East' and 'West' during the twentieth century had an obvious material basis in the fact these economic models were mutually antagonistic (Saull 2007, 16 – 48). Two further consequences of this concentration of political and economic power follow. Firstly, the bureaucracy idealised the autarky that had initially been imposed upon the Soviet Union by foreign powers. They looked with suspicion upon any interchange with the wider world (production networks, migration flows, information sharing, media openness, etc.) that could not be controlled by the state, seeing it as a potential source of instability. Secondly, the relationship between Stalinism and nationalism was an organic one. Stalin had launched an apparently doctrinal debate over whether socialism could be achieved in Russia alone after the defeat of the revolution in Germany. However, standing behind this seemingly semantic dispute was the emergence of a new, and 'Russian', bureaucratic elite inside the Soviet state. What could be more destabilising to their power than new revolutions that resurrected the tradition of radical soviet democracy? It was natural that concern for internal security, with a related use of Russian chauvinism, soon became paramount. The Soviet Union was in formal terms a

multi-national state, but a Russian bureaucracy, who utilised patriotic and nationalist discourse to provide legitimacy for their rule, nonetheless dominated the polity.

China was one amongst several regimes that adopted this form of political rule. Article 2 of the 1982 PRC Constitution perfectly expressed the substitutionist logic Trotsky had warned against back in 1904. Indeed, its *formal description* echoed Trotsky's prophecy almost word-for-word:

> Subordination of the individual [party member] to the organisation, subordination of the minority to the majority, subordination of lower levels to higher ones, and subordination of the whole Party to the Central Committee (cited in P. R. Baehr 1994, 163).

In all likelihood this was an unwitting parroting of the young Trotsky's fears. But it naturally poses a striking question of why a communist movement having taken power proceeded to create a state whose constitution so closely paralleled his dark warning. Observing the revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, Yugoslavia, China, and several other states, one cannot be anything other than struck by how the monolithic one-party state was seen as so eminently appropriate by its leaders. Back in 1904 Trotsky was critiquing the Leninist notion of vanguard party, and it is certainly the case that the concept of a professional elite standing 'above' the people and embodied in the Bolshevik leadership provided an important source of justification for closing down democratic mechanisms after 1920. The Trotsky of 1904 was evidently correct *after this* point. But before this change the Bolsheviks were prepared to base their new form of rule on multi-party soviet democracy. Regardless of this controversy, for us a different but related issue is posed; namely, why the new revolutions bypassed the democratic stage and moved straight to a 'post-1920' view of the one-party state that substituted the activity of the masses for the dictatorship of an elite. The answer, I believe, lies in three features of the uneven and combined development of the world order in the last century, all of which were visible in China: (i) a welter of new national imaginations and the mutability of Stalinism faced with the rise of nationalism; (ii) the challenge of modernisation, requiring a degree of 'primitive accumulation', in predominantly rural societies; and (iii) the logic of substitutionism that became etched into the doctrine of the communist movement. Let us briefly digress these elements.

The international structure I have called 'colonial capitalism' – i.e., the post-1870 world order characterised by the empire-building endeavours of rival great powers – entered a major crisis in the inter-war years. Most of all, this expressed how the

advanced economies had 'outgrown' their own colonial domains and therefore required a genuinely global market. Yet this is not how the ruling political elites of the imperial powers, conditioned by the cultural assumptions of an entire epoch of history, understood their economic plight. Instead colonial expansion, or the protectionist retrenchment into existing empires with trade privileges, characterised the prevailing responses. Intersecting, however, with this structural crisis was a shift in consciousness amongst the subjugated peoples; growing demands for political rights and freedoms, a challenge to the legitimacy of the racial narrative, and the kindling of a plethora of new national imaginations all over the world. The Easter Rising in Ireland and the establishment of the Irish Free State, the push for home rule in India, and the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and conflict over the future of Palestine, all foreshadowed the post-war process of decolonisation. It also illustrated a general shift in 'public mood' within colonial and semi-colonial states of the kind that I have highlighted in China from the 1890s onwards. In light of these developments and anticipating anti-colonial struggles would become a major cleavage in global politics, in 1920, the Second Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) declared its intransigent opposition to imperialism and unconditional support for the rising tide of anti-colonial struggles (Trotsky 1953; Trotsky 1973). This position was developed at the Fourth Congress into what they called the 'united front tactic', which committed communist parties to initiate alliances with reformist parties, unions, or any other grouping engaged in a progressive struggle, for action to improve the conditions and rights of the subaltern classes (Riddell 2011). However, Stalin modified this approach in the mid-1930s (see Trotsky 1979). Whereas the united front tactic advocated the unity of workers and peasants in action against 'the capitalist front' (Riddell 2011), Stalin remoulded the concept as the 'people's' or 'popular' front (Trotsky 1979). In addition to common 'action', such as strikes, boycotts, and so on, Stalin instructed the official communist movement to politically align with liberal or nationalist parties in their own countries. 'Popular front' governments, in effect coalitions of nationalists, liberals, communists, and social democrats, depending on the national context, were the crowning goal of this perspective. Although only formalised as official doctrine in the mid-1930s, the policy was effectively trialled in China during the revolution of 1925 and 1927 (more on which below). Left critics of this turn emphasised how the new line involved suppressing social and economic aspirations of the subaltern classes in favour of unity with 'patriotic' sections of the bourgeois class (Trotsky 1979). However, the

turn also exposed the organic nationalism that came to shape Soviet doctrine under Stalin proved to be complementary to the global flowering of new national imaginations in the south and east (Kautsky 1971; Von Laue 1987). The Soviet Union shared with the post-colonial states of the so-called 'Third World' the view that a strong nation-state was an end in itself and that each national community had to find its own pathway to development (ibid). This carried with it an implication that was rarely acknowledged. In a world characterised by political multiplicity, competitive pressures and national antagonisms were seen as normal and so the naturalisation of the nation state along the lines of realism in International Relations was effectively adopted. The more radical aspiration to *transcend* the national community was consequently forced to one side. This was an unexpected outcome of the Russian Revolution's combined development. Trotsky's belief that socialist revolution was possible in backward Russia had been predicated on a German Revolution coming to the aid of the fledgling state and establishing a transnational federation. In contrast, the new world order that was coming into view during the inter-war years, but was only fully consummated after the Second World War, accelerated the growth of 'nation-ness' and territorialised state sovereignty.

According to the schema of the people's front national liberation was the priority, maximum unity was essential to stand up to imperialism, and once in power the nation could only turn to socialist tasks if a foundation for it had been laid in a long period of capitalist development. This led Moscow and the official communist parties to actively promote the most infamous (e.g. Gaddafi, Idi Amin, Robert Mugabe[25]) and the most celebrated (e.g. Ghandi, Mandela, Sukarno) icons of twentieth century nationalism in equal measure. In power these nationalist movements, with the exception of Cuba, rarely 'took the Soviet road'. Despite their left wing discourse, they pursued state-capitalist[26] models that were hostile to socialist policies, particularly those involving radical forms of democracy, and utilised economically sclerotic 'import substitutionist' models. Affinity with the Soviet Union brought nationalist leaders prestige in their own countries, cloaking their politics in the language of communism and class struggle. 'Third World' nationalism was often ambivalent, even hostile, to democratic rights, and, indeed, the assimilation of democracy into nationalism in China provided an early example of a trend that would become pervasive across the multiplicity of new national

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[25] Strictly speaking, Robert Mugabe's 'African National Union' was actually backed by the PRC whereas the Soviet Union supported Joshua Nkomo's rival, 'African People's Union' (Liebenow 1986, 135).
[26] I am referring here to a state-dominated market economy and not the 'state-capitalist' theory of the Eastern bloc states.

imaginations. Stalinist ideology was much more mutable in response to this than the original 'transnational' communist vision, and many states came to identify with the Soviet Union. An official list of non-European countries compiled in 1982 illustrates how it assumed a substantial degree of ideological hegemony. There were 'core communist party ruled states' (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Cuba, Laos, Mongolia, Vietnam); 'independent communist party ruled states' (China, North Korea); 'leading states of socialist orientation' (Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Yemen); 'less advanced states of socialist orientation' (Algeria, Benin, Burma, Cape Verde, Conga-Brazzaville, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Iraq, Libya, Madagascar, São Tomé, Syria, Tanzania, Zimbabwe); and, finally, the 'marginal states of socialist orientation' (Burkino Faso, Ghana, Seychelles, Surinam) (cited in Halliday 2010, 119). Despite the Stalinist parties' capacity for great militancy and sacrifice, their organic nationalism was inherently conservative, and their socialism was largely defined as positive identification with the Soviet Union. For Trotsky and Lenin uneven development had been confronted *as a problem* for a universal transition to a socialist mode of production. In contrast, Stalinism's allure lay in its *embrace* of unevenness. The division of the world into nations – each engaging in competition to expand power, prestige and influence – was treated as a natural, and not imagined, process. 'Socialism' was not only relegated to a distant future, but it was actually reconceived as a path that *nations,* and not *humans,* could choose to tread.

Stalinism had a special ability to integrate into this flowering of national imaginations, which 'internationalist Marxism', so to speak, shirked. In doing so, 'Marxist-Leninism' effectively became a religious scripture that cloaked state policy, as nationalism was now the operative ideological basis for the decisions of state leaders. As I discussed in chapter one, this was acknowledged within the discipline of International Relations, but only in the terms stipulated by realist theory. In contrast, sociological accounts tended not to acknowledge the role of nationalism in policy-making, and this fed into a symbiotic relationship existed between the two. Realism held international politics to be autonomous and not subject to 'domestic' causes, leaving the way open for sociological accounts to develop a purely internalised conception of the political life in these states. This elided the organic connection between these regimes and nationalism, owing to their attachment to the nation-state form as the source of their bureaucratic social power. Furthermore, the nature of the economic structure of Stalinist nationalism, which was rooted in an authoritarian party-

state, struggled to extend its reach globally. The bureaucratic elite was qualitatively more dependent on the *nation-state* as the source of its social power, than capitalist ruling classes were at the time or since. Unlike the latter, states that were practicing bureaucratic command planning under the auspices of a one-party political system lacked any effective means to project economic power across borders (Saull 2001; Saull 2007). They were exclusively dependent instead on the 'brutish' forms of diplomacy and military force. As Richard Saull explains:

> Soviet expansionism took the form of the domestic character of the Soviet state – centralised, authoritarian, coercive and militarised and centred on the communist party's monopoly of socio-economic political power. [In contrast, US expansion rested] …on the bourgeois separation of state and economy, permitting political influence and power through international capitalist economic relations (Saull 2007, 55).

A disparity can be clearly seen between the overwhelming character of Soviet 'intervention' in Eastern Europe and the weak, elastic bonds of affinity it developed with left nationalist regimes. Even at the high point of Soviet influence in 1976 it had just 5,000 military personnel, spread across some 37 different countries, outside of the Warsaw pact zone (Saull 2007, 153, 225). Dependency on a nation-state practicing bureaucratic autarky consequently established very visible limits on the ability of the Soviet Union to compete geopolitically. The hierarchical power relations between the Soviet bureaucracy and its satellites in Eastern Europe also illustrate how supra-national associations amongst these types of regime could only exist if one bureaucratic elite was militarily and politically dominant.[27] In comparison, the communist parties that came to power in revolutions ruled genuinely sovereign states. These parties proceeded nonetheless to model their political economy very closely on the Soviet Union. The complementary fusion between nationalism and Stalinism is critical to explaining why they took this route. In the first place, membership of the 'official', i.e. Soviet-sponsored, communist movement was *conditional* on supporting Stalin's authoritarian regime inside the Soviet Union. Dissidents who opposed this were purged from national parties and this undoubtedly played a role in making the party leadership unaccountable regardless of whether they had any prospect of taking power. For those that won power, creating a Soviet-style political system was a logical consequence of the 'substitutionist' model of party organisation they already adhered to. Their leaders had no intention,

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[27] In this regard, perhaps Stalinism's biggest single legacy – as a colonial aggressor *and* supporter of nationalisms – is the post-1991 'proliferation of nations'.

even when they enjoyed genuine popular admiration, of allowing those below them to control their actions, let alone ultimately remove them from power in elections. Moreover, this logic of substitutionism was ideally suited to the condition of political multiplicity, i.e. the existence of many nation-states within the world order. A single leader could not dominate the plethora of global societies, or even the nationally fragmented Eastern bloc, but could autocratically rule a despotic, one-party nation-state.

Put in these terms, the causal relationship moves from substitutionism to nationalism, but China's experience suggests a two-way, dialectical relationship between these aspects. In other words, despotism could just as easily arise *out of* nationalism. As I showed in chapter four, nationalist ideology was ascendant in China for the whole period after the Russo-Japanese War. Chinese communist leaders generally had a background within the country's nationalist movement, even if Mao's own personal predilection for the discourse of patriotism was particularly pronounced. Stalinist politics was therefore able to connect with these indigenous tendencies; 'subjectively' the worldview of many CCP cadres was nationalistic, and 'objectively' an imagined community that was strongly inclined to militant nationalism existed. Assimilating democracy into nationalism was also a central characteristic of China's national movement and, in this sense, is arguably indicative of many of the post-colonial movements. It might appear perplexing from our contemporary perspective that political activists and writers who sincerely believed in some form of emancipation would countenance creating dictatorial regimes *on normative* grounds. But it reflected problems of industrial modernisation in extremely underdeveloped societies. Peasant surpluses had to be appropriated to fund industrial modernisation and this encouraged paternalistic conceptions. The same writers also observed that democratisation only came to the West long *after* the industrial revolution. Sun and Chiang used such arguments with a degree of sincerity. A similar logic also pushed communists towards bureaucratic command planning. Despite its record as an economic system being overwhelmingly negative, command planning had one dispensation. It proved capable of undertaking a rapid transition from a rural to an industrial based economy within a matter of years (Hobsbawm 1994, 382 – 385; Flewers forthcoming; Kautsky 1971; Von Laue 1987). An authoritarian party-state was a suitable vehicle to impose the primitive accumulation necessary for this on the peasantry. If the latter looked to the party, if they saw it as their saviour for whom they would sacrifice, then this only provided further justification for a development trajectory that took the 'Soviet road'. The bourgeoisie

could not achieve fast-paced industrialisation on this scale and, particularly if the party had taken power in a civil war, were nearly hostile to the new regime. Bureaucratic planning allowed the ruling party to dispossess the capitalist class economically as well as politically, and centralise social power completely, with the logic of substitutionism then vigorously asserting itself to create a personal despotism.

This digression identifies the global conditions of uneven but combined development that proved, only for a short period of time in the long sweep of history, extremely favourable to the Stalinist paradigm. Each of these processes was eminently present in China; its transition from tributary empire to capitalist semi-colony unleashed the powerful forces of the nationalist imagination; the challenge of modernisation was extraordinary given the levels of rural hardship and persistent failure of ruling elites to industrialise; and the substitutionist model of the Stalinist party infused into the polity from the outside world, influencing *both* the Kuomintang and the CCP. One can see then the ascending link between the narratives I have sketched out in the previous two chapters; together they locate Maoism as an answer to the problem of underdevelopment on the road to national salvation. Having outlined these general conditions of the world system in the decay of colonial capitalism, we can now move explicitly back onto China's national terrain. I trace the emergence of Maoism through four steps: the origins of Chinese Bolshevism, the 'dress rehearsal' of the Chinese Revolution, the emergence of the peasantry as revolutionary subject after the defeat of the working class, and the rise of Japanese imperialism.

5.4 Ideological infusions: the origins of Chinese Bolshevism

Stalinism's global expansion was inevitably subject to a high level of political unevenness; all such international movements will exhibit this given that they operate within a world made up of a polycentric distribution of diverse yet interacting communities. However, the Stalinized communist movement openly embraced unevenness due to its deep commitment to the politics of social patriotism, allowing it to adapt to the global flowering of national imaginations. The Chinese communists' desire to blend their ideas with the prevailing national spirit of their own country was therefore hardly unusual amongst the global movement. For the Soviet Union, however, this approach flowed from their commitment to realism in international relations (realism, that is, in the discipline of 'International Relations' sense of *national interest*). This, in turn, implicitly reflected the ruling elite's attachment to the status quo, i.e., the

Russian nation-state as the source of their bureaucratic power, which new revolutions could potentially threaten. Moscow did not intend to encourage successful 'struggles for power' – an outlook illustrated by their use of *stadial* concepts of social development, with long periods of capitalist development seen as necessary before any move to collective control of production. In numerous polities globally, communist hegemony over the working class component of the people's front saw the successful suppression of more militant demands for an offensive on capital in favour of unity with 'patriotic' sections of the capitalist class. Even in Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe, Stalin had initially pursued a popular front policy – envisioning a periphery of market economies with friendly relations to the Soviet Union – but soon found that bourgeois class interest groups in these war-ravaged states were hostile to membership of a Soviet-led security bloc (Main and Hughes 2012, 121 – 122). The Soviet-occupied countries of Eastern Europe, in spite of the hardships of war, retained strong bourgeois traditions and interests hostile to the political economy of the Soviet Union and this led to Stalin exporting the authoritarian party model. Underdeveloped polities with weak capitalist interest groups exhibited a different dynamic. If power fell into the hands of the communists following a civil war, then what were they to do with it? How could they develop a strong economy and achieve the national salvation that they had promised in their rise to power? The conclusion drawn observed the same logic as Stalin's decision-making process in Eastern Europe, but in quite different social conditions; native capital was abominably weak and hostile to the communists, and so bureaucratic planning appeared to offer a viable alternative to the popular front policy.

The Chinese Revolution would pose these questions to the communists. Despite global tendencies favourable to the rise of the CCP, there was nothing ineluctable about their triumph. It reflected a particular constellation of social and class conditions; of ideological infusions, adaptions, and modifications; and no shortage of good fortune. Communism in its Bolshevik form held a powerful allure in China due to the polity's wrenching backwardness. Russia's failed revolution of 1905 had given energy and gusto to the formation of the Tongmenghui as they sensed a global crisis of absolutism was developing. In a similar spirit, 1917 appeared to open up a world of previously unimaginable possibilities; that a revolutionary shift from a society of great paucity, strangled by semi-colonial subjugation, to one taking tentative steps to a socialist future, was quite realistic. 'Marxism found a way to China via Russia', writes Deutscher, 'the lightening speed by which it did so', and 'the firmness with which it struck down roots

on China's soil, are the most stupendous illustration of the law of combined development' (Deutscher 1984a, 182). He added, 'here we see the most archaic of nations avidly absorbing the most modern of revolutionary doctrines' (ibid). There was, however, another source of Asian radicalism that provided part of the groundwork for China's Bolshevik experience. Deutscher's evocative argument that China skipped a series of historical stages in the intellectual evolution of Marxist thought involves an internally logical set of claims, but is not entirely aligned with the real history. The first translation of the *Communist Manifesto* was not, as Deutscher claimed, produced in 1920 (ibid), but has been dated to 1907 (Tian 2005, 57). It should be remembered that this was a time of intense intellectual upsurge triggered by the Russo-Japanese War and reflecting the radicalisation of the new cosmopolitan intellectuals in China. Indeed, here once more, the question of the Chinese following in the footsteps of Japanese pioneers resurfaces, for the island state that had responded more rapidly to modernity also gave rise to Asian socialism. In a fashion typical of modernisation, the emergence of radical thought was conditional on the reshaping of urban life and rupture with messianic discourse. 'Japanese Socialism' emerged amongst those avidly concerned with the injustices of industrialisation (Shichor 2009, 199 – 200). Socialist thought was freely pirated as these subjects looked to the wider world for theories to answer social problems:

> The absorption of socialist thought in Japan was determined by a process of selection – conscious and unconscious – from the rich reservoir of ideas that had gradually aggregated in the West during many decades, but that reached Japan almost instantly (Shichor 2009, 199).

Mirroring socialist thought in early nineteenth century Europe, Japanese leftists reacted in similarly moral terms to rampant individualism and social injustice, utilising traditional concepts of social harmony to render their ideas palatable to the Japanese cultural imagination (Shichor 2009, 199 – 200). Japan's ruling elite took no notice, however, of this moderation. These heretics were repressed and their gradualist vision of reform appeared hopelessly out of touch as the Russo-Japanese War inspired the country's colonial ambitions (ibid). Socialism emanated into China by way of this influence and, thus, 'when the vibrations of the Russian Revolution reached East Asia, socialism had already become familiar to intellectuals and activists' (ibid). The Russo-Japanese War (see Anievas 2012; Kowner 2006) pushed Asian leftism away from the pacifistic reformism that had characterised Japanese Socialism, as it appeared at odds

with the intensifying colonial conflicts that polarised ideological debate. Proto-fascist and chauvinist outlooks emerged on the political right and leftist movements reflected these broader cultural changes by turning to violence and taking up the imagery of nationalism (Shichor 2009, 201). Deutscher's insistence that 'lacking any native Marxist ancestry, Chinese communism descends straight from Bolshevism' (ibid) thus occluded the shift from reformist to revolutionary outlooks, an evolution analogous to Europe's socialist thought. The earlier moment, 1905, which emerges as key, confirms that the 'Russian connection' was important but not in the way that Deutscher conceived it, i.e. the developmental possibilities the Soviet regime posed for Eurasia. China's socialist ideology emerged from a process of intermingling with militant *nationalist* discourses inflamed by the Russo-Japanese War. Meanwhile, the Russian Revolution of 1905 inspired these early radicals' pursuit of a revolutionary, anti-Qing agenda, which was also laced with the racialized nationalism discussed in chapter 4. Across East Asia, consequently, the reformist moderation promoted by 'Japanese Socialism' could not connect to this growing sense of geopolitical crisis that created strong tendencies towards a much more militant form of political nationalism.

This contextualisation – locating the origins of Chinese socialism in the same 'moment' of middle class radicalisation from which revolutionary nationalism sprung – is not only a correction of the historical record, but reflects a basic absence in Deutscher's work, which elides the nationalism that formed an organic part of Maoism. Once 1905 is recognised as the stimulus to the turn towards leftism – with the *Communist Manifesto* translated two years later – it is possible to visualise the overall context as one in which a powerful 'push' was exerted on Chinese subjects towards nationalism but in the complexity of this process they latched on to a variety of radical ideologies. Marxism could, naturally, find a hearing at this time, for the obsession with the 'fate of China' fed into utopian depictions of the a 'future-orientation and modern content', an intellectual imagination which expressed the 'general social temper for accelerated change' (Lee 1983, 459). Moreover, this indigenous culture was pregnant with radicalism, as 'reformism' was satirised as a 'hackneyed style shorn of intellectual substance and political gravity' (Lee 1983, 460). However, the same cultural conditions that provided openings for militant varieties of socialism also created pressure for them to assimilate into Chinese nationalism.

5.5 China's dress rehearsal: counter-revolution and the origins of the Maoist road

Having witnessed the post-war revolts in Europe subside the attention of the Comintern shifted to China as a potential site of social upheaval. Trotsky, for instance, argued rhetorically, but, in some respects, quite reasonably, 'We know that in China, toiling people, who have probably never in their life read a single one of Lenin's articles, ardently gravitate towards Bolshevism for such is the might of history's breath!' (Trotsky 1924). This optimism found its confirmation in the rapid growth of the Chinese communists. The CCP was born in 1921 with just a handful of converts – twelve delegates attended the 'First Congress' representing a mere fifty-seven members (Deutscher 1984a, 183). In just four years it had grown exponentially, claiming 1,000 members in May 1925 and growing to 10,000 just six months later (Wilbur and How 1989, 184). 'Leninism', wrote Deutscher, 'offered its Chinese adepts a few great and simple truths' (Deutscher 1984a, 183): revolution would come from below through the masses' own power; the communists should distrust reform and look for no accommodation with colonial powers or warlords; the working class represented the consistently revolutionary subject with no interest in small-holder, property-owning democracy; and China, like Russia, could move in an 'uninterrupted' fashion from anti-colonialism to anticapitalism (ibid). These were the dictums that Bolshevism initially taught its Chinese converts. Debates at the CCP's First Congress between those advocating a literary focus, and those who felt it was vital to reach out energetically and speedily to the urban proletariat, were resolved decisively in favour of the latter (Saich and Yang 1996, 4 – 6). Amongst the urban working classes in Shanghai and Guangzhou (Canton), whose workplace conditions were appalling, the communist message found a natural resonance. For both communist leaders at the time and Marxist historians looking at this process in retrospect, the temptation was always to read the unfolding Chinese Revolution through the lens of the Russian process. Trotsky and Deutscher therefore, looked upon, the Chinese Revolution of 1925 to 1927 alike, as 'the dress rehearsal' in a similar spirit to the 1905 revolution in Russia. In a sense, it was, but not only did the CCP draw radically different conclusions – developing out of the ashes of defeat a peasant-war strategy –, the initial sociological conditions also diverged a great deal.

China's combined development gave its failed revolution a quite different character to its Russian equivalent. China's industrial workers lacked the social power of the working class in the Russian 'dress rehearsal'. Financing for modern industry was

chronically bad in Republican China and the state could not offer private capital sufficient security or protection from foreign competition (Feuerwerker 1983b, 61). The limits this placed on growth naturally found expression in the size of the industrial working class and Marxists at the time and since have tended to understate this. The best figures for the size of the industrial labour force, taken from a national census, put it at around 1 million in 1933 (Lippit 1987, 47). Even taking into account that the Great Depression hit China in 1933, the estimate, from 1927, of 3 million cited by Isaacs (Isaacs 1961, 33), and Mao's estimate of 2 million cited by Deutscher (Deutscher 1984a, 185), both significantly overstated the size of the industrial working class. Factories were small, technologically backward and formed only a small proportion of the economy. This contrasted with the great combines of Russian industry (see pages 106 to 107) and made the social power of the Chinese industrial working class considerably weaker. There was, however, a real potential for 'urban revolution' broadly defined, as a wider mass of precarious proletarian layers occupied the cities. Workers in Chinese factories toiled in appalling conditions, with wages for unskilled workers low and 12-hour days the norm (Feuerwerker 1983b, 61 – 62), and this gave ample scope for radicalism, even if – as was the case in Russia – low paid workers did not look for jobs for life and retained links with the villages. The concentration of the industrial working class in a handful of cities provided them with a visibility that belied this weakness, and appalling conditions led many to quickly assimilate communist ideas and join unions. This urban socialist radicalisation was, however, spatially located in the major cities, notably Shanghai and Guangzhou, whereas the countryside remained mired in warlordism, posing the vexing question of whether a struggle for power was possible. Russian Marxism's textbook problem – of how to make socialist revolution in conditions where capitalist industry was underdeveloped – was amplified in the Chinese setting and posed obvious challenges of the CCP. Indeed, adherents of all the ideologies that won a hearing in the urban centres had to address the question of how to conquer the countryside, extinguish the plague of warlordism and establish a state that was able to confront colonialism. Uneven development – both in terms of China's socio-economic paucity and its division into rival warlord fiefdoms – was confronted as a problem to be overcome. Combined development with the wider world had, in some respects, introduced a communist ideology that *was* 'too advanced' for the Chinese setting and, in turn, amplified the difference between urban and rural consciousness. Meanwhile, the isolated Soviet Union was keen to develop geopolitical allies regardless

of whether they had any socialist orientation. These tensions were manifested during the period 1923 to 1927 when communists worked inside the Kuomintang and won significant influence.

Communist entry into the Kuomintang was heavily determined by the prescriptions laid down by the global movement, particularly the turn to the 'united front'. The Kuomintang struggle for national unification and against the unequal treaties and the plague of warlordism was rightly deemed progressive, and, if successful, would open up avenues for economic relations with the Soviet Union. Initially, no communists, including Trotsky, thought that a social revolution in China was a *short-term* prospect. For example, in 1924 he discussed, with excited anticipation, the *capitalist* potential of Kuomintang rule and the role this would play in giving rise to a stronger working class subject:

> There is no doubt that if the Chinese Kuomintang party manages to unify China under a national-democratic regime then the capitalist development of China will go ahead with seven-mile strides. And yet all this will prepare the mobilization of the countless proletarian masses who will at once burst out of a prehistoric, semi-barbaric state and cast themselves into industry's melting-pot, the factory. Consequently there will not be the time to conserve and accumulate the rubbish of past ages in the consciousness of the toilers; a guillotine will slice through their consciousness as it were, cutting off the past from the future and forcing them to seek new ideas, new forms and new paths of life and struggle (Trotsky 1924).

Trotsky was, however, aware of the contradictions underpinning this outlook. A class antagonism was lodged firmly within the Kuomintang with the entry of the communists and the rising tide of rural and urban class struggles. The Chinese nationalist bourgeoisie, who were excluded from the governance of the colonial 'International Settlements' in Shanghai and elsewhere, formed a key social base for the Kuomintang (Isaacs 1961, 79 – 80). These layers wanted a state that could offer security for their investments and protection from foreign capital, and were alarmed at the decision to permit the communists to enter the nationalist movement (ibid). The way these class tensions in the alliance resolved themselves cruelly exposed the law of uneven and combined development's tragic qualities. Soviet military advisors persuaded Chiang Kai-shek to reorganise the Kuomintang as a disciplined centralised force rooted in mass struggle and with a standing army modelled on that which had brought the Bolsheviks victory in the Civil War (Isaacs 1961, 64). 'The Kuomintang', wrote Isaacs with only slight exaggeration, was thus 'transformed into a rough copy of the Russian Bolshevik

Party' (ibid). It appears likely that Chiang was also impressed with the stability and order that one-party, centralised rule had brought to the Soviet Union when he undertook a six month visit and returned to China hailing the 'world revolution' (ibid). Chiang did not share any of the communist goals that Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy formally adhered to. Yet he drew upon the model of a one-party nation-state and used it instrumentally to channel the wave of struggle towards his personal dictatorship. He did so with Moscow's blessing, providing another indication of how complementary Stalinism was to twentieth century nationalism. From 1926 to 1927, paralleling closely Stalin's own moves against Trotsky's and the oppositionists in Russia (1923 – 1928), Chiang shut down the communists and other lefts in the Kuomintang. This concluded with their annihilation in the brutal Shanghai massacre of 12 April 1927 that saw thousands killed (Isaacs 1961, 175 – 185).

It was a tragic outcome of combined development. Not only had the Soviet Union given Chiang the weapons and the training to crush the movement, but the Stalinist ideology of the monolithic party-state had also become interwoven with the existing tendency of Chinese nationalists to identify the 'rule of the people' with the liberation of the nation, i.e. to assimilate democracy into nationalism (see discussion on p.157). This 'authoritarian imagination' was crystalized into the institutional fabric of the new Nationalist government by 1928. China's Marxist revolutionaries had undoubtedly benefited from their entry into the Kuomintang. By the close of 1925 they found themselves at the head of mass social struggles (Isaacs 1961, 68 – 73). This was the golden moment of Kuomintang entryism as CCP membership increased tenfold in the space of six months (Wilbur and How 1989, 184) and Guangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong were beset by strikes, riots and labour protests (Isaacs 1961, 68 – 73). It was met with predictable hysteria on the part of the local and foreign bourgeoisie alike, pushing these old foes to unite *against* the subaltern classes (Isaacs 1961, 74 – 80). The movement therefore polarised on class lines sooner than the communists predicted. The CCP were very far from naïve faced with this change of circumstances, and argued forcefully to Moscow that Chiang was preparing to crush them by force. They requested at the close of 1925 and again in the spring of 1926 that the Communist International give them permission to break with the Kuomintang and for the flow of Soviet arms to be used to develop independent working class militia (Deutscher 2003a, 267 – 268). Moscow denied the request and instead urged the CCP to hold worker and peasant protests 'in check' in the name of national unity. Mikhail Borodin, the Soviet Union's

attaché in China, was alarmed at the enveloping mass movement and insisted that 'the left' – a term that, for the bureaucratic Soviet elite, included Chiang and the whole Kuomintang leadership – continue to 'present a united opinion' (cited in Isaacs 1961, 87 – 88). It was recognised that the nationalist party was of 'mixed class composition' and could not 'undertake the confiscation of private property' (cited in Isaacs 1961, 88), and that the maintenance of a 'united opinion' of 'the left' inevitably entailed abandoning the workers' immediate social demands in order to conciliate the patriotic bourgeoisie. In a country where political violence was an everyday occurrence it was never likely that having converted warlords to the cause, the Kuomintang in power would tolerate an active, radical workers' movement. The Guangzhou Coup of 20 March 1926 was a critical moment that saw Chiang curtail the mass movement, substituting it for his standing army and launching the Northern Expedition (Isaacs 1961, 89 – 110). Chiang consolidated his control of the Kuomintang military, arrested scores of communist dissidents, and replaced the party structures with a de facto personal dictatorship (ibid). But it was shortly *after this* dramatic turning point that the Soviet Politburo ratified the decision to accept the Kuomintang as a supporting sympathiser section of the Communist International with only Trotsky voting against (Deutscher 2003a, 271; Isaacs 1961, 117). Chiang even took up an honorary position on the international leadership. Forgotten, it seems, was Lenin's warning, made when he announced the Communist International's unconditional support for the anti-colonial struggle in 1920, of 'quasi-communist revolutionists' that 'cloak the liberation movement in the backward countries with a communist garb' (cited in Isaacs 1961, 48). 'In preparing himself for the role of executioner', Trotsky would later remark, Chiang yearned for, 'the cover of world communism – he got it' (cited in Isaacs 1961, 117). The Chinese Revolution of 1925 to 1927 came at a time when Stalinism was still in its infancy, both in its state form and core ideological moorings. The Trotsky-Stalin split had until this point been a purely Russian affair. But Moscow's policy in China's revolutionary days provided an early insight into the global implications of Stalin's rise: state security, and not social revolution, was now his paramount concern. Stalinism would, across the twentieth century, habitually support nationalist leaders, but in China it had a novel and shocking quality. Its impact on Maoism was contradictory; never again would Moscow be able to instruct in such absolute terms the Chinese communists to pursue a given line, yet, at the same time the defeat pushed Mao to intensify his efforts to find a specifically Chinese route to the social revolution. As such, the tragic paradox of

Stalin's insistence that the communists should support the Kuomintang *nationalists* at all costs lay in how it pushed the CCP towards political nationalism.

5.6 A revolutionary subject? The role of the peasantry in China's combined revolution

In spite of his general advocacy of an uninterrupted movement from political to social revolution in the backward countries (Trotsky 1978), Trotsky, as we have seen, initially believed a longer period of capitalist development was needed in China (Trotsky 1924). He had good reasons for thinking this, due to the sheer scale of its underdevelopment. When the masses rose up in 1925 he was also slow to react to the historicity of these developments, and, even once his critique of the Comintern strategy was in place, he did not speak out on the issue between April 1926 and March 1927 (Deutscher 2003a, 271). Since Trotsky most 'Trotskyist' writers (Deutscher 1984a; Isaacs 1961) have implied that a healthy soviet system might have been established *if* the CCP had broken with the Kuomintang when its leaders had wished to, and *if* the Soviet Union had materially supported splitting Chiang's army and launching a workers' insurrection. There are reasons, however, for treating this assessment with a degree of caution. Saull argues that the failure of the Hunan peasants' uprising and the workers' insurrection in Shanghai in the spring of 1927 were rooted in material realities, i.e. not in the political failure of the CCP, under the strict tutelage of Moscow, to break with the Kuomintang earlier (Saull 2007, 39 – 40). Saull puts his case too categorically and fails to acknowledge the Shanghai insurrection was initially successful and only defeated once Chiang arrived and massacred the communist-led workers' movement (J. K. Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 284). Nonetheless, there is no doubt that it would have been very difficult for armed workers' communes to survive in what passed for an industrial core of China in Guangzhou and Shanghai. The Northern Expedition only succeeded because Chiang incorporated the vast warlord armies as entire units into his command structure. Warlords that submitted to his authority were granted the official title of regional governor within the new Nanjing regime. There were 2 million soldiers serving China's warlord armies in 1928 (Sheridan 2008, 291) and the Kuomintang had begun the campaign with an initial fighting force of just 100,000 soldiers in 1926 (Joes 2006, 195). The politics of the Kuomintang, which sought a strong, bureaucratic state able to stand up to the colonial powers and assert China's national interests, was politically amenable to the incorporation of the warlords. The CCP could hardly match this offer and grant warlords formal control of whole territories. The Soviet Union might have

been able to buy time through bribery, but their attempt to do this after the Shanghai massacre suggests it would have ended in failure. Feng Yuxiang, a leading warlord, had been cultivated as a Soviet ally in the 1920s, and even visited the Soviet Union for an extended period. The hope of Stalin and the Soviet elite that he would support the communists after the Shanghai massacre was not entirely naïve, but it was soon dashed in any case (Sheridan 2008, 306 – 307). He 'promptly came to an understanding with Chiang and advised the Russians to go home' (Sheridan 2008, 307). In addition, to this problem of the military balance of forces, the threat of colonial intervention cast a long shadow over the revolution. Britain had some 58 warships stationed in Shanghai supported by a garrison of 5,000 troops (Elleman 2009, 59). Since the fall of 1926, the British government had made preparations to intervene militarily in China and had openly stated its intention to act if colonial interests were threatened (ibid). The *North China Herald,* the mouthpiece of China's British settlers, saw the revolutionary upsurge as a Soviet conspiracy against the Empire and openly called for immediate 'retaliation' and 'reprisal' (Elleman 2009, 57). Had the working class successfully taken power into its own hands in Guangzhou and Shanghai it seems extremely likely that the British would have intervened to protect their colonial power. Only the rallying of considerable sections of the rank and file in the warlord armies to defend a workers' insurrection in these cities could have averted their speedy military defeat. In the absence of the still small CCP's material ability to undertake agitation for this, it seems unlikely that they could have held onto power. A 'Paris Commune scenario', i.e. when an urban revolution is smashed by a Bonapartist peasant army, would have been the most likely conclusion had the communists pursued Trotsky's line. Alternatives to this pessimistic appraisal must assume that neither the warlords nor the British would have moved to retake Shanghai or Guangzhou if the working class had established soviet power.

Trotsky would have likely seen no great shame in heroic defeat; the question for him was whether a consciousness could be kindled in the working class that was determined to settle scores with their persecutors in the future, and that looked to the communists for guidance. Whatever the rights and wrongs of this view, in China an altogether different approach to Marxist practice was pioneered. Chinese Marxism, wrote Deutscher, sadly fell prey to 'Moscow's opportunism and national egoism':

> … Being dependent on Moscow for inspiration, ideas and the sinews of their activity, finding themselves raised by events of dizzy suddenness from the obscurity of a tiny propaganda circle to the leadership of millions in revolt, lacking political experience and self confidence, bombarded by an endless

stream of categorical orders, instructions, and remonstrances from Moscow, subjected to persuasion, threats and political blackmail by Stalin's and the Comintern's envoys on the spot, bewildered and confounded, the pioneers of Chinese communism gave in (Deutscher 1984a, 186 – 187).

There was a certain tragic fatality to this process. China's combined development with the Russian Revolution had introduced a political vision to the polity that was, in some respects, 'too advanced' for its sociological terrain, yet also captured the imagination of the urban working classes and steeled them for a resolute struggle with colonial capitalism. This same infusion of revolutionary momentum from the outside world gave the Russian 'teacher' its political authority as the global centre of anti-colonial struggle, but Stalin's tutelage left the masses literally unarmed in the face of Chiang's army. Having previously preached complete subordination to the Kuomintang, the Comintern shifted its position after the Shanghai massacre, impelling the Chinese party to launch absurdly adventurist armed uprisings in urban centres despite the movement having dissipated in defeat. Although adhering formally to the idea that China's revolution remained bourgeois in character these were in effect futile attempts to seize power (Deutscher 1984a, 190). This dangerous revolutionary posturing pre-empted the post-1928 'Third Period' hailed by Moscow as a new phase of imminent global revolution. In China, just as in numerous other polities, there was no such radical uprising after the defeats of 1926 and 1927. The strategy of 'permanent insurrections' merely served to justify the authoritarianism of the Kuomintang regime. Not only were the effects of this approach catastrophic for the core membership of the CCP and its standing amongst the people, but its imposition from the outside also had important implications. Stalin's dictatorship in the Soviet Union led, in turn, to colonial-style direction of national leaderships in the global communist movement. This dictating of strategy to serve Russian national interests was very far removed from democratic internationalism and there could be few better ways to push these parties towards nationalism. In this sense, the CCP leadership's decision to find their very own road to power – though never formally breaking with Moscow – was unsurprising. More surprising is why so few other communist parties did not embark on similar journeys, but instead remained more orthodox components of the official communist movement. It might plausibly be argued that this simply illustrates the high regard the Soviet Union was held in which gave its leadership authority. However, a further factor can arguably be seen in how the strategy of the 'people's front', which the Russian party generally promoted, complemented the

rising tide of political nationalism in the Global South and East. 'History', in this sense, was on the side of the politics the Soviet Union promoted, as it actively encouraged national parties to adapt to the flowering of national identities. Maoism's distinctiveness therefore emerged twofold out of (i) the CCP's experience of the 'people's front' and (ii) the weakness of the industrial working class in the Chinese setting. China's impoverished peasantry had a long history of radicalism conducive to a strategy of agrarian revolution. The country's expansive geography had also long provided fertile terrain for the marauding bandits of Imperial China and afforded the same protections for modern guerrilla warfare. A struggle for power based on the peasantry allowed the CCP to introduce a class antagonism into the national struggle that the industrial working class was too weak to provide. This, in turn, meant that the party could be identified *both* as the leadership of the subaltern classes *and* as national saviours. The latter, of course, required a successful struggle against colonialism, and this opportunity was provided by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria (1931) and Mainland China (1937) – both of which represented key events for the slide into the Second World War.

It would be wrong to present the turn of the CCP to nationalism as simply a political choice made by Mao, for this turn reflected the extraordinary pressure within the Chinese polity to adopt the discourse of national chauvinism. Amongst the peasants the adaption of traditional imageries to the modern context – to generate a national imagination pushing for *minzu*-unity – might not have been a condition for a successful peasant struggle, but it certainly helped foster legitimacy for the CCP in the base areas. Mao's own predilection for social patriotism arose out of and consciously deepened this pervasive nationalist sensibility amongst the people. This point is curiously notable by its absence from Deutscher's analysis. Yet it is more than implied by his recognition 'that the Chinese Revolution, which in its scope is the greatest of all revolutions in history, was led by the most provincial minded and insular of revolutionary parties' (Deutscher 1984a, 182). In the period that Deutscher describes as one of 'undiluted Leninism' in the Chinese party, from 1920 to the opening of the national revolution in 1925 (Deutscher 1984a, 183), and even throughout the revolution and counter revolution of 1925 to 1927, the party was firmly 'internationalist' in its outlook, and its loyal observance of Comintern positions perfectly expressed this. It was only as Mao assumed growing influence in the party in the 1930s that the nationalist ethos, and the insularity of the party from world events, fully takes hold. Mao successfully positioned himself as an advocate of a distinctively Chinese strategy based on rural 'Red Bases',

but importantly cloaked this with unquestioning support for the Soviet Union, and total opposition to critics of the authoritarian regime. His manoeuvre against Wang Ming and the pro-Moscow faction was, however, implicitly justified by the latter's distance from Chinese affairs (see Rue 1966). As I have discussed, Mao's early writing developed themes 'of his thought and action' that would be present 'throughout the whole of his subsequent career: nationalism, or patriotism, and admiration for the martial spirit' (Schram 1986, 791). While there is consistency in his use of this discourse, he was also a successful pragmatist in his approach to the inner-party struggle, careful to never openly oppose Moscow. He remained aloof and disinterested from international affairs, and his 'interventions' on this terrain were often even cruder than his domestic writings. The two articles (Mao 1926; 1927) that Deutscher cites as evidence for labelling Mao a 'Trotskyist Jourdain' (Deutscher 1984a, 188) are heavily laden with what sociologists today would term 'methodological nationalism', i.e. they assume a pristine development of the nation as an organic whole, logically independent of the external world. Neither article approaches China's development from the standpoint of the polity's place within 'the world revolution', even if they do not contain the explicit nationalist ideology of some of his other writings. Mao did come into conflict with the CCP leadership over these pieces, because he stressed that the peasants struggle should not be held back in order to save the alliance with the Kuomintang (Rue 1966, 47 – 48). But Deutscher's remark that 'by this time in the Soviet Union only the Trotskyists and Zinovievists still spoke such language' badly overstates their political affinity (Deutscher 1984a, 188). Mao had no knowledge of Trotsky's criticisms of the CCP policy, but there is no evidence he would have responded positively to them, 'because his awareness of the wider horizons of the world communist movement had little or no affect on his tactics, nor did the shifting alignments in the CPSU [i.e., the Russian Party] on the policies he worked out and recommended' (Rue 1966, 116). Mao's reasoning was located purely in China's national circumstances and not, as was the case for Trotsky, the role a triumphant revolution could play in rehabilitating a transnational conception of the workers' state by ending Russia's isolation and encouraging its democratisation. Deutscher's use of the analogy 'Jourdain', which recalls Molière's *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, reveals the extent of his exaggeration. In the play, Monsieur Jourdain is a bourgeois, who ardently longs to be an aristocrat, and thus dons splendid clothes and engages in aristocratic pursuits, but lacks the lineage and title defining the aristocracy.

In Deutscher's analogy, Mao could only nominally cloak himself in the discourse of Stalinism, because the approach he took had a *Trotskyist substance.*

Maoism, however, was distinguished from Trotskyism in a radical fashion. Deutscher himself notes how Trotsky 'bluntly ruled out the possibility of a consummation of the Chinese Revolution without a previous revival of the revolutionary movement amongst the urban workers' (Deutscher 1984a, 198). The diverse paths taken by Maoism and Trotskyism in China illustrate their dissonance. Trotskyism gained a not entirely insignificant foothold in China around the ousted CCP general secretary, Chen Duxiu, who was expelled from the party in 1929 after siding with Trotsky's Left Opposition (Alexander 1991, 201 – 223). The Comintern scapegoated Chen for the policy of the CCP in counter-revolution, and this naturally inclined him to reflect upon the critique of Trotsky's Left Opposition that was now taking on an international significance (ibid). He got no support from Mao who joined the rest of the party in denouncing Chen and his supporters as 'liquidationists'. Indeed, Mao took advantage of the Central Committee's call to purge the party of 'non-proletarian elements' as a cover to secure his control of the Front Committee and Fourth Red Army (Rue 1966, 166 – 172). As for the Trotskyists, various small groups were fused to form the Communist League in 1931 and the new organisation claimed a reasonable following in urban areas as it recruited scores of Communist Party cells, splitting away half the membership of the party in Shanghai (Alexander 1991, 209 – 210). Their persecution by the Kuomintang regime was, however, immediate – quickly extinguishing hopes of a rapid growth –, and the repressive climate remained in place throughout the 1930s. Communist guerrilla movements in the countryside were at the time looking to establish a rural soviet republic centred on their stronghold in Jiangxi and, despite the purges, were not yet, in 1931, entirely dominated by Mao. However, as E. H Carr notes, these efforts were 'ridiculed' by the Trotskyists, who held it to be impossible that 'Chinese peasants, without the participation of the industrial centres and without the leadership of the communist party, had created a Soviet government' (Carr 1982, 326). The CCP leadership, whose strategy had been focused on urban insurrection, initially shared this view, but, having suffered crushing losses, conceded defeat and joined Mao in Jiangsi in 1933. A seemingly tactical retreat in fact signified a radical strategic shift:

> … The Central Committee was obliged to get out of Shanghai and move to the central base in Jiangxi, of which Mao Zedong was head. There they outranked

him but became immersed like him in peasant life and its problems. From this
time on the personality and mind of Mao became a central factor in the CCP
revolution (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 302).

At the time, Trotskyist criticisms of the turn to the countryside appeared to be borne out quickly, as the agrarian insurrectionists suffered a series of defeats at the hands of Chiang's 'extermination campaigns'. In 1934, this led to the 'Long March' that became a cornerstone of CCP folklore and enduring source of ideological legitimacy. Some 80,000 troops were led thousands of miles from the Jangxi base area to Yan'an. The difficult mountainous terrain resulted in devastating losses of personnel and Mao concluded the march in Yan'an with just 8,000 troops in 1935 (Li 2012, 243 – 245). Trotsky's criticism and alternative strategy therefore appeared to be justified in 1935. A long-term orientation to illegal work amongst the urban proletariat, gaining a foothold that could be built upon and developed once a democratic space opened allowing the movement to revive, seemed a far more profitable and less hazardous strategy than a permanent rural insurrection against the Kuomintang. The crisis of colonial capitalism intervened abruptly, however, to disrupt such a gradual development, and pushed the polity on a trajectory that would ultimately see the Maoists take power. Out of the ashes of revolutionary defeat, Mao was able to lead the CCP on a new path, turning to the peasants, increasing the independence of the party from Moscow, and pushing a much more overtly nationalist line. Meanwhile, the fate of the Trotskyists encapsulated the fate of China's industrial working class; their small forces were heavily repressed and unable to influence the life of the country. Even so, if the Great Depression had not hit and the Japanese not invaded China's most populace regions, to add to Manchuria, in 1937, then Maoism too would have been defeated. In short, the intensifying global crisis of capitalism shifted China onto a *fundamentally* different course.

5.7 Power falling into the hands of the Maoists amidst the crisis of global capitalism
Kuomintang rule extinguished hopes of the rapid industrial expansion needed to resuscitate the proletariat. The Great Depression was an obstructive factor, which hit China between 1933 and 1936. But it also compelled the Kuomintang to reorganise the currency system, finally replacing the silver *teal* (weights and measures) system with a single state-backed paper money produced by a modern mint in 1933 (Shiroyama 2009). A package of long overdue fiscal reforms were also achieved; tariff autonomy was recovered, the *lijin* tax on inter-regional trade was abolished, and the financial crisis of

1934 led to the creation of a central bank able to manage the money supply (ibid). Overall, however, Nationalist rule was an economic failure. The industrial boom necessary for the emergence of the proletarian 'gravedigger' of the communist imagination did not develop. One estimate put the annual rate of growth at 6.7 per cent from 1931 to 1936 (Eastman 1991, 40). Today, many countries would envy such growth figures. However, in the China of the 1930s it amounted to very little in absolute terms (ibid). Electrical power generation, for example, doubled during the Nanjing decade (ibid). But, in 1928, the country's electric-power output was just 0.88 million mega-watt hours, compared to 5 million in Russia in the same year, and 88 million in the United States (ibid). This was steady growth rather than rapid 'catch up'. Ultimately, the new regime stood in an ambiguous relationship to capitalist modernisation. It came to power in a revolution but soon lost its radical drive and impetus. After the Shanghai Massacre of 1927 mass organisation was discouraged and membership of the party totalled barely 550,000 in 1929 with 280,000 of these military personnel (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 286 – 287). For a one-party state in such a vast country these were small figures, and the party's support was concentrated in the bureaucracy and the police. The Stalinist principles around which the party was reorganised in 1924 became spliced together with the political economy of the warlord era and the country's ancient ruling class tradition. Warlords restyled as regional governors were granted the freedom to keep the land tax in 1928 (Eastman 1991, 42). In a stroke, this handed them de facto control of the bulk of China's economic output and legitimised their clientelism (see p. 171). Modernising the agrarian-dominated economy required the transformation of peasant surpluses into capital for investment in industry, but the rentier elite was risk-averse and favoured the time-honoured destinations for embezzled funds, such as usury and land. Kuomintang rule in the cities also discouraged capital investment. Crippling tax burdens were imposed on private capital that drove many firms out of businesses. For example, between 1927 and 1930 two thirds of cigarette companies closed down (Eastman 1991, 42). The Nanjing regime was also debt dependent and absorbed 70 per cent of the country's banking investment capital (ibid). In competition with the state for loan capital, industry was expected to pay 18 to 20 per cent in interest per annum, and, this, in turn, created a climate that encouraged asset price speculation over long-term industrial investment (ibid). In Shanghai, business associations were incorporated into the state and gangster methods used to extort funds to be channelled into military spending and bureaucratic self-aggrandisement (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 287). In

short, this was a regime that was very far from 'business-orientated' (ibid) and effectively gave warlord-like practices the legitimacy of a cohesive state. Not only did industry suffer as a result, the scope for a radicalisation in the face of this failure was considerable, as many youth and intellectuals grew disillusioned with the party. The Kuomintang failed to deliver the industrial miracle achieved by Japan, not only in the late nineteenth century, but also, indeed more importantly, during the rapid growth of the 1920s. This would have been politically damaging in any context given the history between these two Confucian polities, but it was ruinous in the context of the Japanese invasion. This shift in the geopolitical context coupled with economic failure created the ideological *and* material basis for the CCP's rise.

In the mythology of Chinese communism, the Long March is seen as a glorious defeat. It plays an equivalent role in the dominant ideology of modern China as the Battle of Alamo does for America, or the retreat from Dunkirk does for Britain. In each of these examples the narrative imagines triumph against adversity; of the brave groups of individuals prepared to fight on regardless of circumstances. All of them abstract, in ways designed to cohere a certain ideological mythology, from the material realities that proved favourable for the perspectives of the victors. The Chinese Revolution may have involved a quite different strategic project to that advanced by the Bolsheviks, but it shared a basic feature of their triumph. In China, as in Russia, power fell into the hands of the communists as the polity disintegrated; yet for one, the peasant war came after the initial seizure of the cities, for the other, the opposite held true, as Mao urged the CCP to, 'gather strength in the villages, use the villages to encircle the cities, and then take the cities' (Mao 1992, 138). Despite this strategic contrast, both of these revolutions were essentially born of the destruction of the colonial-capitalist world order that had been constructed around 1870. And it is in this epochal crisis that the secret of Mao's success is lodged. 'What saved Maoism', wrote Deutscher candidly, 'and decisively contributed to its further evolution were, apart from its own determination to survive, two major events or series of events: the Japanese invasion, and the deliberate de-industrialization of coastal China by the invader' (Deutscher 1984a, 194). Japan had strolled into Manchuria in 1931 with virtually no Kuomintang resistance. Between 1931 and 1937 Chiang prioritised defeating the communist foe within, as opposed to the militarily much harder task of expelling Japan from the now restyled 'kingdom' of Manchukuo, nominally run by the last Manchu emperor of Imperial China. This was a rational enough response to the military balance of forces, but given the nationalist

sentiment in the polity it proved to be politically fatal. The Long March was a genuine victory for Mao in the same way that Dunkirk and the Battle of Britain was for the British Empire: to *survive* at the point when their foe appeared ready to crush them *was* a victory. For Mao personally it consolidated his total control of the CCP. As Roderick MacFarquhar put it, 'the greatest strategic retreat in military history turned Mao into a living legend' (interviewed in Davidson 2005). Having survived the retreat, Japan's invasion of China now transformed the standing of the CCP. The Kuomintang ended the Civil War and restored the CCP to the status of anti-colonial allies. Once it was defeated by Japan in 1938 and Chiang moved his wartime capital to Chongqing, the nationalists could no longer claim any overwhelming military superiority over the CCP. The new united front may have had only a nominal character, but, crucially, it presupposed, in ideological terms, a relationship of equivalence between the two sides in far more explicit terms than the 1920s. Moreover, the war had a transformative effect on the consciousness of the CCP's core social base: the peasantry that appeared to perfectly verify Mao's orientation. The 'war totally destroyed the traditional social order and sensitized the Chinese peasantry to a new spectrum of possible associations, identities and purposes' foremost amongst which was 'China' itself (Johnson 1962, 5). Maoism suddenly appeared to have history on its side. The peasant war strategy could connect to this new consciousness with its organic nationalist ethos and programme of agrarian social revolution.

Utopian is not a word that should be used lightly, implying as it does *structural impossibility,* but the Japanese project, nonetheless, had this character. To say that the invasion of China 'saved Maoism' is to make a strong but justified claim: the Japanese were fighting an unwinnable war. Defeat, and the disintegration that Japan left behind, passed power to the CCP. To understand why the CCP won out, the admiration they enjoyed in a fiercely nationalistic polity once they took power, and the colossal task of post-war reconstruction, let us briefly outline the impact of Japan's imperial policy. Amongst the zealously imperialist Japanese military elite there was actually an ideological *hostility* to capitalism (Coble 2003, 35). These layers saw the colonial enterprise in China and Manchuria as a means not only of purifying these polities of evil, but also renewing the moral fibre of the Japanese race (ibid). Finance capital, it was thought, formed part of this decay and should therefore be excluded from the economic management of the colonies (ibid). Inevitably reality 'intervened' into these ideological discourses and concrete Japanese policy represented compromises between

bureaucratic interests in the state, ideological aspirations for the future, and the interests of business elites. But across all of these groups and outlooks, there was a common cultural assumption that colonial empire building was a prerequisite for national wealth and power. Japan's elite was hardly unusual in approaching the economic crisis of the 1930s in this way. Modern capitalist development had integrated the colonial empires into an inter-dependent system, but, perversely, ruling elites tended to see the dash for colonial annexation to secure market privileges as *the answer* to the Great Depression. Japan's dystopian vision of East Asia illustrated this destructive psychosis. From 1935 to 1939 the United States was Japan's largest trading partner with the balance firmly in favour of the former (indeed, the US claimed a quarter of all Japanese imports) (Beasley 1987, 211). Japan saw this not as the reality of economic inter-dependence, but as a weakness that empire could end. The high costs of modern warfare, however, created a logic of escalation; more punitive privileges for Japanese industry in the colonies weakened demand for exports; the military hunger for raw materials led to new demands for expansion to meet these needs; all the while making a backlash from rivals more likely.[28] A cabinet paper of 12 December 1941, i.e. shortly after the bombing of Pearl Harbour and prior to their conquest of most of S.E. Asia, outlined the vision with admirable forthrightness:

> … To fulfil the demand for resources vital to the prosecution of the present war, to establish at the same time an autarkic Greater East Asian Co-prosperity Sphere, and to accelerate the strengthening of the economic power of the Empire' (cited in Beasley 1987, 245).

Japan's ruling elite took the course of colonial emulation having seen Britain successfully conquer just under one fifth of the world's population and nearly a quarter of its total land mass. Why could Japan not carve out a much more modest empire for itself in Asia? One answer is that Japan might well have achieved exactly this had its rulers, driven forward by a military elite with a suicidal belief in their own invincibility, not invaded China in 1937 and instead consolidated their gains in Manchuria, Taiwan and Korea. However, although Japan's economic remedies were flawed, the nation's economic problems were nonetheless real and gave the semblance of 'necessity' to their colonial actions. Responding to the Great Depression with colonial conquest appeared

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[28] An American oil embargo on 1st August 1941, which cut off Japan's main supply line, created a spiral of events resulting in war. Diplomatic avenues broke down on the 1st December and six days later Pearl Harbour was bombed (Beasley 1987, 232). It may well have been the least surprising 'surprise attack' in modern world history.

eminently logical given the culturally conditioned assumptions that had underpinned international politics since the 'Scramble for Africa'. It was the same cultural logic that led Chiang, from a position of extraordinary weakness, to imagine *China's Destiny* lying in the domination of Asia, dreaming in essence of the same colonial future. Japan's attempt to carve out a regional empire equally illustrated, however, the gargantuan costs of colonialism in new conditions of modern production. Britain had imposed its authority on a world that was not capitalist and whose communities, in their great variety, did not imagine themselves as nations with a shared future. Whereas the British humiliated Imperial China in the First Opium War with a mere 19,000 troops (Martin 1847, 81 – 82), Japan set out to conquer an altogether different world. Decades of military accumulation and the consolidation of a fiercely patriotic national imagination had made even enfeebled China a powerful enemy. Indeed, Japan was shocked by the scale and ferocity of China's resistance to its colonisation. At the Battle of Shanghai, at the time the bloodiest conflict the world had seen since the First World War, the Japanese faced seventy-two divisions totalling 500,000 soldiers (Coble 2003, 11). They lost 50,000 soldiers, a quarter of their expeditionary force, by the end of 1937 alone (ibid). China was now a *national* entity – a fact that made for a striking contrast to the First Sino-Japanese war (p.88) – and this transformation in social consciousness dramatically altered the ability, and inclination, of the people to resist Japanese colonial subjugation. All of which underlines the overall significance of the *sequential* character of combined capitalist development. Different polities aspiring to 'catch up' with the more advanced can draw on their technical achievements and do so rapidly, but the sum total of this interaction amongst states introduces changes in the overall character of the system. In this context, they can remain wedded to a cultural model of development that cannot be achieved in the *new* global environment they helped to create. And it was this dynamic that one can see play out in the epochal crisis of the colonial capitalist order in the inter-war years. Japanese imperial advance could not be reconciled with new material realities.

China bore witness to the destructive costs of this degenerate utopia. Having conquered the country's economic heartland by 1938, the Japanese plundered the economy. Under the slogan, 'using the war to sustain the war', the military attempted to render the occupation self-sufficient; factories were looted, equipment was seized for scrap iron, and the army was fed off Chinese land (Coble 2003, 38). Needless to say, these policies did immense damage to an economy already reeling from the war.

China's small industrial sector had been devastated, as one estimate from 1943 put it, 'within the greater Shanghai area (including the foreign concessions) 52 per cent of industry was destroyed, in Nanjing, 80 per cent was lost, in Wuxi 64 per cent, and in Hangzhou only 28 per cent' (Coble 2003, 13). In Shanghai alone, the Japanese are thought to have looted 10,000 tons of iron and steel commodities worth $1.5 million and 7 million yuan of copper coins were exported in the first twelve months of the occupation (Coble 2003, 15). The Japanese took near-total control of strategic industrial sectors, such as mining, electrical power, and smelting, and even in textiles over 50 per cent of cotton textile spindles in central China were requisitioned (Coble 2003, 42). The military also imposed price controls and took full control of internal trade, allowing it to procure food stuffs at below market prices through force and sell at inflated prices in the cities (Coble 2003, 40 – 41). Even in the short term these measures were counter-productive as they drove Chinese investors out of the market. The occupiers looked for collaborators amongst China's capitalists but they were obviously reluctant. This was not just a patriotic reaction, but reflected the fact Japan could not provide plausible security for even short-term investments. Meanwhile, in Japan itself, military accumulation burdened the economy with vast debts and drained capital away from the production into military waste. It is hard to imagine a more comprehensive attempt at pan-Asian self-sufficiency and insofar as it failed abysmally it confirmed the utopian character of the whole enterprise. Once added to the overall destructive character of the war itself, these policies also destroyed the Chinese industrial working class, and thus provided a material, and not just ideological, source of strength for the Maoist project.

Despite a formal agreement between the CCP and the Kuomintang signed in October 1945 it was apparent to all that civil war would strike the moment Japan withdrew. Both parties engaged this 'make-believe' of peace so as not to be seen as responsible for plunging China into yet another conflict (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 329). War soon transpired and political economics, not grand military strategy, arguably determined the outcome of the conflict. If Japanese imperial strategy can be understood as a mental conception of the world that could not align with its living reality, then the same can be said of the Kuomintang's post-war policy. The sense of what to do and how to achieve it was badly out of kilter with the material realities of the situation. It should be recalled that Chiang's actions were framed by *China's Destiny* that attached great emphasis to the aesthetic, i.e. emotion-inducing symbolism, of Chinese power. His forces outnumbered the communists by two-to-one at the close of the war, but rather

than concentrate them where they were strongest in the south, Chiang retook the capital cities in order to claim the mantle of national unity, even if his forces then found themselves besieged (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 331). This forced his army to defend the north eastern cities without securing control of the communist controlled north (ibid). This choice, however, was a feature of an anterior set of political and economic failures. The Kuomintang was still scarred politically by their appeasement policy towards Japan in the 1930s. When the CCP advanced in the north, Chiang actually appealed to the Japanese forces not to surrender to them and carry on fighting until the Kuomintang could relieve their positions (ibid). Once again the Kuomintang was seen to prioritise anti-communism over national salvation. Chiang's reaction to the peace movement campaigning for an end to the civil war in urban areas, which represented a sincere liberal body of opinion, was to heavily repress their demonstrations (ibid). More seriously still, the retaken cities soon experienced a politically induced economic catastrophe. The Kuomintang elite took control of the rentier economy left by the Japanese, used it for their own embezzlement and actually increased the burden of taxation and requisition (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 332). To complete this abysmal record, the Kuomintang introduced a so-called 'currency reform' in 1948 that saw prices increase by a multiple of 85,000 in six months (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 334). Kuomintang post-war governance was such a total failure that it seems likely that China would have disintegrated into warlordism again had it not been for the Maoists.

China's combined development created material conditions pushing the Maoists to power: (i) the general crisis of colonial capitalism was expressed in Asia with the utopian project of Japanese imperialism; (ii) the Kuomintang politically, economically and militarily failed to address the competitive 'whip of necessity' thrown down by Japan; (iii) they did not expand the size of the working class that was then decimated by the war itself; and (iv) their policies were characterised by a desire for self-preservation, rentier capitalist interests, and anti-communism, none of which was able to foster a sense that they were national saviours. In contrast to this litany of failures, CCP policy was driven by a sense of practicality. Even the agrarian revolution against landlords – who were often wealthy peasants rather than large monied capitalist interests – was undertaken cautiously, once a base had been consolidated in the area and trust accumulated with locals. An enlightened form of despotism, which for the peasants was a clear improvement on warlordism, imbued the Red Bases. Mao's strategy for CCP controlled territories above all else emphasised order, welfare and security:

> … First of all, local peace and order; second, an army of friendly troops who helped in peasant life, harvesting crops when necessary and fraternizing with the villagers; third, a recruitment of local activists who might very well be found at the upper level of the poor peasantry, people of ability who felt frustrated by circumstance; fourth, a program for economic betterment partly through improved crops but mainly through agricultural cooperation in the form of mutual aid, organized transport, and production of consumer goods in cooperatives (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 318).

One can see, then, why, first in Northern China during the Japanese occupation, then moving to the North East, the peasants responded energetically to the Maoists' call for social revolution and an end to the old order. Given the repeated failure of ruling elites to industrialise China, the peasant war strategy offered an alternative route to power. Mao also had genuine abilities as a guerrilla leader, tactician and agitator, and for the CCP to survive the extermination campaign at all was a remarkable success. Mao's conquest of power was ultimately, however, conditional on the global crisis. The full-scale Japanese invasion in 1937 allowed the CCP to become identified with the project of national salvation that was so ingrained in the collective psyche of the polity. In lieu of this intensification of colonial conflict in the world order, the 'from the country to the cities' approach would have ended in failure, or at least been permanently confined to the interior. The formation of the PRC in 1949 consummated the project of national emancipation, which Chinese subjects had long yearned for, and Mao's persona became the icon of the fatherland that had now achieved *minzu*-unity. Nationalism was the consistent thread of CCP policy in power and the goal of strengthening China was always fundamental. It is difficult to exaggerate the extent of the legitimacy that the CCP could garner from the mantle of having put an end to the appalling suffering of the Chinese people at the hands of imperialism. Given this history and the nationalism that the Maoists had promoted on their rise to power, there was never any question that they would seek to make China a strong and powerful country. More ambiguous, however, was the position of China's classes in the new economic order that they would establish. In the final section of this chapter, I analyse the contradictory shifts in policy in the search for a 'Chinese road' to development. Material constraints, particularly the unviability of bureaucratic command planning, coupled with failed attempts, rooted in messianic nationalist discourse, to indigenise the economic model would ultimately result in the triumph of a more pragmatic nationalism; one taking 'the capitalist road' to a powerful nation-state.

5.7 In search of national salvation and global power: the nature of Maoism in power

China's revolution formed but one moment in a *general crisis* of colonial rule. The Second World War hastened this overall process, and in China's case proved decisive in determining the form of its revolutionary rupture, but the overall pattern reflected the exhaustion of the colonial capitalist order. Soviet influence was able to penetrate this uneven and combined breakdown of the old world:

> Soviet expansion took place entirely in the underdeveloped world in the aftermath of decolonization. For the creation of a hundred-odd new states over a thirty-year period did not simply increase the mathematical complexity of power balancing. It also generalized across whole regions of the globe, and in a hundred new ways, the classic conditions of combined development: independent states locked into the dynamic imperatives of development by their incorporation into the world market and states system, but based internally on unstable amalgams of capitalist and non-capitalist society, and tending towards more and more authoritarian political forms. Decolonization replaced a world of unsustainable European empires with a states system full of potential mini-Czarisms, any of which might explode and drag other similar states down its new path of combined development (Rosenberg 1996, 12).

China's 'explosion' saw power fall into the hands of Mao's peasant army. The CCP were suddenly free to reshape the national imagination; providing it with the institutional and political cohesion its people had long desired. The Chinese Revolution could not reasonably be termed a *mini* Tsarism, for its vast scale exceeded all previous revolutions in human history, but it was nonetheless similarly rooted in the long crisis of absolutism that capitalist development had created. China's post-tributary colonial capitalist economy fostered the pattern of disintegration, which, in turn, morphed into warlordism, thereby creating the sociological basis for the Maoist revolution that was 'detonated' by the Japanese war. None of this was a merely 'indigenous' process. Moreover, how the CCP institutionally reshaped the polity's political economy reflected their melange of nationalist and Stalinist ideology.

This revolutionary process exemplified, in its own unique and complex terms, the general characteristics of the crisis of colonial capitalism I outlined earlier: the proliferation of new national imaginations, the challenge of modernisation in extremely underdeveloped societies, and the logic of substitutionism that became written into the DNA of the communist movement with the rise of Stalinism. This last point, the despotic logic of substitutionism, indicates how the tragedy of Russian socialism had altered, in ways that were quite fundamental, the ideological contours of future revolutions. For whereas in the Soviet Union authoritarianism emerged in a process of

decay, in China, and the other states where the communists took power, one-party despotism was anticipated and prepared for in advance. Indeed, in several respects, the Chinese appeared to be emulating the Russians 'in reverse' by skipping the earlier, but brief, stage of democratic idealism seen after 1917. Stalin turned to Great Russian chauvinism only tentatively after Lenin's death, but Chinese communism was openly nationalist long before its seizure of power. In Russia, the peasant war had occurred after the revolution that seized hold of the cities; in China the reverse was true. Stalin only attempted rural collectivisation and industrialisation eleven years after the revolution, whereas Mao, encouraged by Soviet aid, turned to this model more quickly in 1952. And, most of all, Mao's personal power had effectively 'substituted' for the party leadership after the Long March and was actually constitutional by the time of the revolution. Stalin, in contrast, had only achieved this by cultivating a police state to first isolate, and then exterminate, his rivals from 1923 to 1936. These points of comparison each illustrate how the Russian experience offered a series of ideological precedents that the CCP could either draw on or reject, and, equally, how the existence of the Soviet state shaped the world order, providing incentives and securities in return for the PRC's filial piety.

China, like the other social revolutions in Cuba, Vietnam, and elsewhere, thus skipped an ideological stage by applying the Stalinist model pioneered in the Soviet Union directly to its own conditions. Insofar as the amalgam they created assimilated communism to nationalism, it underlined the overall complementary character of Stalinist ideology to the new national imaginations. Three elements of the emerging sociological organism are crucial to explaining why the CCP would turn to the use of markets in the late 1970s. Firstly, there was the search, motivated by the desire for national salvation, for a development strategy that could make China a great and *independent* nation. And the ensuing split with the Soviet Union illustrated the contradictions of Stalinist nationalism. Secondly, there is the specific way in which the CCP appropriated the model of the substitutionist, Stalinist party. In this adaptation, Mao was invested with supreme authority over, above, and in potential opposition to, the bureaucracy. The latter formed below him within the party-state, and he did not treat his grip on power as *conditional* on the support of the security apparatus in the manner that Stalin did. Thirdly, there were the inherent problems of bureaucratic command planning that made it an ultimately unsuitable vehicle for the nationalist project. Each of the shifts in economic policy after 1949 reflected the contradictory tension between

these three elements. The turn to Soviet-style rapid industrialisation, focusing on heavy industry, created a sclerotic, unsustainable bureaucracy analogous to the Soviet Union; the search for a Chinese road to development, though in part a potentially rational recognition of the country's concrete development problems, became bound up with the millenarian desires of Mao and brought the nationalist antagonisms with the Soviet Union to the surface; and the economic catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward that followed from this turn created a backlash amongst critics that saw Mao utilise his supreme political authority to attack the bureaucracy below him. After Mao's death a pragmatic nationalism was allowed to assert itself that valued order, stability and gradualism, but was also prepared to unleash capitalist tendencies within the polity if they would further the overall goal of national greatness. I develop this argument through three steps in this last section: exploring the class structure of the economy from 1949 to 1979, the specific nature of Mao's substitutionism, and the unbroken thread of Chinese nationalism.

To begin the analysis of the PRC's class structure it is useful to recall that Trotsky had categorically ruled out the possibility that the Maoists could carry through a social revolution against capital *in lieu* of an active proletariat. In essence, 'he feared that Maoism, despite its communist origin, might become so completely assimilated with the peasantry as to become nothing buts its mouthpiece' (Deutscher 1984a, 198). In doing so, Trotsky assumed an instrumental relationship between the peasantry and the CCP that made the latter little more than the vehicle for the class interests of the former. However, state, or 'quasi-state', power has, on many occasions in history, shown its capacity to seemingly rise above class antagonism and impose by force a particular social order on an entire people. Marx termed this 'Bonapartism' and Trotsky had once called it 'substitutionism'. The CCP assumed this posture in a Stalinist manner, i.e., claimed a monopoly on political and economic power for the party leadership, prior to the revolution, 'and Mao and his followers did this without any of the scruples, compunction and *crises de conscience* that had troubled Lenin's party' (Deutscher 1984a, 199). Despite giving little emphasis to Mao's overtly nationalist worldview, Deutscher recognised that above all else the new regime 'was determined to turn China into an integrated and modern nation' (Deutscher 1984a, 200). In the Red Bases the CCP replaced the old order with their own enlightened despotism, which dispossessed the landlords and fused political and economic power into the hands of a quasi-state. From 1949 to 1952 they moved gradually, but their course affirmed the

logic of substitutionism of the Stalinist party and ultimately centralised all levers of economic and political power into their own hands. This naturally poses a question of how exactly to classify the class nature of the regime that they proceeded to establish. Deutscher's argument for Mao as a 'Trotskyist Jourdain' rests on the view that the social order the CCP constructed, while not being fully socialist, represented 'a socio-economic framework indispensable for socialism' (Deutscher 1984a, 201). Despite the absence of any democratic control by the subaltern classes in the one-party system the Stalinist states were seen as creating a basis for socialism to be built upon in the future, rather than entirely rejected. Trotsky similarly argued that the bureaucracy within the state was 'not an independent class but an excrescence upon the proletariat' within a workers' state (Trotsky 1934a, 24). Despite the working class having no control over any aspect of society, from the factory floor to the high echelons of state power, they were held to be a *ruling* class due to the purely formal, i.e., 'legal' existence of collective ownership (ibid). China's experience provides but one of many illustrations of the wholly flawed nature of this claim: the party-elite *ruled* the Stalinist system.

Trotsky's argument arguably related to the positions he took in the Soviet Union in 1919 and 1920 that might be summarised as underscoring his *incomplete* break with substitutionism. For in the Soviet Union, and the states that adopted political and economic models that were carefully modelled on its regime, the working class had *not* succeeded in developing a democratically planned economy that was then 'usurped' by a bureaucratic elite (Flewers forthcoming). It was, in fact, the party-state that forced through rapid industrial modernisation and this consolidated the existence of an elite that derived privileges from their bureaucratic control of the economic structure. No stage of this process involved working class control over production and this renders the formal socialisation of property, on which Trotsky and Deutscher's position hinges, merely nominal vis-à-vis the actual, substantive control of the economy by the unaccountable party-state elite. To say otherwise involves, 'the wrenching apart of the economic infrastructure from the political superstructure, as if there is no essential interrelationship between them in a Stalinist society' (ibid). Stalinist economies were not, however, capitalist, but organised according to 'top-down targets, commands and allocations' that 'specifically excluded the involvement of the working class other than purely as subordinates' (ibid). The bureaucratic elite was therefore an 'indispensable part' of the 'socio-economic formation, as it created it, dominated it and managed it on a day-to-day basis to the exclusion of all other social strata' (ibid). In *The Revolution*

Betrayed, Trotsky did recognise many of the inherent problems that blighted the Stalinist economies, emphasising how the narrow self-interests of the managerial bureaucracy rendered the system sclerotic and incapable of dynamic renewal (Trotsky 1936). He was right to do so, for these states' problems were perennial: including, for example, disproportions between sectors, a lack of effective cross-sectorial co-ordination, 'falsified statistics, poor product quality resulting in vast quantities of defective goods, poor labour discipline, lack of skills, lack of innovation, discouragement of initiative, and poor maintenance and storekeeping' (Flewers forthcoming). Despite these fundamental failings for the post-colonial states that took 'the Soviet road', it seemed to provide a suitable structure for underdeveloped societies to rapidly modernise: for coercive one-party rule made it easier to appropriate peasant surpluses to fund industrial growth. In this extensive phase of development, the system's congenital malfunctions were less apparent. However, in the intensive phase, which required technical sophistication to modify and refine output, they were particularly pronounced. Even during the prestigious phase of 1930s industrialisation, Stalin appointed Gosplan super-commanders who were granted sweeping powers to push forward major projects, which, in effect, tacitly acknowledged the chronic inertia of the bureaucracy (Main and Hughes 2012, 516). In contrast, capitalist markets require the continual modification and refinement of production to boost efficiency, a process Marx and Engels referred to as the 'constant revolutionising of production' (Marx and Engels 2008, 12). No such force existed in the Stalinist states and over time they exhibited extreme levels of stagnation that made them ultimately unviable (Titkin 1992). The competitive pressures of the wider system were experienced in more diffuse cultural and geopolitical forms, owing to the autarkic character of these economies, but they were real nonetheless. Conceived as *national* projects in a world characterised by political multiplicity, the drive for geostrategic power tended to be expressed in the Soviet Union in military terms, but its people also developed desires and aspirations based on their apprehension of the wider world. These systems of political authoritarianism and economic autarky could not respond to this global confluence of pressure, influence and aspiration. Soviet collapse was, thus, inevitable given this correlation of 'combined' historical forces in the international order.

China's history confirms the ephemerality of bureaucratic command economies. However, the CCP shifted to a market based development strategy 'early', i.e. when the planning structure was still economically viable. The collapsing economy of the

Brezhnev era in the Soviet Union, in contrast, exhibited extreme exhaustion. To explain the motivation of CCP leaders and, to a certain degree, their historical foresight, one has to locate the turn within the overarching nationalist agenda – the search for a Chinese road to development – that was a continuous feature of Maoism in power. The Chinese communists inherited an economy in a state of hyperinflation; its 'private sector' consisted of monied-capitalists and landlords subjecting the people to the torture of rentier exploitation. It should be recalled that neither the Japanese nor the Kuomintang pursued expansive industrial policies; both had brought whole swathes of the economy under the auspices of the state, but used the state as a vehicle for rentier practices rather than industrial investment. This meant the economy was already, to a considerable degree, 'state-dominated' and the changes the CCP introduced specifically targeted the rentier elite profiting from the hyperinflation. They took over the banking sector and monopolised state control of credit; established a state monopoly on internal trade on all major commodities; and introduced an emergency system for paying personnel in 'market-basket' terms (so much grain, so much oil, etc.) rather than in cash (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 348). This level of state intervention into the economy was really quite tentative from a communist standpoint, especially in comparison to the huge levels seen under 'War Communism' in the Soviet Union. Indeed, the CCP's 'Common Programme' of 1949 emphasised gradualism and committed the new government to protect the private property rights of the patriotic bourgeoisie and middle class:

> The People's Republic of China… must confiscate bureaucratic capital and put it into the possession of the people's state. It must systematically transform the feudal and semi-feudal land ownership system into a system of peasant land ownership; it must protect the public property of the state and of the cooperatives and must protect the economic interests and private property of workers, peasants, the petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. It must develop the people's economy of New Democracy and steadily transform the country from an agricultural into an industrial one (CPPCC 1949).

Such statements reflected the 'popular front' aspect of Maoism, but they were also very similar to the reassurances to the private sector that Lenin had made during the retreat into NEP in Russia.[29] By monopolising credit and banking services and taking hold of

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[29] Indeed, Lenin freely admitted that his policy would bring into being a state-capitalist economy: 'The New Economic Policy means substituting a tax for the requisitioning of food; it means reverting to capitalism to a considerable extent—to what extent we do not know. Concessions to foreign capitalists (true, only very few have been accepted, especially when compared with the number we have offered) and leasing enterprises to private capitalists *definitely mean restoring capitalism,* and this is part and parcel of the New Economic Policy; for the abolition of the surplus-food appropriation system means allowing the peasants to trade freely in their surplus agricultural produce, in whatever is left over after the

the already state-dominated productive economy, the CCP gained control of the commanding heights of a *state-capitalist* economy. Mao and the CCP leadership predicted that it would take three years of economic recovery along these lines, and the course of economic development after 1949 correlated closely with this anticipation (Teiwes 1987, 69). There was plainly a class tension lodged within this initial phase, just as there had been in NEP era Russia, between the desire for a centralised programme of state reconstruction and the concessions granted to the private sector (ibid). However, these were mitigated by the type of economy that the CCP had inherited: private capital was extremely weak and their agrarian and financial reforms targeting 'bureaucratic capitalism' hit the rentier ruling class. In effect, this popular front was largely an appeal to the middle classes of urban areas. It succeeded in bringing inflation down to the manageable level of 15 per cent per annum, and thus cohered the alliance, for 'this was literally the salvation of the salaried class' (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 348). Taken together with the achievement of peace, order and unification, the prestige of the CCP rose enormously:

> The initial phase of public sentiment… was one of euphoria, based on growing confidence in the CCP. Here was a conquering army of country boys who were strictly self-disciplined, polite, and helpful, at the opposite pole from the looting and raping warlord troops and even the departing Nationalists. Here was a dedicated government that really cleaned things up—not only the drains and streets but also the beggars, prostitutes, and petty criminals, all of whom were rounded up for reconditioning. Here was a new China one could be proud of, one that controlled inflation, abolished foreign privileges, stamped out opium smoking and corruption generally, and brought the citizenry into a multitude of sociable activities to repair public works, spread literacy, control disease, fraternize with the menial class, and study the New Democracy and Mao Zedong Thought (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 348 – 349).

CCP rule tapped into the desire of the Chinese people for national salvation. For the first time since its formation in the late nineteenth century, China's national imagination had a state that appeared to have satisfied its desire for an end to colonial humiliation. Many young and ambitious idealists flocked into the ranks of the CCP, only as time passed discovering 'that the Promised Land was based on systematic control and manipulation' (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 349). This initial adulation was real, nonetheless, and post-war CCP policy was characterised by the expediency and pragmatism on the road to a strong China that the party would turn back to after the

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tax is collected—and the tax~ takes only a small share of that produce. The peasants constitute a huge section of our population and of our entire economy, and that is why capitalism must grow out of this soil of free trading' (Lenin 1921, emphasis added).

trauma of the Cultural Revolution. Not only were petty capitalists appeased but a huge layer of Kuomintang officials were incorporated into the new state, totalling some 2 million (Teiwes 1987, 72). They continued to receive their salaries and undertake their administrative work – a policy that was key to order and stability in urban areas where the CCP had no track record of governance (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 348). CCP membership increased from 2.8 million to 5.8 million between 1949 and 1950 (Teiwes 1987, 71 – 72). In part this reflected the public mood, but it also underlined how, as a bureaucracy came into being, party membership played a new role; it became a conduit into the state for the career-orientated. This system had already taken shape in 'the liberated areas', which, on the eve of the final stages of the Civil War, accounted for around a quarter of China's entire population, and were governed with clearly defined 'career lines with cadres versed in finance, commerce, and education, as well as agriculture and military affairs' (Teiwes 1984, 71). A degree of bureaucratic specialism was, of course, inevitable but the new political economy was built on wholly top-down lines, creating the same opportunities for nepotism as existed in Stalin's Russia.

Poster: Celebrating the People's Republic of China's National Day, 1950

This poster was produced for China's National Day, the 1st October 1950.

A colonial outlook formed a crucial part of this new authoritarianism, for the remit of the party was considered absolute over the entire territory of the old Confucian empire. Chinese nationalism was, as I have argued, always laced with a colonial element, reflecting the racial concept of *minzu* and the polity's imperial history. However, the communists had initially reacted against this prevalent public mood. Conscious of the

chauvinism that use of Han Chinese nationalism entailed, the CCP had once insisted upon the right of self-determination of all China's national minorities (Zhao 2004, 174). As late as 1934, admittedly at a moment of great weakness for the party that saw them in desperate need of allies in any form, the CCP backed the principle of 'unconditionally recognising their rights of national self-determination, namely their free right of politically separating from the oppressive nation, the Han, at will' (cited in ibid). In the late 1930s, more ambiguous statements began to predominate. Instead of speaking of the Han Chinese as an oppressor nation, Mao would frequently praise their heroic struggles across history against foreign domination in line with the concept of *minzu* (see p. 160). However, it was only upon seizing power that they fully reneged on their original commitment and announced the abrupt withdrawal of the right of self determination (Zhao 2004, 175 – 176). In itself this might not seem significant but it was a telling indicator of China's new nationalism. The CCP had recognised a strong *territorial* dimension to its geostrategic interests. 'When we say that China has vast land, rich resources (*di da wu bo*) and a huge population (*renkou zhongduo*)', argued Mao, 'what that actually means is that Han Chinese nationality has a huge population and ethnic minorities and rich resources' (cited in Zhao 2004, 178). Zhou also made the same point but in more overly racialized terms, praising the Han for its cultural superiority and calling on the Han people to develop the interior to save the 'motherland' (cited in ibid). This quite conscious embrace of the brutal history of Han settlement in the interior underlined the extent to which the notion of *minzu*-unity had been incorporated into the assumptions of the state. One can therefore see the *enduring* impact of the specific forms of nationalism I identified in chapter four, as the CCP in power adopted almost identical ideological vernaculars to those that Sun Yat-Sen had employed in imagining a future 'Great Asia' where Han-Chinese culture would be allowed to flower. Propaganda too repeatedly emphasised this. One example can be seen in the poster above; produced for China's national day in 1950 it illustrates the country's new nationalism. Traditional peasant folk performance dominates the street in the foreground and the industrial areas are pushed to the background, symbolising the intrusion of rural life on the centre of the polity. And, perhaps most significant of all, is the image of Sun alongside Mao. Both are idolised as historic figureheads of the fatherland, with the implication that the CCP is building a China befitting Sun's nationalist dream.

The 'United Front' declared at the People's Consultative Conference differed in one important respect from NEP-era Russia. For it granted minority 'democratic parties' a place in government, and the majority of the new ministries were nominally held by non-CCP members (Teiwes 1987, 77 – 78). Mao even engaged in the following polemic in mid-1950, in remarks that made for a stark contrast with how he would later justify the Great Leap Forward, 'The view… that it is possible to eliminate capitalism and realise socialism at an early date is wrong and does not tally with our national conditions' (cited in Teiwes 1987, 77). But these policies towards Chinese small capitalists were all predicated on the absolute principle of one-party communist rule that was secured by the armed power of the PLA. Given the extraordinary weakness of industrial capitalism in China, state intervention backed by a credit monopoly squeezed out and subordinated the private sector to the dictates of the ruling party even in this early phase of reconstruction. Prior to the establishment of a planning commission on Soviet lines, in 1952, the state dominated the economy: it controlled 70 to 80 per cent of heavy industry, 40 per cent of light industry; its cooperatives and trading agency accounted for 50 per cent of business turnover; and government lending to the remaining private sector and establishment joint operations had left it firmly subordinated (Teiwes 1987, 93 – 94). Between 1952 and 1955 the CCP moved decisively towards a command economy: the planning ministry was established in 1952, one-party rule was formalised with a new constitution in 1954, the commencement of socialist reconstruction and the end of New Democracy was declared, and the First Five Year Plan adopted in 1955, although it covered the period from 1953 to 1957. Soviet emulation was crucial to this new turn in policy. The constitution was closely modelled on the Soviet Union's and formally centralised power into the hands of the party elite. Economic plans were drafted with the assistance of Soviet advisors; a typically Stalinist model was adopted with 'high rates of reinvestment, emphasis on capital-intensive high technology projects, agriculture as a major source of funds for industrial growth, and priority investment in heavy industry' (Teiwes 1987, 96). The Korean War encouraged this shift by confirming China's position within the Eastern bloc and imbued the CCP with great confidence. For the first time in modern history, a united Chinese state had fought one of the world's great powers to a standstill, and the wave of patriotic enthusiasm for the elite, in a fervently nationalistic polity, was hardly surprising. An economic strategy modelled on the Soviet road also provided technical and scientific expertise, at a time when no such help would be forthcoming from the major capitalist

states. This was the peak time for the discourse of Soviet emulation, encapsulated by Mao's statement, 'There must be a great nationwide upsurge of learning from the Soviet Union to build our country' (cited in Teiwes 1987, 96). However, even at a time of Soviet friendship, Mao's remark, 'our country', underlines the nationalist ethos of his regime. These were ties between two sovereign regimes, with separate ruling cliques, that each jealously guarded the basis of their own power in the *nation*-state.

In its initial phase, the path of Soviet emulation appeared profitable for China. The First Five Year Plan was largely a success. National income grew on average by 8.9 per cent per annum, which was an improvement on Kuomintang era and also compared favourably to other post-colonial economies (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 358). China, however, became heavily dependent on Soviet assistance with half of industrial investment ploughed into 156 Soviet-backed projects in heavy industry (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 359). This came at a cost as the aid came in the form of loans at the rate of 60 million yuan a year, which ultimately had to be repaid (ibid). Copying the Soviet model so directly gave rise to similar problems to those that blighted Stalin's industrial drive: funds for investment in heavy industry had be redistributed from rural surpluses and, unless agriculture was made more productive, this meant deepening rural exploitation. The CCP collectivised agriculture, moving speedily from cooperatives to full-scale 'communes' between 1952 and 1958. This crudely paralleled the Soviet industrial drive post-1928 that, by forcing the peasantry into collective farms, gave the state almost total control of rural surpluses. However, China's economy was much less developed in 1952 than the Soviet Union had been in 1928 and its rural life was much more impoverished. While vast amounts of capital were invested in heavy industry, rural collectivisation failed to increase production of grain and other farm products. Given the level of rural underdevelopment and the preponderance of the sector in the economy, this was a considerable problem. All that could be said for the Chinese attempt is that it achieved a dramatic transformation in peasant life without the bloodbath of forced collectivisation in the Soviet Union. In part, this reflected the CCP's astuteness and its experience of work amongst the peasantry, but it was also a feature of the pervasiveness of rural poverty. Land redistribution to this relatively egalitarian peasant class had already dispossessed its richer layer between 1949 and 1952, and, there was, therefore, little in the way of a Chinese equivalent of the *kulak* with economic interests deeply antagonistic to the commune system. Collectivisation created an intricate, multi-layered rural bureaucracy to represent the interests of the state

as the single, monopolistic landlord and patron (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 356 – 357). At each administrative tier there existed ample scope for nepotism, corruption and false accounting, as these newly created party-elites were not subject to any form of democratic control (ibid). These problems were becoming evident towards the end of the plan and were recognised by party leaders at the Eighth Congress of the CCP in 1956 (Solinger 1993, 13 – 26).

Brought into focus at the end of China's First Five Year Plan were *general* problems that blighted twentieth century command planning. The issue was how to create incentives for the improvement of output by both factory and agrarian managers when this layer enjoyed their position of privilege thanks to nepotistic ties to those above them. Given that the system was characterised by the centralised top-down control of a party-state, this became a question of how to create economic dynamism without challenging the monopoly of power enjoyed by the CCP: markets, and not democratisation, were therefore seen as the answer. At the Eighth Congress, Vice Premier Chen Yun's proposals were to restrict the role of central dictate and embrace 'indirect planning, enterprise autonomy, fluctuating prices, and response to the market' (Solinger 1993, 16). In short, he proposed initial market reforms almost identical to those introduced in 1979 and after. The abortive Liberman reforms from 1965 in the Soviet Union also made a series of very similar proposals (Pejovich 1969) and the comparison between the two cases is instructive (Flewers forthcoming). In Russia, the proposals ran up against the *nomenklatura,* the bureaucracy that stood at the top of the stagnant economy. In the mid-1960s, when the economy still had a degree of life in it, these reforms may well have replicated the success of China's capitalist development model after 1979 (ibid). In the Soviet Union, the political will was not sufficiently strong enough to overcome the obstruction of the bureaucratic elite in the 1960s, but in China in the 1950s and in the 1970s its ruling stratum did not represent the same obstacle. In the interim period, it was the intervention of Mao that led the CCP to attempt a quite different strategy.

Before considering the origins of Mao's turn to messianic nationalism and his opposition to the pragmatic nationalism behind the market reform proposals of 1956 and 1979, it is worth emphasising that amongst all parties in this discussion the search for a *Chinese* road was absolutely paramount. Many of China's leaders could see the problems of Soviet command planning and the difficulties presented by a crude imposition of them to an overwhelmingly agrarian polity presented. This view was

spliced with a concern not to be subordinated to the Soviet Union, and not to be widely viewed as if they were. China's episodic commitment to market reform in 1956 exemplified this independence of mind. In fact, a close alliance with the Soviet Union and a political economy wholly based on emulating its bureaucratic infrastructure only enjoyed a momentary hold on Chinese policy. Given the complementary fusion of substitutionist authoritarianism with organic nationalism in Stalinist ideology, national antagonisms with the Soviet Union were always very likely to flare, and this was made all the more so by China's modern history. After all, the CCP would not have taken power had they followed Stalin's lead, and his belief they would not win the Civil War was underlined by the bilateral agreement he signed with the Kuomintang in 1945 (Heinzig 2004). In the Korean war, China shouldered the substantial military burden, committing well over 1 million troops – 152,000 of which were killed (Li 2009, 111). Although North Korean losses were greater, it was neither China nor Korea but Stalin that took charge of the war effort despite the Soviet Union only committing military advisors (Shen 2012). China's junior status was also indicated by its economic paucity that fed into its geostrategic dependence via its lack of nuclear weapons, rendering the country implicitly dependent on the Soviet Union in the event of an American nuclear attack (Whiting 1987). In short, the country was, in economic and strategic terms, a junior partner in the Sino-Soviet alliance. For a nationalist elite that governed the world's largest polity, with a national imagery imbued by its proud imperial history, this disparity in its international relations represented a new, if less serious, source of 'humiliation'. As such, the rift that opened up in less than a decade after the revolution should not have come as a surprise. Several concrete ruptures between the two polities emerged in the 1950s. The 'post-Stalin Thaw' in American-Soviet relations and Khrushchev's trumpeting of 'peaceful co-existence', implied an acceptance of the status quo in East Asia, and recognition of the American commitment to Taiwan in the event of a PRC invasion (Whiting 1987, 479 – 480). Soviet overtures to India by-passed the issue of its border dispute with the PRC that involved armed clashes in 1959 inspired by the Indian-backed Tibetan uprising, and spiralled into a border war in 1962 (ibid). China pursued an independent foreign policy in the Third World, effectively in competition with the Soviet Union, and even extended this into the Eastern Europe by developing a close alliance with Albania (ibid). In summary, the Soviet Union and the PRC's *national interests* aligned till 1958 but departed thereafter. The doctrinal conflict was largely instrumental to this process with one important exception. Khrushchev's de-

Stalinization speech – and specifically its attacks on Stalin's 'cult of personality' – potentially threatened, and certainly undermined, Mao's own monopoly on power inside the PRC.

These geopolitical tensions within the Eastern bloc hastened the search in China for an independent development strategy that was attuned to its own circumstances. A split emerged within the CCP but it was largely denied an open, critical expression due the assumptions that underpinned political discourse within the party: it was not permissible to make even tentative and oblique criticisms of Mao. It was Mao that pushed for the Great Leap Forward and then the Cultural Revolution that both drew upon the tradition of messianic, millenarian discourses within modern Chinese nationalism. This pushed to one side the pragmatic, paternalistic approach of Chen Yun and others that backed market reforms in 1956. In other words, this unspoken split was between two different forms of Chinese nationalism, both of which had origins in the New Culture Movement. In his rise to power, Mao had often urged pragmatism and the policies that he supported in power largely reflected this orientation from 1949 to 1957, i.e. both the united front announced at the People's Consultative Conference and to turn to Soviet emulation were seen as necessary practical steps to build a strong China. A key shift in his political evolution came with the Hundred Flowers campaign in mid-1957 (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 365 – 367). Mao encouraged the urban intellectuals, who had largely and sincerely flocked to the banner of communist China in the 1950s, to critically discuss the country's future under the dictum, 'Let a hundred flowers bloom together, let the hundred schools of thought contend'. These were the strata of freethinking, urban intellectuals of the New Culture, which was characterised as much by ideological plurality as it was by a common nationalist conviction and ethos. Despite being well aware of this critical history, Mao was shocked by the criticism of China's new, stultifying bureaucracy and monolithic culture, which the Hundred Flowers campaign inspired. At his behest, the Anti-Rightist Campaign was launched and it signified Mao's turn against the urban intellectual elite, and as such those that were identified with the more moderate nationalist tradition (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 365). This included many educated CCP members that had been encouraged to take professional jobs in the Kuomintang held areas back in the 1930s (ibid). From this point on, until the end of his life, Mao became vehemently hostile to critical discourse and increasingly argued that the intellectuals were a reactionary social class. But the trajectory of one individual leader could not explain the carnage that was unleashed in

China from the Great Leap Forward through the Cultural Revolution. A sociological basis to this new, anti-intellectual movement was needed. Mao appealed to the xenophobic and parochial impulses of the vast peasant bureaucracy that the CCP's collectivisation programme had brought into being. He heaped praise on fundamentalism over pragmatism, and went on to commit economic mistakes that, if they were permitted to speak, the intellectuals cast out by the new turn could have saved China from (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 366). This illustrates how Soviet-style planning *combined* with China's rural paucity to create a social basis in an uneducated peasant bureaucracy for Mao's turn to messianic nationalism. And this socio-economic amalgam existed in a reciprocal inter-relation to the ideological and political dimension: the 'imported' substitutionist model of the party-state that gave Mao absolute authority.

This concatenation of global and local factors explains why Mao enjoyed the power to push for this dramatic change of course within the Chinese party: it reflected the particular way that the Chinese communists had appropriated the Stalinist model of the substitutionist party. Khrushchev's attack on Stalin's 'cult of personality' in the secret speech was a cause of considerable discomfort for Mao, who had long enjoyed a similar enforced adulation. Mao gained *absolute power* – as opposed to merely personal leadership – within the CCP from the Rectification Campaign in 1942 to April 1945 when 'Mao Zedong Thought' was actually enshrined in the party constitution (Schram 1986, 860 – 861). Somewhat ironically, this appropriated and took to a new extreme the Stalinist notion of the substitutionist party pioneered in the Soviet Union, despite Mao having risen to this position of supreme power *by defeating* the pro-Moscow party faction. This historical lineage opened up an important contradiction in Mao's relationship with the post-1949 bureaucracy. For whereas Stalin's leader cult emerged through a process of decay within the Soviet state, Mao's imitation was already in place prior to the seizure of power in 1949. Stalin was therefore much more dependent upon a security apparatus to impose his absolute authority through the purges. In contrast, amongst the CCP leadership it was largely accepted that even implied criticisms of Mao were not acceptable. Once the urban intellectual class had raised criticism having been encouraged to, this led Mao to a deep distrust of the 'elite' bureaucracy, as opposed to the vast peasant bureaucracy that had been created through collectivisation. Mao was therefore able to use his extraordinary personal authority, which was codified into the overtly substitutionist party CCP constitution, to impose a messianic nationalism on the Chinese people. The Great Leap Forward, which saw somewhere between 20 to 30

million lose their lives through malnutrition and famine, was the first result of Mao's backlash against elite nationalism (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 368 – 378; Lieberthal 1987, 293 – 359).

The Great Leap Forward emerged out of a dispute in the CCP, which had seen the party initially back market reform, and the primary advocate of this turn, Chen Yun, had also proposed extending the same policy to agriculture through a programme of market incentives very similar to those which would eventually be adopted in 1979 (Lieberthal 1987, 300). The Chinese leadership recognised that Soviet industrialisation could not be un-problematically reapplied in the Chinese setting due to the sheer depth of rural paucity. Per capita income was so low that there was an insufficient agricultural surplus to fund industrialisation, making the failure to increase agricultural productivity during the First Five Year Plan therefore a severe problem (Lieberthal 1987, 299 – 300). Chen Yun's market-drive approach was brushed aside by Mao, whose alternative answer to this conundrum contained several elements: (i) to turn China's poor capital-labour ratio into an advantage through the mass mobilisation of unskilled labour, in effect to use fanatical appeals for self sacrifice amongst the rural population to boost output; (ii) to restrict 'planning' to the setting of ambitious goals for economic output and encourage 'innovation' by any means necessary to meet the targets, in effect dismantling the capacity of the central planning apparatus to allocate resources; (iii) to decentralise power to local bureaucracies, mobilise the new rural communes for industrial output, and encourage them to use traditional methods – resulting in the infamous 'backyard furnaces' whose steel product was normally worthless; and, in all areas, (iv) to disregard the technical norms advocated by the intellectual elite (Lieberthal 1987, 299 – 305). It might have been possible to apply some of these ideas in a manner that did not result in an economic catastrophe, but the pursuit of absurdly adventurist targets in steel production pushed rural labour away from agriculture and resulted in one of the twentieth century's most disastrous human-made famines. In its essence, however, and in a cruel irony given the search for an alternative to the Soviet road, the Great Leap Forward attenuated and deepened the inherent problems of the bureaucratic command economies: systematic falsification of statistics, lack of cross-sectorial co-ordination and, most of all, gross disproportions between industrial sectors (Titkin 1992). This led some writers to argue Stalinist economies exhibited 'planlessness' (Flewers forthcoming; Titkin 1992). Whatever the merits of this as a general claim, the Great Leap certainly exhibited just such a complete, *planless*

breakdown in central coordination. A human catastrophe on this scale inevitably led to a backlash in the leadership, but the form this took illustrated the specific nature of the substitutionism in the CCP. Peng Dehuai denounced the 'petit bourgeois fanaticism' of the Great Leap and, because this was *interpreted* as an oblique attack on Mao, was promptly sacked – leading, in turn, to the fatal continuation of the policy for another year (Lieberthal 1987, 295). Even carefully veiled criticisms of Mao were not permitted. This inevitably distorted discourse amongst the CCP, but also, in its own way, encouraged Mao's own paranoia. As positions could not be openly stated, what CCP leaders 'really thought' was subject to his suspicion.

The Cultural Revolution formed the next and last cataclysm in this struggle between the two souls of Chinese nationalism: one rooted in a messianic philosophy of mobilisation that identified Mao's person with the liberation of the nation, and the other drawing on the paternalistic pragmatism that was prepared to utilise market forces in the goal to build a strong China. That this distinction was far from mutually exclusive could be seen in the Chinese rapprochement with the United States in the early 1970s, which Mao supported. This exposes the utopian character of the messianic fanaticism Mao and his supporters advocated during the Cultural Revolution, for once the initial hysterical mobilisations he unleashed – which saw the masses encouraged to rise up and 'bombard the party headquarters' – subsided, then a retrenchment into the norms of dictatorial one party rule resulted. Some have estimated that 60 per cent of party officials were purged and as many as 400,000 people died from maltreatment (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 387). In this sense, it was reminiscent of Stalin's purges, but, reflecting the specific nature of Mao's non-bureaucratic despotism, it relied upon popular mobilisation, rather than the armed might of the security services. It is understandable given Mao's power that the CCP's acquiescence to the Cultural Revolution has been explained thus:

> Only if we regard him as a monarch in succession to scores of emperors can we imagine why the leadership of the CCP, trained to be loyal, went along with his piecemeal assault on and destruction of them (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 386).

Yet, despite Mao's authority reigning supreme and his move against the elite bureaucracy resembling an emperor bringing a nobility to heal, there was something distinctively modern about the Cultural Revolution. Its discourse drew heavily on the 'totalistic anti-traditionalism' (Lin 1979) of the most messianic sections of the New Culture Movement, encapsulated by Mao's encouragement to the masses to eliminate,

'old ideas, culture, customs, and habits of the exploiting classes' (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 113 – 116). The Cultural Revolution is remarkable for the extent to which this struck a chord, and inspired a genuine outpouring of emotion and belief. Its paradox lies in how it tapped into a very real hostility with the monolithic bureaucracy that the CCP had created, while Mao and the group around him were idolised as saviours from it. Its two sides could be seen in different moments of this so-called revolutionary process at its peak in 1966 to 1967. One side – the cultish, mass worship of Mao as the great idol – was symbolised by eight vast Nuremberg-style rallies in Beijing where millions flocked to glimpse a sight of Mao, culminating in a 12 million strong gathering on 26 November 1966 (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 106 – 110). The same cultish, fanaticism could be seen in the destructive offensive on the treasures of classical culture; for example, 4,922 of the 6,843 'places of cultural of historical interest' in Beijing were destroyed and the Forbidden City was only saved thanks to the personal intervention of Zhou Enlai (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 118 – 119). Mass mobilisation to carry through a dramatic purge of the bureaucracy invoking the language of the revolution – but without uprooting the principle of a one-party, Stalinist state – was the other dimension that took real hold in the summer of 1967. In its darkest hour the country appeared on the brink of, if not full-scale civil war, certainly a complete breakdown of civil order, as a section of the bureaucracy actually fought back against the Red Guards in Wuhan, organising a million supporters into an impromptu army (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 119 – 214). This was one of numerous armed clashes, at the time encouraged by Mao under the slogan 'arm the left' (ibid, 214 – 216). As the situation grew completely out of control, Mao eventually abolished the Red Guards by decree in July 1968 and mobilised the PLA to restore order. The price of this dependence on the PLA was that military personnel dominated the party that had survived (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 395). If, in its ultimate nature, the Cultural Revolution should be understood as, 'an unprecedented wave of state-instigated persecution, torture, gang warfare, and mindless violence' (Fairbank and Goldman 2006, 402), against Mao's opponents within the party, then it follows closely the substitutionist logic that led to Stalin's great purges of 1936. However, in its distinctive elements – its use of genuine, as opposed to coerced, mass mobilisation and its cultish fanaticism – it was firmly rooted in the messianic discourses of Chinese nationalism.

5.8 Two souls of Chinese nationalism in the Maoist amalgam

Deng Xiaoping, the 'arch-unrepentant capitalist-roader' (MacFarquhar and Schoenhals 2008, 379) was brought back into the fold by Zhou with Mao's blessing in 1975, a year before the Chairman died. It symbolised a dramatic reversal for the radical wing of the party, but the motivation illustrates the overall logic that led the CCP towards capitalist market reform. Mao was concerned to curtail the power of the PLA over the party, as the Cultural Revolution had left them in control of whole swathes of China, and Deng's return sent the message to the military that 'a Long March veteran with strong party and military credentials' would guarantee stability (ibid). This appeared to be Mao's shift back to the pragmatism that had motivated the 1956 proposals for market reform. Yet he changed course yet again allowing the Cultural Revolution Group to launch the 'Criticise Deng No Rehabilitation for Rightist Elements' campaign, after the Tiananmen Incident of 1976 had seen supporters of Deng come onto the streets (Burianek 2009, 14). Only with Mao's death could the pragmatic nationalism of the CCP party elite fully retake control.

Understanding the turn to market reform as representing a pragmatist ethos within Chinese nationalism accords with the most famous ideological justifications for the new turn. Deng's dictum, 'It doesn't matter whether it's a white cat or a black, I think; a cat that catches mice is a good cat' (cited in Goodman 2002, 68) became so well known precisely because it perfectly encapsulated the philosophical ethos of the reform era. It was rooted firmly in the assumption that China must become a strong nation and any number of means might be utilised to realise such ends. Its origins, in a speech to the Young Communist League in July 1962 (ibid), are also particularly telling. At this time, the CCP was searching for a way out from the catastrophe of the Great Leap Forward and Deng and others were trenchant in their criticisms of the 'leftist' dash into the commune system. There was continuity here with the positions the party had taken in 1956 and the Cultural Revolution (along with the 'education campaigns' that preceded it) was Mao's backlash against this oblique criticism from the pragmatic nationalists. There was an overriding theme in these positions, one that is not captured by the term of abuse in Chinese communism, 'capitalist roader', of the need to build a strong nation-state. This is what Sollinger aptly calls 'the statism behind the reform effort':

> [Reform offered]… a set of tools to be manipulated in the service of a few fundamental and overarching statist ends: the modernization, invigoration, and enhanced efficiency of the national economy and its continued heightened capacity to boost productivity and returns to the central state treasury (Solinger 1993, 3 – 4).

The nature of political discourse within the CCP that ruled out open statement of ideological differences, reflecting the disguised nature of the intra-bureaucratic struggle within the Stalinist party, obscures the continuity between 1956, 1962 and 1979. However, at each of these moments the search to create a strong Chinese *nation*-state was paramount above all else for the group of key CCP leaders. Indeed, so strong was this conviction that it was largely taken for granted rather than openly discussed. Even the Cultural Revolution distortions of this debate firmly emphasised the class cleavage above all else, the 'proletarian revolutionary line' versus the 'bourgeois reactionary line'. Notions of China's geopolitical relations with the United States and the Soviet Union were only introduced through this lens of supposed class antagonism. Liu Shaoqi, for example, was denounced for 'three reconciliations and one reduction': to 'capitalist imperialism', 'social imperialism,' (the Soviet Union) 'reaction' (domestic 'class enemies') and 'reduction' of aid to national liberation movements (Dittmer 1998, 184). The choice of enemy foes registers a terrain of geopolitical conflict but the implication is that these betrayals follow axiomatically from an absence of a class line. Accusations of 'Soviet revisionism' also abounded during the Cultural Revolution, and implied a similar betrayal of Chinese national independence. Yet the primary cleavage in the split did not draw on a patriotic narrative. It could be argued that this was a logical form of reasoning in an otherwise irrational discourse; for it recognised a shared nationalist foundation and goals with only the means to this end substantively contested. Deng and the other leaders of the post-Mao era articulated a nationalism that was rooted in pragmatic paternalism. It was also one that Mao had on many occasions articulated, an ethos that 'learnt true from facts' rather than 'bombarded the headquarters'. This image of China as a powerful *nation-state* – a myth of descent rooted in a desire to restore 'lost' power in international affairs – did not 'fall from the sky' but was based on the national imagination that emerged from the 1890s through the 1920s and 1930s. One final remark should, however, stress the limitations of the distinction between revolutionary, millenarian nationalism, and the cautious pragmatic ethos that has since displaced it. These are not internally logical programmes that can be simply aligned with two different methods and pathways. They are essentially forms of aesthetic – i.e.

emotion-inducing symbolism – that served to provide legitimacy for a culturally conditioned form of political economy rooted in a concrete relationship of class power.[30] Mao's 'vision', if it can be called that, lacked a sustainable economic basis, for it was rooted in a specific form of substitutionism in the Chinese party that gave him a pre-eminent position outside of, and in potential hostility to, the managerial bureaucracy. For the party elite their state-capitalist political economy was sustainable and successfully turned China into a powerful global actor. The common assumption amongst both was, in this sense, more important: a 'strong China' nationalism based on the party-state form. And both sides in this split were capable of drawing on a millenarian discourse. Indeed, this can be seen in the way in which it has resurfaced in contemporary China. As Yu Haiqing explains, however, it has assumed a 'traditionalist form' upon its return to the Chinese ideological scene:

> At the turn of the twenty-first century, revolutionary millennialism was being replaced by rejuvenation millennialism. This referred to a this-wordly transformation of livelihood – not the existing social-political order – that would enable the glorious return and a second coming of the 'dragon culture' in the new millennium. Unlike revolutionary millennialism, rejuvenation millennialism did not promise total transformation but revitalisation and regeneration of a culture whose revitalisation was pre-determined by its history and pre-existent in its collective memory (Haiqing 2009, 47).

Today's millenarianism therefore invokes a myth of descent firmly rooted in the traditional: a final flowering of the long awaited Chinese prestige, only 'momentarily' lost in the crises of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and now rediscovered in a new age. This encapsulates perfectly how market reform should be seen as an answer to the desire of national salvation that has occupied the imagination of China's nationalists since the First Sino-Japanese War. Furthermore, it underlines the relative stability of the pragmatic nationalism that won out in the 'two-line' struggle, for it is rooted in a 'sustainable' political economy of dynamic state-capitalist development.

5.9 Closing a chapter in world history: the rise and fall of 'state socialism'

In the conclusion, I will return to the 'paradigm debate' over Chinese economic reform, drawing out the implications of this *longue durée* analysis for the existing literature. For now, let us briefly summarise the argument presented in this chapter:

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[30] Thanks to Ishan Cader for impressing the importance of this conception of aesthetics in conversation.

- 'State socialism' emerged out of the death agony of colonial capitalism. This involved the breakdown of dynastic empires; the flowering of a plethora of national imaginations; and the extreme consequences that followed from the pursuit of colonial empire as an answer to the slump in the highly integrated world economy. These cultural qualities shaped the 'colonial imagination' of Japanese imperialism, whose actions ultimately handed power to the CCP.

- Stalinism's attachment to the politics of national egoism, and the corresponding preference for pursuing geopolitical state interests ('realism') in international relations, made the ideology particularly amenable to the flowering of national imaginations. Nonetheless, due to the specific conditions of the Chinese 'dress rehearsal' of 1925 and 1927, the strategy of the people's front became inoperable in China and the politics of national egoism resonated powerfully with the nationalism of public society. Maoism, thus, represented a fusion of the politics and organisational principles of Stalinism with Chinese nationalism.

- The Kuomintang's double-failure – both to modernise the economy and to politically confront colonialism – allowed Mao to claim the mantle of national salvation and appeared to confirm the 'turn to the countryside', peasant war strategy.

- Faced with extreme level of underdevelopment and already operating with a Stalinist party form replete with leader cult, the CCP turned to bureaucratic planning to centralise political and economic power in a one-party state.

- The search for a 'Chinese road' to development was a continuation of the nationalism that underpinned the CCP's struggle for power. It resulted in a conflict between two varieties of Chinese nationalism, the messianic and the pragmatic; emerging out of Mao's break with the modernist intelligentsia in 1957, it was made possible by the specific form of substitutionism in the Chinese party ('a leader cult without bureaucracy').

Conclusion

Only 20 years ago all the schoolbooks taught that the mightiest factor in producing wealth and culture is the worldwide division of labour lodged in the natural and historic conditions of the development of mankind. Now it turns out that world exchange is the source of all misfortune and all dangers. Homeward ho! Back to the national hearth! A correction must… be made of… Christopher Columbus [for] so immoderately extending the arena of human culture.
Leon Trotsky

In this thesis, I have developed a *longue durée* analysis of the causes of Chinese economic reform, applying the framework of the theory of uneven and combined development. How, then, does this aid our understanding of the overall *problématique* – of why, that is, an undefeated communist party would embark upon a process of capitalist market reform? It allows us to conceptualise the decision as an answer to the historical problem of Chinese modernity. The turn announced by the Third Plenum in December 1978 is now recast within a longer process of 'nation building'. I have located this policy within the post-1894 'project of China': the aspiration of a new public society emerging within a decaying ancient empire to find a place for itself in the modern world that was befitting of a lost, glorious past.

The radicalism of Chinese nationalism lay in the nature of its genesis; it emerged within a dynastic polity that had experienced a sudden and rapid loss of competitiveness faced with the challenge of British industrial capitalism. This descent from powerful tributary empire to semi-colonial client economy, which lacked territorial sovereignty and fiscal independence, created a peculiar condition, establishing the sociological basis for a modern national imagination – and, in that sense, inventing 'China' – yet instilling this new nation with a fervently anti-colonial ethos. Just as China's 'myth of descent' was imbued with an intense desymbolization crisis, so resymbolization was imagined as the restoration of 'lost' power. From these aesthetic qualities of emotion-inducing symbolism there evolved the political programme of Chinese nationalism, which the communists have actively pursued since taking power: the end to 'humiliation and suffering'; a strong and powerful nation-state with an international stature befitting its imperial history; and an assertion of claims to the territory of Qing China as part of a single nation-state, with implications for Tibet, Xinjiang, and Taiwan. The pragmatic nationalism that triumphed after Mao's death identified economic prosperity as fundamental to achieving these goals. In this regard,

the return of Hong Kong in 1997 and Macau in 1999 were of huge symbolic and material value for the overall project. The reform era could now be aligned with the historical project of the country's nationalism as the epoch of Western colonialism in China finally came to an end. This reciprocal unity between Chinese nation-building and economic development was drawn out explicitly by Jiang Zemin in his speech at the handover ceremony for Hong Kong back in 1997:

> July 1st 1997 will go down in the annals of history as a day that merits eternal memory. The return of Hong Kong to the motherland after going through a century of vicissitudes indicates that from now on Hong Kong compatriots have become true masters of this Chinese land, and that Hong Kong has now entered a new era of development… Hong Kong compatriots have a glorious patriotic tradition. Hong Kong's prosperity today, in the final analysis, has been built by Hong Kong compatriots. It is inseparable from the development and support of the mainland… (for the full speech see Rudowski 2012).

The speech perfectly encapsulated the assimilation of 'state socialism' to the project of national salvation through capitalist means. Jiang Zemin oversaw the final dismantling of the planning apparatus following the decision of the party congress of October 1992. However, in another historical irony of modern Chinese politics, Jiang had frequently endorsed leftist positions in the period after the Tiananmen massacre in 1989 and was forced to do a dramatic volte-face, replete with 'self-criticism', after Deng's 'Southern Tour' (Baum 1996, 350 – 351). Such a shift in position – and the parallel change that Chen Yun had made *against* market reform, which I discussed in the introduction (see pp. 8 – 9) – brings one full-circle back to the 'paradigm debate' over Chinese capitalism. The theory of uneven and combined development offers an incorporative approach to the causal analysis of this process. I have emphasised the role of nationalism, but not as a derivative of the ideology-based theorisation. Instead I have located the rise of Chinese nationalism – and its competing forms of political economy – within a materialist analysis of the contradictory process of capitalist internationalisation. The rise of Chinese nation-ness was a direct result of the geopolitical compulsions of colonial capitalist order, while the search for a developmental model attuned to national circumstances was part of a drive to 'catch up'

with the more advanced powers. This social analysis of the reproduction of the global system allows us to incorporate its cultural, ideological, *and* economic aspects.

The theory of uneven and combined development therefore offers an *Aufhebung* of the classical dichotomy between 'power' (P. H. Chang 1978; MacFarquhar 1974; MacFarquhar 1983; MacFarquhar 1997a; MacFarquhar 2011; Pye 1968; Pye 1981; F. Teiwes C. 1984a), 'policy' (Barnett 1967; Harding 1981; Lewis 1966; Solinger 1984), and 'institutional' (Lieberthal 1992; Lieberthal and Oksenberg 1988; Lampton 1992; Shirk 1992; Shirk 1993) approaches. Factional and ideological conflicts, which involve inconsistencies and shifts in position, are explicable within the amalgam of Soviet Stalinism and Chinese nationalism that Maoism represented. *Ideological* argument takes place within the parameters laid down by these historical assumptions; its 'state socialist' element became identified with the party-dictatorship and the nationalist programme pursued through capitalist means. *Factional* intrigues are inherent within the 'substitutionist', Stalinist party, which was culturally appropriated by the CCP in a manner that amplified the role of the 'leader cult'. As power is strictly concentrated at the top of the party with no democratic mechanisms it tends towards personal dictatorship. The special role for the 'leader cult' in the Chinese model created tension between elite figures and sections of the bureaucracy, as illustrated by Deng's 'Southern Tour' as well as Mao's Cultural Revolution. *Institutional* hierarchies in the party state system were socially stratified by class contradictions and the developmental model of command planning was ultimately judged against the dynamism of global capitalism – a test that it failed in China and elsewhere. A materialist analysis of China's combined development, thus, visualises each of these dimensions of the analysis as part of a contradictory historical process.

The decision of the Third Plenum in December 1978 amounted to a turn to state-capitalist development. 'In the absence of an indigenous bourgeoisie', writes Kevin Gray, 'the Chinese state took upon itself the leading role in the reorganisation of social relations commensurate with a restoration of capitalism' (Gray 2010, 456). Treating this process, however, as one fundamentally rooted in a nationalist response to the competitive challenge of the modern world recognises the degree of 'unconsciousness' that it involved, which was rooted in a desire to develop a strong and powerful nation-state rather than strictly 'capitalist' aspirations. It was *commensurate with*, rather than *motivated by*, a capitalist logic of power. Solinger is therefore correct to see *statism* – the utilisation of market measures to strengthen the power of the state – as a driving

force of reform (Solinger 1993, 3 – 4). As a consequence, the reform process was initially based upon a coalition of forces, some of which saw it as augmenting the planned economy, rather than replacing it (ibid). This understanding imparts a consistency to the positions that Chen Yun took in 1956, 1978 and 1992: he supported reform only insofar as it did not threaten a 'state socialist' centralisation of political and economic power. In addition, it allows one to capture the class contradictions that emerged in the course of the reform process between pro-market sections of the state bureaucracy with material interests in the reform drive, and less competitive bureaucratic units (Shirk 1993). A decisive political intervention *was* needed (ibid) in favour of the pro-reform wing of the state and was possible due to the nature of the substitutionism in the CCP. However, the key anterior assumption, around which there was an absolute consensus in the ruling party, in these decisions, was the political programme of Chinese nationalism – i.e., the drive to build a strong and powerful China – and this, in turn, emerged out of East Asia's interface with Western colonialism in *la longue durée.*

The politics of nation-ness (Anderson 2006) had an extraordinary impact on the socialist project of the last century. The proliferation of national identities, each aspiring to sovereign territoriality, and engaged in processes of mutual interaction and competition, proved to be antithetical to the realisation of a transnational transition to the socialist mode of production that Trotsky and others had seen the Russian Revolution as a step towards. Revolutions that followed afterwards were heavily characterised by the rising tide of political nationalism in the Global South and East. Lenin's injunction, that 'At all events, under all conceivable circumstances if the German revolution does not come, we are doomed' (cited Rosenberg 1996, 10) – and its assumption of an internationalist orientation – would not, therefore, find an echo in the movements led by Marshal Tito, Fidel Castro, or Hồ Chí Minh, any more than they did in Mao's regime. The tragedy of twentieth century socialism thus lies in the following dilemma: the same wrenching processes of capitalist internationalisation that had brought the communists to power also created forces favourable to the collapse of these movements into authoritarian nationalism. By explicating the sociological origins of this process in the uneven and combined development of the global system, the thesis highlights the enduring challenge of socialist transition in a world of many societies. However, by recognising this, it may equally aid the development of effective anticapitalist strategies committed to democracy, internationalism, and human freedom.

Appendix

List of sources for beginning-of-chapter quotes.

Introduction
Describing reform and opening as the importation and development of capitalism and viewing the main danger of peaceful evolution as coming from the economic field are leftist manifestations.
Deng Xiaoping
cited in Zhao 1993, 746

As we can see now in retrospect, the strength of the global socialist challenge to capitalism was that of the weakness of its opponent.
Eric Hobsbawm
Hobsbawm 1994, 8

Chapter 1
What do people want from the Communist Party? First to be liberated, and second to be made rich.
Deng Xiaoping
cited in Jeffries 2010, 18

If today we still do not set about the task of improving the socialist system, people will ask why it cannot solve problems that its capitalist counterpart can.
Deng Xiaoping
cited in Jeffries 2010, 18

Chapter 2
The class struggle… is a struggle for the rough and material things, without which there is nothing fine and spiritual. Nevertheless these latter are present in the class struggle as something other than mere booty, which falls to the victor. They are present as confidence, as courage, as humour, as cunning, as steadfastness in this struggle, and they reach far back into the mists of time. They will, ever and anon, call every victory which has ever been won by the rulers into question.
Walter Benjamin 1940

Chapter 3
China offers an enchanting picture of what the whole world might become, if the laws of the empire were to become the laws of all nations. Go to Peking! Gaze upon the mightiest of mortals; he is the true and perfect image of heaven.
- Pierre Poivre, cited in Clarke 1997, 42

There is no sin to which they are not prone, no crime which is not common among them.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau
cited in Clarke 1997, 53

Chapter 4
Insofar as the past has been transmitted as tradition it possesses authority; insofar as authority presents itself historically, it becomes tradition.
Hannah Arendt
cited in Calhoun and McGowan 1997, 58)

The Chinese nation is known throughout the world not only for its industriousness and stamina, but also for its ardent love of freedom and its rich revolutionary traditions… During the thousands of years of recorded history, the Chinese nation has given birth to many national heroes and revolutionary leaders. Thus the Chinese nation has a glorious revolutionary tradition and a splendid historical heritage.
- Mao Zedong
cited in Apter and Saich 1994, 53

Chapter 5
Socialism isn't only about defending against one's enemies, against the old world it is opposing; it also has to fight within itself against its own reactionary ferments.
Victor Serge
Serge 2012, 133

Modern China is the product of nineteenth-century western imperialism, crossed with the influence of the Russian revolution. Unfortunately it was not the Chinese workers who laboured in the western-owned factories in the treaty ports, or in the South African mines, or on the western front in the First World War, who have survived to enjoy whatever glory or profit may have accrued from the Chinese revolution.
E.H Carr
Carr 1965, 104)

Conclusion
Only twenty years ago all the schoolbooks taught that the mightiest factor in producing wealth and culture is the worldwide division of labour lodged in the natural and historic conditions of the development of mankind. Now it turns out that world exchange is the source of all misfortune and all dangers. Homeward ho! Back to the national hearth! A correction must… be made of… Christopher Columbus [for] so immoderately extending the arena of human culture.
Leon Trotsky
Trotsky 1934b

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