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Origins of Peasant Socialism in China

The International Relations of China's Modern Revolution

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Department of International Relations

Submitted for the degree of Dphil in International Relations

September 2013

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been submitted, either in the same or different form, to this or any other University for a degree.

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Abstract

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Submitted for the degree of Dphil International Relations

Origins of Peasant Socialism in China

The International Relations of China's Modern Revolution

More than six decades after its occurrence, China's 'peasant revolution' of 1949 remains an enigma. According to classical Marxism, peasants are passive 'objects of history' who must be transformed into industrial workers before they can become agents of revolutionary change. This line of argument is reinforced by much extant Sinology and historical sociology, both of which have treated Maoism either as a disguised continuation of peasant exploitation, or as a failed emulation of Stalinism. *Contra* these interpretations, this thesis argues that China's peasant revolution was a real historical phenomenon which involved a previously unthinkable form of peasant political agency. To substantiate this argument, the thesis deploys Leon Trotsky's theory of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) which posits social development as a non-linear process constituted via multi-societal interaction. This reveals that the origins and specificities of the Chinese Revolution can best be understood with reference to a 'combined development' emerging from China's long-run and short-run interactions with variegated social forms.

The first chapter of the thesis shows how China's 'peasant revolution' remains an insurmountable paradox for the relevant literature, expressed in a shared problem of anachronism. Chapter 2 introduces Uneven and Combined Development as a theory of inter-societal causation that might overcome the problem by virtue of its non-linear conception of social development. Chapter 3 demonstrates how this inter-societal perspective is central to understanding the *longue durée* 'peculiarities' of China's development: the interaction of nomadic and sedentary societies made the Chinese peasants directly subject to a centralizing empire, configuring their political agency quite differently (and with quite different potentials) from that of their European feudal counterparts. Chapter 4 analyzes the specific intersection of the Chinese social formation with the universalizing dynamics of Western capitalism, an intersection which generated the context of China's modern combined development. Chapter 5

then provides a conjunctural analysis of how the revolutionary agency of the peasant came to the fore in China's revolution in terms of a pattern of combined development that substituted the peasantry for the weak bourgeoisie and nascent proletariat as the leading agency of a socialist modernization that fused anti-imperialist struggle and campaigns for rural restoration and national liberation into a single process aimed at overcoming China's backwardness. Finally, Chapter 6 shows how this argument resolves the Sinological debate on whether modern Chinese history is 'China-made' or 'West-made'; for it reveals how the interaction of China's premodern social forms with Western modernity co-determined the peculiarities of China's modern transformation. It also provides a critique of extant Marxist historical sociology, arguing that it is built upon a mode-of-production analysis that tends towards falsely unilinear, 'internalist' explanations.

“王知夫苗乎？七八月之間旱，則苗槁矣。天油然作雲，沛然下雨，則苗浡然興之矣！其如是，孰能御之？今夫天下之人牧，未有不嗜殺人者也。如有不嗜殺人者，則天下民皆引領而望之。誠如是也，民歸之，猶水之就下，沛然誰能御之？”

——《孟子見梁襄王》

Does your Majesty understand the way of the growing grain? During the seventh and eighth months, when drought prevails, the plants become dry. Then the clouds collect densely in the heavens, they send down torrents of rain, and the grain erects itself, as if by a shoot. When it does so, who can keep it back? Now among the shepherds of men throughout the nation, there is not one who does not find pleasure in killing men. If there were one who did not find pleasure in killing men, all the people in the nation would look towards him with outstretched necks. Such being indeed the case, the people would flock to him, as water flows downwards with a rush, which no one can repress.

Mencius: The King Hsiang of Liang

“山窮水盡疑無路，柳暗花明又一村”

—— 陸游

When hills bend, streams wind and the pathway seems to end, past dark willows and flowers in bloom lies another village.

Lu You

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Conventions

I have applied the *Pinyin* transliteration system to the text with a few arbitrary exceptions. Most Chinese and geographical names are translated to English in the *Pinyin* system such as Kangxi (康熙), Mao Zedong (毛澤東), Tianxia (天下) and Shanghai (上海). However, in the case of some received names which were not officially translated in Mainland China or after 1949, I have maintained their more established names in other transliteration systems such as Wade-Giles. For example, I use Chiang Kaishek (蔣介石) rather than Jiang Jieshi, Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙) rather than Sun Zhongshan. As for books and articles originally published in Chinese, I have provided their titles in *Pinyin* with my own English translation in the bracket afterwards. All the translations of Chinese materials can be found in the footnotes and the bibliography.

Chapter 1-Peasant Socialism: Situating the Chinese Revolution in World-Historical Perspective

1.1 Introduction: The Chinese peasant socialism as a world-historical riddle

The Chinese Revolution has affected the second half of the twentieth century as dramatically as what the Russian Revolution has done to the first half of the century (Schurmann 1968: 36). The paradox of China's revolutionary experience is significant not only for its profound world-historical impact, but also its multi-faceted implications on historical-sociological theories of social revolution: a socialist revolution has emerged from China's vast peasant communities where there was no fully fledged industrial sector, capitalist social relations and working class organizations. Such a particular trajectory has posed great challenge to the enduring Marxist hypothesis that peasants were 'rural idiots' and 'potatoes in a sack' who play a 'negative part' in the historical drama of social development (Mitrany 1951; Duggett 1975: 160-161). The Chinese Revolution, unlike its Russia predecessor which imposed a socialist state upon the un-revolutionized peasants, has grown organically from the peasant communities in which the socialist state was firmly rooted; and in consolidating the peasant-based socialist regime, the Chinese peasant still played an active role with his and her identity represented in the new regime. As Lin Chun has noted, 'Chinese socialism can best be grasped as a modern project that has sought to develop by its own means into its own unique type, always conscious of the other possibilities it has refused to emulate: that is, Soviet Style bureaucratic socialism as well as diverse forms of peripheral capitalism' (Lin 2006: 1, 60). For many historical moments was China actively pursuing the Soviet as well as western models of socialism and industrialization, whereas she has later reinterpreted 'socialism' and 'democracy' by differentiating itself from the Russian and the western experiences. The peculiar nexus between peasantry and socialism in the Chinese Revolution requires a world-historical explanation.

However, the Chinese Revolution remains an enigma for a world-historical analysis is long overdue. In extant theorizations, some accounts have overemphasized the coercive elements deployed by the revolutionary leadership to establish nationwide control by reference to China's prolonged tradition of 'dictatorship' (Moore 1966; Wolf 1969), whereas some others have highlighted from different angles the organic

and cooperative relationship with the rural communities created by the Communist Party during the anti-Japanese guerrilla war (known as the Yenan Period) (Johnson 1962; Hinton 1972; Belden 1971). What the two strands of analysis have both failed to produce is an understanding of how the modern value of socialism and the organization of peasants were intertwined and rendered co-constitutive to generate a unprecedented socio-political order in China's case. A common theoretical narrowness in these accounts is to treat the Communist Revolution as a simple project of state-rebuilding fuelled by nationalist ideologies, whereas having omitted the *socialist* perspective aspiring to creation of a new social order encapsulated in the practice of peasant-based revolution¹. All these approaches have suggested that socialism existed as a marginal idea in the Chinese Revolution which has induced little change to China's mundane and regressive past; also these explanations have allowed the role of nationalism belittling the meaning of socialism.

Thus in this chapter, I will show by introducing through the extant literature that the above accounts' explanatory difficulties are caused by a common problem of *anachronism*. Here, I will define anachronism as a problem caused by simplifying and reducing historical temporalities. Anachronistic analysis always involves overemphasis of a specific set of *explanans* without specifying their 'historical socio-temporal context', 'making it appear as a static, self-constitutive and reified entity'. The deeper methodology reason of anachronism is that a specific period of history in either the past or the present is 'sealed off' from broader historical development, being 'eternalized' as 'natural and resistant to structural change'. Also, 'history appear to be marked, or is regulated by a regular tempo that beats according according to the same and constant rhythm' of a certain reified system (Hobson and Hobden 2002: 6-15). Ironically, though historical sociology has promised to theorize the 'historical specificity' of social categories, they have also committed the mistake of anachronism in explaining the Chinese Revolution. On surface, it is because that they have treated the Chinese peasant or the traditional society as mundane, inactive and changeless. However, I will aim to show in this chapter that the real solution to the problem is not

¹ Assisted by the Realist framework of International Relations, Neo-Weberian historical-sociologists, Theda Skocpol (1979) *inter alia* have interpreted the Chinese Communist Revolution as a task of rebuilding state-administration in a historically made anarchical space of geopolitical crisis (also Thaxton 1977: 24).

to debate on whether the Chinese peasant is progressive or not; rather, it is about solving a more fundamental methodological problem underlying all forms of anachronism in extant historical-sociological accounts; because anachronism is ultimately caused by *ontological singularity* as the most deep-seated methodological weakness in classic sociology which will inevitably lead to all forms of uni-linear notion of social development (Rosenberg 2006: 310, 2013: 186). This review will give the basis to introducing Uneven and Combined Development as an antidote to anachronism with its ontology of ‘interactive multiplicity’ which views social development as accumulative, multi-linear and spirally ascending.

This chapter will first review some classic notions on the potentialities of socialist revolution in a peasant society on which Marxism holds a precarious position. It will show that classic Marxian theory of social development has not denied the plausibility of socialist revolution revolving around the peasantry whereas they look to the revolutionary leadership as the key agent that provides essential organizational and ideological energy to any peasant revolution. Thus the key question to be tackled is what particular *modus operandi* the Chinese Communist Party (hereafter the CCP) has deployed to organize, politicize and militarize the peasants and under what historical circumstances these political manoeuvrings became effective. It will be shown that though existing authors have highlighted different aspects of the CCP’s state institutions crafted to mobilize and militarize the peasants, they have not succeeded in mobilizing *world history* as the key *explanans* to the peculiarities they have identified; instead, they have resorted to the internal structure(s) of the peasantry or the agrarian society to explain the peasant-based characteristics of China’s socialism which is supposed to be the *explanandum*. As a result, those authors are unable to explain why the traditional peasant society has been historically incorporated to the socialist-revolutionary project of the CCP, neither can they address the specificities of socialism in the Chinese case which should have been understood as a contradictory ‘social combination’ entailing multiple, intertwined social formations rather than a linear outgrowth of the traditional peasant society. On this basis, this chapter concludes by calling for an alternative theoretical framework of social transformation centred upon the conception of ‘social combination’, and Leon Trotsky’s theory of Uneven and Combined Development (hereafter U&CD) plays this role for it will activate a

conjunctural method of world-historical analysis predicated upon the ontological multiplicity of social development.

1.2 The key question for modern China: Is Socialist Revolution conceivable in a peasant society and why is it necessary?

Whether a revolutionary social transformation can emerge from a peasant society remains one of the most contested questions in the field of general theories of social revolution (Wolf 1969; Scott 1977; Paige 1975; Migdal 1974; Skocpol 1982 etc.). As Barrington Moore has stated, the ‘process of modernization begins with peasant revolutions that fail. It culminates during the twentieth century with peasant revolutions that succeed’ (Moore 1966; Skocpol 1982: 351). A long list of successful revolutions won on the basis of peasant organizations has elicited the great transformation of the peasant which has become the ‘subject’ rather than the ‘object’ of history—This is also regarded a *zeitgeist* of twentieth century’s world history (Skocpol 1982). The Chinese Revolution is significant among other peasant revolutions not only because it was the first successful attempt to implant socialist property relations in the soil of peasant communities, but also that the theory and praxis of Maoism has inspired the rest of the national liberation movements in the Third World (D’Mello 2009)². In pre-1949 China, peasants constituted 75 percent of the total population and the agricultural sector produced approximately 65 percent of the national output (Feuerwerker 1983: 29). Fully fledged capitalist social relations was nonexistent and the number of workers was small. Agricultural production by 1949 was still in a large sense organized around scattered household units. China’s apparent backwardness makes the revolution a more paradoxical case for Mao and his CCP have transcended the longstanding myth upheld by some classic Marxist scholars that socialism is more likely to be achieved in societies with mature capitalism. It is thought that Marx has an ‘elemental belief’ in the ‘superiority and necessity of large-scale production’ that is sought first by capitalism and then by socialism on a higher level (Mitrany 1951: 26)³. With the peculiar strategies of political struggles such as ‘villages besieging cities’, the ‘mass line’ and the Land Reform, Mao’s triumph in China has come to unsettle the

² Notably, Maoism was also deployed as the praxis of some left-wing movements in the West during the Cold War, see R.J. Alexander, *Maoism in the Developed World*, 2001.

³ On this score, see David Mitrany, *Marxism Against the Peasant*, 1951.

Stalinist notion of socialist development which exaggerates the determinism of forces of production (D'Mello 2009)⁴; Mao alleged that human capability could substitute material capability in China's extremely backward situation as a shortcut to socialism. In this sense, the nexus between socialism and the peasantry presented by the Chinese Revolution has posed significant questions not only to the precarious status of the peasant in the Marxist theory of revolution, but also to the general understanding of the origins and nature of modern social transformation.

Marx's understanding of the role of peasantry in social revolution is marked by his famous analogy of 'potatoes in a sack' that highlights the short-sightedness, vulnerability and disorganization of the peasant population (Hobsbawm 1973). However, unlike David Mitran's charge based upon his selective reading of Marx's works on the European experiences that Marxist theory is in nature 'against' peasants, an opening can be recognized in Marx's theory for envisaging peasant revolution in the canvas of wider social formation (Duggett 1975: 160). This opening lies not only in the feature of historicism of Marxism, but also Marxism's nature as an unfinished and open-ended intellectual project. Marx himself has confessed that his understanding of peasant is limited to 'the countries of Western Europe' (Marx 2000: 623) where the peasant would inevitably be 'released from rural idiocy and turn into a proletariat or in some cases a bourgeois'. Thus '[p]easants seemed to him (Marx) the epitome of backwardness' facing capitalism as an 'all-conquering' force of modernity (Duggett 1975: 161; Marx 2000: 623). Though Marx has emphasized the stagnation of economic development in the traditional agrarian economy, his attitude towards the role of peasants in social progress has long remained ambivalent across different cases he has addressed. It is notable that '[p]easants were most interesting for Marx when they were ceasing to exist as such, their expropriation from the land constituted 'the prelude to the history of capital'' (Duggett 1975: 161). This point makes Marx less an apologist of capitalism predicated upon 'the expropriation of the agricultural

⁴ The Stalinist notion is nonetheless a 'mechanical interpretation' of Marx's 1859 *Preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* which vaguely implies that the development of production forces turns preexisting social relations into fetters and preludes the 'era of social revolution' (D'Mello 2009). Stalin applies this interpretation to justify his China policy in the 1920s that the bourgeois KMT needed to act as the interim leader of the Chinese Revolution before the stage of socialism, see Deutscher 1984.

producer' (Marx 2000: 623). In the case of England, the disappearing of peasants was a necessary condition for the emergence of capitalist development that favours large-scale production.

However, to Marx, any socialist progression on that basis has to be predicated upon reversal of the status of peasants in the social property regime in which the disappearance of peasants in England did not have to be the sufficient condition. The potentially progressive role of the peasant in anti-capitalist struggles is first detected by Marx in France's case. In *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, it is shown that the French capitalist relations was not built upon a radical dispossession of the peasant, but the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the Monarch sustained by partly accommodating the peasant's expectation (Marx 1852/2008; Duggett 1975: 168-170). French peasants supported Louis Napoleon with the hope that their private property right would induce the passage to bourgeoisie; whereas they then lost faith in Napoleon because the man has proved incapable of protecting them against 'the consequences of trying to become petit-bourgeoisie' (ibid). The political disillusionment of Napoleon's state simultaneously led to disillusionment of the economic system, namely the private property regime on which the state erected (ibid). These double disillusionments have in turn conceived an anti-capitalist element among the French peasants. Though it is highly contested whether the so-called anti-capitalism developed in opposing the Napoleon government had promised any socialist impulse which, in Marx's sense, would promote the progressive growth of large-scale production, it is nevertheless conceivable in the French case that progressive class identity could be formed in the peasant communities under particular conjunctural circumstances, despite the relative stagnant production forces.

Though the anti-capitalist impulse displayed in the French peasants could not be simply viewed as an incentive of socialist revolution, it is nonetheless conceivable in the French case that by cultivating antipathy to private property, the socio-political order of capitalism could be unsettled. This is why Marx has also looked to the East for possibilities of revolutionary transformation. Marx is certainly not more optimistic about the East, but he is ready to posit the huge peasant population in Eastern societies as a potential ally of the urban proletarian class for challenging capitalism (Duggett 1975: 173). This possibility lies in the element of 'communal property and communal production' possessed by non-western societies such as Russia and China

(Marx 1973: 490; Duggett 1975: 174). Complexities of the Russian case arose from the dilemma that both the capitalist development and peasants in the communes were against the exploitative regime of Tsarism at a specific point when they could enter a temporary alliance. The contradiction, however, is that though communal property in Russia would present a potential counterforce to capitalism, the peasants' small holding of land was nevertheless against the progressive logic of capitalism which entails large-scale production. Though it is imaginable in Marx's picture that the peasant could be turned into a conscious class to achieve political victory of overthrowing Tsarism by allying with other classes, it is questionable though, whether the peasant could transcend the stagnancy of production force due to the condition of small landholding. Marx has implied that a peasant revolution could not necessarily overcome such weakness unless a superimposed state-power came to further revolutionize the peasant's political agency. Marx has also suggested that once the anti-capitalist revolution triumphed in Russia, large-scale, rationalist production such as machinery could be 'transplanted immediately' to the peasants who was 'troubled by many irrationally small plots'; thus socialism could grow out of the Russian peasant communities, and in transplanting machines to the socialist Russia directly, the capitalist stage of peasant dispossession could be 'leap-frogged' (Marx 1953; Duggett 1975: 173-176).

All the above review of the Marxist notion of peasant revolution could be summed up as follows. For Marx, it is fully conceivable in under particular historical circumstances that peasants could be politicized, mobilized and rendered a conscious class force for anti-capitalist revolution, as long as there are other classes assisting this revolution via a more complex process of social formation; this is because that capitalism itself is detrimental to the peasants' original way of life. However, the underdevelopment of productive forces of agrarian society also presumes an excessively contradictory trajectory for the peasant to become revolutionary. Some additional methods may need to be deployed (e.g. massive use of state-violence) to alter the small-holding characteristics of peasant economy which is in conflict to the principle of large-scale production of socialism. This understanding leads to two further questions. First, where comes the particular historical conjuncture which has given rise to the revolutionary peasantry? And second, how was a certain political leadership formed in that conjuncture that turned the peasant away from their

congenital weakness towards a socialist end; and how was socialism reinterpreted in order to facilitate the course of a peasant revolution? As Eric Hobsbawm has problematized, the primary question of peasant politics is about ‘the relation between microcosm and macrocosm’, because for the peasants, ‘[b]y themselves they cannot solve this problem’ (Hobsbawm 1973: 8). For Hobsbawm, the revolutionary agency of the peasantry is always formed outside peasant communities as part of a wider social movement (e.g. the 1960s nation-wide unrest in Peru), without which the peasants would lack both education and armed forces sufficient to politicize their discontent because ‘the normal strategy of the traditional peasantry is passivity’ (ibid: 12-13). Thus Hobsbawm has agreed with Marx’s proposition in *The Eighteenth Brumaire* that peasants ‘cannot represent themselves’ and must be ‘presented’ by others (ibid: 20).

Hobsbawm’s engagement with the conception of peasant politics has ushered in a historically holistic perspective—that the conjuncture of peasant politics is ultimately a product of wider social formation in world history⁵. ‘Before looking at the peasantry, it is necessary to look at the whole society’ (Skocpol 1982: 373). This methodological principle is reinforced by Barrington Moore and Theda Skocpol in different regards (Moore 1966: 426; Skocpol 1979, 1982, 1994); nevertheless there has been a wide consensus among these authors that ‘[a] holistic frame of reference is indispensable, one that includes states, class structures, and transnational economic and military relations’; and such a holistic explanation ‘can only be developed in conjunctions with explanations of other forms of peasant-based political protest (and its absence or failure) in various epochs of world history’ (Skocpol 1982: 373-374). How the ‘world-historical context’ should be applied as the key analytical device is a crucial theoretical step that has to be taken before substantial causal mechanism of the Chinese Revolution could be eventually established; otherwise, it is difficult to theorize the wide social formation(s) in which the peasant has become revolutionary and the revolutionary *modus operandi* was formed to overcome the congenital weakness of the peasant. Now I will turn to the extant theorizations of the causes and consequences of the Chinese Revolution in both historical-sociological and Sinological accounts. I will

⁵ Despite this, Hobsbawm seems to have contradicted his own world-historical method in some of his remarks on China; for example, ‘in the traditional politics of that country (China) peasant risings play an accepted and expected part in the end of one dynasty and the substitution of another’ (Hobsbawm 1973: 17).

show that their inadequate utilization of world history has caused them the problem of anachronism and prevented them from understanding the peasant character of the Chinese Revolution and its specific meaning.

1.3. Extant theorizations of China's Peasant Revolution

1.3.1 Always back to Jiashen: the peasantry as a passive object of history and the inescapable dictatorship

The first strand of literature on the emergence of revolutionary China has placed heavy emphasis on weaknesses of the Chinese agrarian society due to which 'socialism' is understood as a relatively empty term. The Chinese Revolution is explained by excavating the traditional agrarian structures in which the passivity, vulnerability and lack of cohesion of the peasant communities are regarded as the constitutive elements of China's development. These traditional backward structures, according to these authors, include ideology, political institutions, developmental stagnation and landownership. Like R. Keith Schoppa has defined, the basic problem for the Chinese Revolution was 'to construct a modern state bolstered by institutions and approaches that could engender the *cohesion* necessary for socio-political stability' (Schoppa 2000: 238, my italics). Barrington Moore (1966) has depicted why the lack of cohesion had emerged in the traditional society. To Moore, this problem lies ultimately in China's stagnant economic development characterized by 'the absence of capitalism' (Huang 1985, 2002; Brenner and Isett 2002).

According to Moore's influential *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (1966), the social incohesiveness in China's agrarian society was caused by two historical conditions. First, the traditional petite-agricultural economy was organized around small households. Family was the basic unit in which production activities took place. Thus a peasant would hardly have any sustainable and cooperative contact with other non-family members in his or her community (Moore 1966: 208-213). Because of the enduring condition of overpopulation in the countryside, hungry peasants would always be in a competitive relationship with each other to bid for the gentry-officials' lands to cultivate. This situation deepened the cleavages between individual peasants. Second, the peasants also had very little connection to the state because the Imperial government's administrative power could hardly reach the grassroot level. For most of the time, peasants would only confront local gentry-scholars and low-ranking officials,

and they could easily perceive the corrupt and exploitative local notables as representatives of the imperial government (see Will, Wong and Lee 1991). Therefore, the highly incohesive structure of the rural society enabled the Communist Party to utilize the pre-existing cleavages to cultivate antagonisms between different groups, which were then framed into nationalist ideology to mobilize peasants on a national scale. Because the Chinese peasants were unlike their French counterpart who was able to raise formal request for property right, the Communist Party could easily launch organized revolts, political mobilizations and identity reconstruction by ‘forg[ing] a new link between the village and the national government’, for which dictatorial government and tighter exploitation over the rural area were essential methods (ibid: 220-227; see also Schoppa 2000: 251-270).

Here comes a difficult question for Moore’s account: though the incohesive rural society has provided the CCP with the platform for revolutionary mobilization, it nevertheless did not guarantee that the CCP had to do that and would be successful. Also, there is no theoretical and logical underpinning for the claim that by ‘forging a new link between the village and the national government’ the revolutionary state would necessarily become a backward dictatorial regime. For this problem, Moore builds his argument upon a sophistry that equates ‘the absence of capitalism’ to the necessary emergence of dictatorship. He has provided a long analysis of the power relation between the imperial state, the landed upper class and the peasant and regarded their correlation as the reason for absence of capitalism in China. Moore argues that the Chinese landed class, namely the gentry-scholars were highly resistant to some of the crucial elements of capitalism such as private property and profit-oriented commercial activities. Such hostility came from the gentry’s *non-economic* access to landed property (Brenner 1977). Because the imperial government had to control a vast territory and population, long-distance control was thus extremely important to the maintenance of imperial order. For this reason, the imperial government made great effort to integrate the landed class into the state-bureaucracy, allowing office-holders in the bureaucracy a certain degree of corruption (Moore 1966: 172). Thus office-holding would always lead to multiplying of wealth for not only gentry-scholars, but their whole family as well. As a result, wealthy families and clans were always in need of degree-holding officials to ‘substantiate’ their ownership of landed property, whereas poor families also tended to support their children to take

the official examination, through which fortunes of the family was expected to be multiplied. Therefore, the gentry's landownership was achieved and protected via office-holding rather than direct involvement in agricultural production. For Moore, this is why the Chinese landed class had no incentive to participate in market-oriented commercial activities⁶.

Moore views the above conditions as the origins of *non-democratic* state-formation in China. For Moore, capitalist production has foregrounded the emergence of democratic polity in England, whereas 'the absence of capitalism' is understood as the sociological foundation for the recurrent emergence of dictatorial regimes throughout the Chinese history. The problem still is that Moore has provided no analysis of the process by which the CCP has succeeded in 'forging a new link between the village and the national government' whereas former political forces could not do this. Charles Tilly is certainly correct to argue that Moore has 'said little about the *actual mechanisms* that translated a certain form of class power into a specific mode of government' (Tilly 1992: 12, my italics).

Other authors have attempted to identify some more specific channels through which the dictatorial state has been imposed upon the peasant. They have highlighted the degenerative role of the Confucian ideology and the agrarian production system. Two particular elements of the agrarian society are regarded responsible for the emergence of the Chinese dictatorship. First, according to Max Weber, Confucianism, which is regarded as the most enduring social consciousness dominating the Chinese society, lacks the fundamental 'transcendental tensions' by which capitalist modernity was conceived (Weber 1951: 226). Confucianism is understood as a set of moral codes followed by the mass of Chinese people in observing traditional values and practices. Through official infiltration, Imperial courts of all times had succeeded in creating a high degree of social integration predicated upon the belief in order and stability. To achieve order and stability, institutions such as the bureaucracy and the scholar-examination were set up as to enable the individuals to realize self-perfection via fulfilling imperial obligations. And also because the logical structure of Confucianism lacks 'determinate paradigms whose disproof could have led to theoretical upheavals

⁶ For criticisms of China's state-bureaucracy and its inefficacy see Harry Harding, *Organizing China: The Problem of Bureaucracy 1949-1976*, 1981.

within them' (Anderson 1974: 543), the Scientific Revolution essential to Industrial Revolution in Europe could not take place in China to induce any capitalist production. Second, it has been widely held that the traditional agrarian society of China was short of the social property relations essential to the rise of capitalism in the West. The Confucian ideology is treated as a major barrier to the formation of private property relations and commercial activities for its tenet that 'the poise and harmony of the soul are shaken by the risks of acquisitiveness' (Weber 1951: 160). The fundamental material condition identified as responsible for the absence of capitalist elements, however, was the natural and ecological setting in which the 'Asiatic mode of production' or 'oriental despotism' was grounded (Wittfogel 1957). Because of the high aridity of land in the Asiatic societies, the state had to play a central role in organizing large-scale hydraulic projects. Resultantly, the state became the sole proprietor of all lands, and the line between public and private properties was blurred. In this sense, the non-progressive Confucian culture, and the state-bureaucracy were both super-structural institutions deployed by the state-class to relieve the material pressures upon the traditional economy.

For all the above social conditions are treated as of transhistorical quality, it is hard for authors to distinguish the novel, progressive elements, socialism *inter alia* in the Chinese Revolution. Eric Wolf argues from an anthropological perspective that the endless peasant wars in history were all generated and predetermined by the oppressive landed property regime under which the peasant had little agency. Though the modern communist revolution has 'reversed the structure of the Chinese society' by organizing the peasants into the newly crafted state-apparatus of the People's Republic (PRC), the enduring political and cultural legacies of the premodern society remains unchanged. The state is still the only 'source of decisions' and the 'bearer of moral order'. The only difference was that the deeply ingrained moral codes of Confucianism was masked by Maoism, which to Wolf is no more than a modern expression of Confucianism displaying very little resemblance with Marxism. Both Maoism and Confucianism would justify the centrality of the state in bonding the peasant communities together via 'moral suasion'. In both ideological systems, peasants were persuaded and even coerced into fulfilling their moral obligations subject to order and stability sought and imposed by the dominant political elites

(Wolf 1969: 154-155)⁷. Like Barrington Moore, Wolf is also unable to explain why and how the CCP has 'reversed the structure of the Chinese society'. What they have both depicted is a dictatorial state as a *linear* outgrowth of China's traditional society which came to power by exploiting the weak peasants using traditional methods. This argument has given rise to a longstanding thesis in the studies of Chinese Revolution- that the communist revolution was far from providing any kinds of 'liberation'. Instead, the communist state as the product of the revolution continues the historical recurrence of 'domination after domination'. To Joseph Esherick, '[i]t makes far more sense to recognize that the revolution was not so much a process of liberation as a process wherein a new structure of domination was created to do battle with, to defeat and to replace another structure of domination' (Esherick 1995: 49-50). Notably, the Communist Party's official historian Guo Moruo has highlighted the nature of China's traditional dynastic transition that almost any progressive political forces in Chinese history would be condemned to more exploitative and suppressive tyranny after the seizure of power. In 1944, Guo argued that the success of the Chinese Revolution had to be achieved by transcending the fate of 'domination after domination', which was termed the 'Jiashen Paradox' by him (see also Wolf 1969: 103)⁸.

What all the above arguments have reinforced together is the classic understanding of the nature of the peasantry that the peasant was the 'object' rather than the 'subject' of history. Also, they have all denied the revolutionary elements of the Chinese Revolution, not to mention the socialist aspect. This understanding of the Chinese peasantry is actually grounded in a broader *philosophy of history* that views China as

⁷ The CCP's inheritance of Confucianism could be found in its leader, Liu Shaoqi's short article 'How to be a Good Communist (*Gongchandangyuan de xiuyang*)' (1939), in which Liu argues Like a good communist is like a Confucian sage who becomes so by 'steeling' oneself and 'self-cultivating', see <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/liu-shaoqi/1939/how-to-be/index.htm>. The discontinuity here is that for writing this as part of the reason, Liu Shaoqi was purged during the Cultural Revolution.

⁸ 'Jiashen' refers to the year 1644 in traditional Chinese calendar. In that year, Li Zicheng, the great leader of Chinese peasant revolts in the Ming Dynasty, had very quickly lost his momentum after his troops overtook Beijing. Guo used this story as an example in his '300th Anniversary of Jiashen' to call for alternative political leadership in the postwar period.

‘stagnant, slumbering, unchanging’ society in a ‘historyless’ situation; and only the penetration of a ‘dynamic, restlessly changing, historyful’ West could introduce progressive social forces capable of unsettling China’s self-constitutive structure (Cohen 1984: 57). This conception of Chinese society, as a discourse deployed by European intellectuals of the nineteenth century to justify colonialism, was revived by the American ‘China-watchers’ in postwar decades to explain the causes and processes of China’s modern development. Several interrelated theoretical models have been generated on this basis, including ‘impact-response’ (Teng and Fairbank 1954), ‘change within tradition’ (Fairbank 1994, Reischauer and Craig 1965; Hsu 1970), ‘dynastic cycle’ and sinology’s broader engagement with the Modernization Theory (Cohen 1984: 58). Despite their subtle differences, these authors are sharing a common narrative that China’s traditional society founded upon Confucianism and Asiatic mode of production has been reproducing itself on a self-sustaining basis. Politically, this narrative calls for western intrusions that introduce to China impetus for change. John King Fairbank has further argued that the Chinese Revolution would irrevocably reconcile with the ‘core tenets’ of the traditional culture, despite how revolutionary it appeared at certain moments. The weakness of the peasant imply that a revolutionary movement could only sustain when it suited the ‘core tenets’ which are thought to favour dictatorial regimes. The communist dictatorship was an outgrowth of the traditional peasant communities, due to which peasants who evaded the domination of old elites were again ‘implicated in a revolutionary process, indebted to a revolutionary party, and subordinated to a new revolutionary regime’ (Wolf 1969; Esherick 1995: 50).

The dictatorial dimension, or the so-called ‘dark side’ of the CCP regime has become a starting point for many historians and theorists to address not only the nature of the revolutionary state-formation but also the post-revolutionary development including the Great Leap Forward and the Cultural Revolution. Having recognized the progressive dimension of the pre-1949 CCP regime, Mark Selden has still highlighted the similarity between the CCP and the KMT which seems to be structurally determined; he argues that the Yenan government encapsulated ‘repressive and elitist tendency’ as much as the KMT regime did (Keating 1997: 9-12). The dark side of the CCP was more consolidated in the People’s Republic which predetermined the post-1949 calamities (Shapiro 2001; Dikötter 2010 etc.). Mao’s base-area did the same

thing as the KMT and warlords such as opium growing (Chen Yung-fa 1995: 263-298), and it is widely held that there is no major difference between the CCP, the KMT and the Soviet Union given that their respective histories were so interconnected and interdependent (Wittfogel 1957: 137-157; Balzacs 1962; Barnett 1967). More importantly, authors on this line also imply that China's internal tradition of totalitarianism, which is deeply rooted in the 'elite and folk culture', sat comfortably with the Stalinist state institutions (Keating 1997: 11; Kong 2010).

Challenges to the above approaches are dramatic on the empirical level. By highlighting the structural constraints the traditional society imposed on the Chinese peasants, these authors have only identified the historical continuity between the communist government and the pre-existing traditional governments; they have never come to an explanation of the particular national crisis (Hobsbawm 1973: 8) in response to which the CCP's revolution took place. As for the consequences of the revolution, these authors have all failed to distinguish between the CCP's regime and traditional imperial regimes because the broad variety of Chinese states in history has been reduced to a singular concept of dictatorship. In this regard, 'socialism' has been marginalized in their conceptualizations of the Chinese Revolution, which is understood as of only nominal significance; and for those authors who have highlighted the similarities between the PRC and the USSR (Balzacs 1962; Barnett 1967), socialism/communism is rendered a synonym of dictatorship being repeatedly produced by the Chinese peasants throughout history.

On the theoretical level, however, it is obvious that this stream of historical-sociological and sinological studies are not speaking directly to the very problematic of the nexus between peasants and socialism posed at the beginning of this chapter. Though all these authors have not made any clear statement to deny the socialist dimension of the Chinese Revolution, they certainly do not regard socialism as a significant aspect of the revolution. No one could deny that Mao and his colleagues have altered the traditional social property regime by promoting the Land Reform and collectivization, but should Mao's reconstruction of rural social property relations be understood as a continuation or negation of the traditional agrarian society? Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett (2002), though they have not openly addressed the subject of socialist revolution, have provided a pessimistic vision of the Chinese peasant by highlighting their role as 'the epitome of backwardness' (Duggett 1975). In

the traditional agrarian society, argues Brenner, '[d]emographic growth and the subdivision of holdings diminished the size of the peasant's productive base' (Brenner 1985: 60). For Brenner and Isett, the weak peasant in China enabled the main economic agents 'direct non-market access to the means of their reproduction', which was grounded in the state-sponsored landed property relations (Brenner and Isett 2002: 613). As they have documented, the state had fixed the rent for political reasons by the mid seventeenth century, which had in turn divorced the landlord from direct economic production. Because landlords could not modify rent-rate according to 'supply and demand of the market', neither could they remove peasants from the politically fixed tenancy, they had no incentive to get involved directly in organising agricultural production. Thus agricultural surplus extracted by landlords via the state-bureaucracy had been channelled towards non-economic activities rather than market-driven activities such as technological innovation. And for the peasants, because they had not been dispossessed, their landed property served as a shield to market competition, rendering their market-driven activities contingent rather than necessary. And because peasants were shielded from market competition, they chose to protect themselves against decline in productivity and natural disasters by using various non-market means, for example raising large number of children which had then led to rapid population growth and the condition of overpopulation (Brenner and Isett 2002: 615-616). Brenner and Isett views the backwardness of Chinese peasant not only as barriers to centralized capitalist production, but also the very origin of intensive struggles between landlords and peasants for surpluses which then led to the periodic breakdown of state-bureaucracy and imperial order (Brenner and Isett 2002: 639; see also Perry 1980). His depiction of the degenerative nature of the Chinese peasant has strengthened the vulgar Marxian notion that there would not be any progressive social transformation without removing the peasant from their lands.

In sum, the underlying assumption of all the above theorizations is that the Chinese peasant was too backward to produce transcendental forces for modern social transformation. Those who argue that the communist revolution was only a continuation of the millennium-long tradition of dictatorship (Moore 1966; Barnett 1967; Wolf 1969) are building their narrative of the entire Chinese history upon the vulnerability and passivity of the Chinese peasant which is regarded as 'static, self-constitutive, autonomous and reified entity' (Hobson and Hobden 2002: 7). Indeed,

by eternalizing ‘passive character’ of the peasant, these accounts have all suggested that there would be no substantial social transformation in China unless the peasant could be removed from the traditional production and turned into the capitalist wage-labour. By rendering the peasant’s incentive and agency as immutable, these accounts have all built their analyses on an anachronistic basis. However, I will introduce a series contrasting understanding of the pattern of China’s traditional society which have also committed the same mistake of anachronism despite their different views on the characteristics of the Chinese peasant and traditional cultural values.

1.3.2 The Chinese peasant as a ‘productive legacy’ for ‘socialist market economy’

The above explanations of the Chinese peasant society denies the possibilities of both revolutionary change and socialist orientation based upon the peasant population. The political inactiveness and economic backwardness are considered the major historical baggage. However, this view has been challenged by some anti-Eurocentric interventions which understand the Chinese peasant as a ‘productive legacy’ (Li 2008: 318). The Webberian myth that Confucianism lacks transcendental tensions is repudiated by Chinese scholars by reinterpreting the meaning of Confucian principles. It is argued that Confucianism has no less ‘in itself the springs of a new and enormous vitality’ (Trevor-Roper 1965: 21) than western Christendom does⁹. Based upon a comprehensive textual analysis, Liu Xiaofeng argues that the ‘life-orientation’ of Confucianism seeks self-perfection rather than ‘order and stability’ as fervently as Christianity does. Confucianism is not as simple as an ideological system that aspires to subordinate individuals to imperial order; instead, it is a spirit envisioning that ‘everyone would become a saint’ (Liu 2007: 96). In order to become a ‘saint’, one has to pursue self-perfection and political perfection in tandem with each other. The endless self-perfection will inevitably lead to the questioning and breaking down of the boundaries of pre-existing political forms. Thus the desire for political perfection and the awareness of the actual imperfection justifies the ‘spirit of revolutionism’ as the

⁹ For further critique of the point that Christendom conceived pro-capitalist forces exclusively, see Jack Goody, *Reinassance: The One or the Many?* 2010, and Samir Amin, *Eurocentrism* 2009.

ethos of the Confucian thought as a revolutionary idea (ibid)¹⁰. Therefore, it is unreasonable to argue that Confucianism lacks the puritan notion of progression and was itself the ideological barrier to capitalist development. For Liu Xiaofeng, if in any sense Maoism is consistent with the Confucian tradition, it must be because that they both have displayed the spirit of revolutionism which aspires to self-perfection through political reformation. Thus Liu Xiaofeng's reinterpretation of Confucianism suggests that China's traditional ideology is irrelevant to the underdeveloped capitalist social relations, neither has it presupposed a dictatorial regime¹¹.

Apart from viewing Confucianism as a progressive agency of modern revolution, other authors argue from the perspectives of economic history and world-system theory that the peasant economy was no less productive than the pre-capitalist society in the west. It is recorded in Kenneth Pomeranz's comparative economic historical study that China's economy had no less 'efficient markets for goods and for factors of production' than that of Europe. Unlike the conventional impression that the Chinese government exercised intensive state intervention and arbitrary taxation, Pomeranz argues that the freeflow of factors on the Chinese market was in no smaller scale than that in Europe. For example, the Chinese land market was thought to be in a good condition of *lassiez faire*. 'The overwhelming majority of land in all parts of China was more or less freely alienable...the government gave up and recognized all tax-paying land as otherwise unencumbered'. Even if the Ming Dynasty had confiscated a great amount of lands during wars, those lands had soon 'drifted back towards private status'. The process of privatisation had come to the point that only three percent of

¹⁰ Liu Xiaofeng's argument was originally raised to challenge the German sinologist Wolfgang Goebin who argued that Marxist revolutionary idea was adopted in China because most of the revolutionaries had been penetrated by thoughts of Christianity, which, according to Goebin, possessed the revolutionary spirit that was nonexistent in Confucianism, see Liu Xiaofeng, *Rujiao yu Minzu Guojia (Confucianism and the Nation-state)*, 2007: 96.

¹¹ Apart from Liu Xiaofeng's exposition of Confucianism as a ideological system ingrained with spirit of revolutionism, there has been a prolific scholarship aiming to uncover the benign and progressive aspects of the Confucian ideology. Great effort of textual and discourse analysis has been made to show that Confucianism has many elements that could be mobilised to accelerate entrepreneurial activities and capitalist growth, see for example Reischauer 1974; Tu 2000.

lands was possessed by the crown in the Qing Dynasty (Pomeranz 2000: 70). So *contra* Wittfogel's point that China was in lack of private property, Pomeranz has pointed out that almost all lands in the country were private and available for free transaction. In terms of the production activity, it is also shown that the traditional customary law had little effect on the tenancy. Most tenants were secured by their contracts to cultivate at their will (Pomeranz 2000: 71). Pomeranz has also highlighted that competitive market activities prevailed in the Jiangnan area, which was not interfered, but protected by the Qing state. 'The Qing state was very concerned to make sure that local marketplaces had multiple, competing buyers and sellers from basic items-until the 1850s, this was in fact the main goal of their system of licensing merchants and brokers' (ibid: 86).

Pomeranz has taken to task the conventional wisdom that capitalism is the most productive mode of production that human society has ever created. As Giovanni Arrighi further argues on the same basis, 'the tendency of Smithian growth to get stuck in a high-level equilibrium trap does not rule out the existence of even higher equilibria, attainable through suitable changes in the geographical and institutional environment in which the economy is embedded'; and for both Arrighi and Pomeranz, China's unique developmental path is viewed as 'a shift of the economy from a high to an even higher equilibrium'. The consequence of this developmental path is that 'China moved in a different direction than in Europe, because it became *less*, rather than more, capitalist in orientation' (Arrighi 2009: 331, my italics). The productivity of the Chinese peasants has predetermined a mode of 'socialist market economy' in China which is predicated upon 'accumulation without dispossession' (Arrighi 2009: 331; see also Cui 2012; Huang 2012).

The present chapter have no intention to delve into the lengthy debate about whether the peasant economy in China is productive or not which could be driven both ways by selective utilization of data (e.g. Duchesne 2001, 2004). What remains problematic with the anti-Eurocentric approach is that it has produced no explanation to the very question posed at the beginning of the chapter: why and how could the peasant be mobilized to undertake a socialist revolution? A basic historical intuition indicates that the so-called 'socialist market economy' is not predetermined by the peasant economy no matter how productive it is. Notably, Arrighi and Sugihara have both touched upon a form of 'short-range temporality' through which the legacy of peasant-based

economy has become active again, though it is obvious that such recapitulation is subject to their understanding of the resurgence of Asia as a world-historical necessity based upon the industrious *longue durée* (Arrighi, Hamashita and Selden 2005: 2-4). It is noted by the American sinologist, Maurice Meisner that only through Mao's revolution and the Land Reform has China's labour-intensive legacy been reasserted to 'shape interactions within the region and with the world' (Arrighi, Hamashita and Selden 2005: 3; Meisner 1989, 1999). Therefore, for all the above authors, their understanding of China's past could not be easily translated to explanations of the emergence of socialist revolution in China's peasant society. Using China's past experiences to address its contemporary transformation is another anachronistic explanation that rules out broader conjunctural factors that co-determined the revolutionary development.

1.3.3 Historicizing the peasant revolution: 'peasant nationalism' and the centrality of anti-Japanese struggle

So far it remains questionable for both historical-sociology and sinology how a socialist revolution could arise from the peasant population, and what the nature of the particular socialism is. To transcend the problem of anachronism in the above analyses, the level of agency need to be highlighted with much greater historical details. Chalmers Johnson's idea of 'peasant nationalism' is an important effort made to specify the particular conjuncture of the peasant revolution (Johnson 1962).

The central argument of Johnson's thesis is that the Sino-Japanese War played the most significant role in the rise of the Communist Party as a result of successful, nationwide peasant mobilization. The key strategy the CCP deployed to mobilize the peasants was constructing the discourse of nationalism or 'national salvation' (*jiuguo*). 'The Communists had...used patriotic and anti-Japanese appeals in their propaganda since the Manchurian Incident (1931)' (Johnson 1962: 4). The promotion of nationalism was accompanied by other forms of military struggles in the power vacuum of the Nationalist government. After the Japanese armies began to 'mop up' (*saodang*) the northern villages, the discourse of national salvation was further strengthened as the hatred of Japanese invaders and their puppet governments grew. These forces have altogether 'broken the hold of parochialism on the Chinese peasant' (ibid: 5). Johnson has highlighted the Japanese factor as the most significant

conjunctural force that ‘forged a new link between the village and the national government’ (Moore 1966), before which the Chinese peasant was ‘indifferent to ‘Chinese’ politics, being wholly absorbed in local affairs’ (Johnson 1962: 5). On this basis, Johnson has specified a variety of methods deployed for peasant mobilization which Barrington Moore has failed to capture without noting the Japanese factor (ibid: 31). To Johnson, the CCP’s nationwide success is attributed to its effective insertion of the nationalist discourse to mass peasant movements in the conjuncture of the War of Resistance. Like all the aforementioned authors, Johnson seems to have denied the ‘communist quality’ of the CCP’s propaganda (ibid: 4); he suggests that the CCP’s peasant revolution was in a large sense a continuation of the prolonged history of peasant rebellions comparable to the Taiping Rebellion (ibid: 14-19), but the anti-Japanese war has enabled the CCP to act for more ambitious goals than the narrow economic interests of the peasant (ibid). Such nationalist propaganda based upon mass-mobilization against a common enemy has infiltrated the Chinese peasants with “a state of mind’ with few tangible roots’ (ibid: 21). The specific fusion of communism and nationalism in China has created a ‘communist nation-state that was not subordinate to the Soviet Union’ (ibid: 8); thus accordingly, the nationalist conjuncture has set China, as well as Yugoslavia apart from the Russian communism (ibid: 156; see also Agursky 1987).

Chalmers Johnson’s contribution is significant in the sense that he has highlighted the conjunctural factor of the anti-Japanese war. Indeed there is no denial that the power of the Communist Party grew dramatically through the wartime mobilization (see also Belden 1970; Selden 1971, 1989, 1995; Hinton 1972; Myers 1986). However, there is a major conceptual problem in Johnson’s account that he has reduced the conception of ‘communism’ to ‘nationalism’. Throughout his book, he has given no comprehensive analysis of the meaning of communism beyond its nationalist element; and he has completely ignored the tensions between the non-territorial, universalist appeal of communism and its nationalist political practices. Even in the section that deals with the meaning of the international communist movement, Johnson still asserts that the Communist ideology ‘had been subordinated to Russian nationalism’ that was ‘effectively camouflaged’ by the Soviet propaganda (Johnson 1962: 176-181). Thus in general, Johnson’s point is very straightforward that the Communist revolution in China was the old wine of peasant rebellions carried in the new bottle of

nationalism, which has in turn broadened the scope of the mass movement from defending economic interests to 'national salvation'. Maurice Meisner is correct to contend that 'neither the nationalistic appeals of the Communist Party nor the emergence of a mass nationalist movement made the social-economic grievances of the peasantry any less pressing or Communist promises of agrarian reform any less appealing' (Meisner 1999: 39). It is certainly partial to argue that communism in China means nothing more than nationalism. The socialist collective property relations was instituted and enforced in both villages and cities after the anti-Japanese war when the nationalist element was much weaker; and it is also unfair to argue that because Mao cooperated with the landlords during the war for very practical concerns, his entire communist revolution was all about nationalism. Furthermore, China's confrontation with the Soviet Union in the 1960s is not only because the Chinese communism was a nationalist project, but more importantly that there were substantial disagreements in the developmental paths of different versions of socialism.

Even in terms of the concept of 'nationalism' itself, Johnson's definition and utilization of it are of methodological problems. The major issue here is that 'nationalism' itself does not constitute a substantial mode of explanation, for it is a consequence rather than the cause of the revolution. Johnson has documented various military actions and political propaganda taken by the communists to mobilize the peasants, whereas he has never revealed the deeper reason why the communists were able to do that. Also, foreign invasions were countless in China's history, why only has the Japanese one led to the 'peasant nationalism'? As Jack Belden has correctly pointed out, the success of the CCP lies in the effective utilization of all external and internal contradictions of the Chinese society by a new group of leadership to 'gain control over society and put into practice its own programme for saving that society' (Belden 1970: 3). The so-called 'external and internal contradictions' involved not only the national crisis inflicted by the Japanese invaders, but also some deep-seated structural problems that have been haunting the Chinese society long before the Japanese invasion. It was through evolving against the backdrop of those contradictions the CCP was able to have some organizational and ideological capacity at its disposal when the anti-Japanese war induced the anarchical space for 'nationalist' mobilization (ibid: 23); however, this cumulative development was ignored in Johnson's account. He argues that the communists were like 'viruses growing on the surface' before the

Japanese invasion, whereas it seems like that they suddenly became very skilful and smart in political manoeuvrings during the war.

To sum up, Johnson's emphasis of the anti-Japanese conjuncture has left two questions unanswered. First, what is the sociological meaning of communism in China apart from the nationalist aspect? And second, what is the broad world-historical context that enabled the CCP to successfully organize and mobilize the peasants in a nationalist fashion? Why are the two questions unanswerable by Johnson's idea of peasant nationalism? The problem still lies in his understanding of the general pattern of social development in China. Johnson, like Barrington Moore and Eric Wolf, also holds the idea that the Chinese peasants were short of progressive energy that leads to substantial socialist transformation-what they did throughout history is endless peasant rebellions seeking narrow economic interests (Johnson 1962: 14-19). The Japanese invasion acted as an external factor that inserted nationalism as the *only* modern element to the premodern pattern of peasant rebellions without substantially altering the course of Chinese history. In this sense, Johnson's anachronism makes little difference from those of Moore and Wolf. Though he has emphasized a certain short-range temporality, he has nevertheless reduced all the rest of the revolutionary development to the formula of the past.

1.3.4 Geopolitics and world time: introducing 'the international' without overcoming anachronism

So far it has been shown that the common problem for the existing literature of the Chinese Revolution is the problem of anachronism caused by their over-emphasis of the causal pertinence of the backwardness of Chinese peasants. Because the so-called peasant backwardness is not properly situated in any world-historical context, it is treated as a transhistorical structure that underlay the recurrence of dictatorial regimes throughout history in which no socialist development could be envisaged. It is worth recalling the tensions in Marx's original texts which recognize the anti-capitalist potentials in the peasant communities and the possibilities of bypassing the capitalist stage in Russia's case (Marx 1953, 2000). These scenarios seem difficult for the aforementioned authors of the Chinese Revolution to understand because they have all failed to capture the wider 'national crisis' in which peasants were organized in conjunction with other social movements (Hobsbawm 1973; Skocpol 1982); and they have also failed to capture the inputs from other societies, such as the 'transplantation

of machinery' that could tilt the Chinese peasant movements towards socialism (Marx 1953; Duggett 1975). The microcosm of peasant revolution needs to be considered in relation to the macrocosm of various forms of social development in a broader world-historical context.

Since the world-historical 'macrocosm' logically entails a dimension of spatial multiplicity, the discipline of International Relations, which takes political plurality as both its subject matter and explanatory device is supposed to shed lights on the issue of China's peasant socialism which is posited as an issue of the co-constitution between the peasant society and other social forms. The logic of social revolution as an *inter-societal* formation is articulated by Theda Skocpol via her detailed critique of her teacher Barrington Moore's *intra-societal* account (Skocpol 1973). Skocpol argues that 'no society is free from foreign influences', and '[t]he Chinese communists depended for the success of their revolution on 'certain fortuitous circumstances...fortuitous in the sense that they did not derive from anything taking place in China itself' (Skocpol 1973: 29). 'International Relations' is introduced by Skocpol as a theoretical perspective that 'recognizes that large-scale social change within societies is always in large part caused by forces operating among them' (ibid: 29-30).

In this sense, Theda Skocpol has moved one step forward from Moore by specifying the causal mechanisms of world history; 'All modern social revolutions, in fact, must be seen as closely related in their causes and accomplishments to the internationally uneven spread of capitalist economic development and nation-state formation on a world scale' (Skocpol 1979: 19). Thus the issue of why the Chinese peasants have become revolutionary and socialist is converted into a question about the particular world-historical context in which the peasants became 'autonomous' to organize themselves. In Skocpol's *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia and China*, the 'world-historical context' is conceptualized as the generator of interstate competitions and wars, which is similar to realist IR theory's definition of international system (Skocpol 1979: 31). For Skocpol, the world-historical context or 'modernity' consists of three 'transnational networks' which wields power on the global scale. These networks are 'global spread of capitalism', 'interstate competition' and 'world time'. In order to reject the 'purposive general theories of revolution' which includes Marxism in her terms (Skocpol 1973: 16; 1979: 3-13), Skocpol argues

that the world-historical explanation of social revolution lies in the structural determinism of the above 'transnational networks'. For her, social revolutions would only succeed in societies where pre-existing state-apparatuses were shattered by socio-political forces generated by structural dynamics of the interstate system. The modern world-historical context is posited to have three structural effects. Global capitalism would frustrate 'mass expectations' and 'give rise to widespread discontent and political violence that destroys the existing government'. Interstate competition would generate wars that exhausted the resources of a government and set it in rivalry with the dominant domestic class. 'World time' would produce possible ideological and organizational models for late-developing revolutionary forces to construct their leadership (ibid: 29). Thus for Skocpol, revolution would only 'happen' rather than be 'made' in the sense that it only happened 'in countries situated in disadvantaged positions within international arenas' (ibid: 23). So to speak, the success of a social revolution rested upon two conditions: the 'administrative-military breakdown of preexisting states' and the occurrence of peasant revolts under organized 'revolutionary leadership' (ibid: 287).

For Skocpol, the backwardness of peasants was not hurdles but catalysts to the outbreak of revolution. This is argued on the basis of her comparative case-study involving both 'method of sameness' and 'method of difference'. Though Skocpol has made the caveat that her study is supposed to be historically inductive, she has nevertheless presumed that the cases of France, Russia and China are those which belong to the category of 'successful social revolution' due to the involvement of peasants (Burawoy 1989). Skocpol has first deployed the method of sameness to argue that France, Russia and China were all backward agrarian societies where the state-power was largely constrained by the dominant landed class. In Russia, despite the state-led industrialization, the Tsarist power could never manage to 'override dominant class interests and enforce modernizing reform'. In both France and China, 'a politically organized and administratively entrenched landed class were present'. Because in these two regimes the dominant landed upper class was able to penetrate the central government with its 'institutionalized political leverage at extralocal level', reforming process enforced by the state would induce rivalry between the state and the landed aristocrats, which then set the Old Regimes in political crisis (Skocpol 1979: 110). On this basis, Skocpol then deploys the 'method of difference' to compare the

three cases with the aborted revolutions in England, Germany and Japan to draw out the key pattern of successful social revolutions. She argues that whereas external geopolitical pressures were both present in the cases of Germany and Japan, they were both lacking the landed class with political leverage in the state to challenge the top-down reforms, and the peasant communities with size and autonomy equivalent to those of France, Russia and China to energize a bottom-up revolution.

When the peasant population was viewed as the reservoir of lower-class support for mass mobilization, social reorientations could only happen when the state-machinery of a traditional regime broke down under pressures from global capitalism and geopolitics and the peasant communities obtained sufficient autonomy for collective actions (Skocpol 1979: 14). Using this logics, Skocpol interprets the Chinese Revolution as a two-staged process. On the first stage, when China went under severely geopolitical exigencies in the 1890s, especially after her defeat to the Japanese navy in 1895, the Manchu elites in the central government began to introduce reforming projects in order to strengthen the state's military capabilities. This reform had put an end to the reformer because many of the projects, *inter alia* the 'nationalization of railway', were contradictory to the existing interests of landed aristocrats who were also deeply involved in the state-apparatus. Because the landed upper class possessed 'political leverage' in the imperial government, its resentment resulted in the breakdown of the *Old Regime* as a result of the 1911 Revolution (Skocpol 1979: 78-80).

The second stage, according to Skocpol, is the process through which the Chinese peasants were liberated from the repression of state-administration, obtaining a degree of autonomy to develop its particular form of 'mass-mobilizing state'. This is a result of both the Nationalist government as a weak state which had no substantial control over the whole territory, but also that the Japanese invasion that unsettled the existing state-structure (Skocpol 1979: 236-237). Skocpol has pointed out that the Long March of the Red Army, as well as the Rectification Movement were all significant formative moments in the making of the CCP's mass-mobilizing strategy; and for her, those moments are significant in the sense that they created anarchical space for revolutionary social formation, whereas how and why the formation was possible in the newly opened space is described in detail without being directly addressed by her

theory. Now, it needs to be reviewed how Skocpol understands the socialist aspect of the Chinese Revolution.

Whereas geopolitics is deployed as the central concept to explain revolutionism of the peasants, the aspect of 'socialism' is addressed by the concept of 'world time'. For Skocpol, meanings of socialism or communism in the Chinese case are twofold. Firstly, she implies that the Marxist-Leninist ideology in Russia and China differed very little from Jacobinism in France which both served a functional role for 'enjoining the revolutionary elites to proselytize and mobilize the masses for political struggles and activities' (Skocpol 1979: 169-172). As for this function, Skocpol has echoed Chalmers Johnson that communism was only a discourse for mass mobilization that camouflaged the nationalist appeal. However, like Johnson, Skocpol has also not explained why 'communism' rather than anything else could serve the function of mass mobilization. She deployed the case of the Meiji Japan as a counterexample in which no equivalent ideologies were needed for the top-down restoration (ibid: 170); however this comparison is still far from clarifying what particular social aspect of 'communism' was conducive to mobilizing the peasants, apart from emphasizing the consequence that it actually was.

Skocpol has gone one step forward than Johnson to have illustrated part of the social meaning of socialism/communism in China's case. For her, there is no much difference between the Chinese socialism and the Soviet model due to the structural factor of 'world time'. In the 1950s China was eagerly transplanted the Soviet-styled 'rationalized state-administration' because of two 'international contextual factors': the 'political influence from the previously revolutionized Russia' and the 'enhanced possibilities in the twentieth century for the state-propelled national industrialization' (Skocpol 1979: 266). In this sense, socialism in the Chinese case largely resembles that in Russia, which refers to large-scale centrally-planned industries. However, how did China and Russia differ from each other? Skocpol then deploys the concept of 'interstate competition'/geopolitics to explain the Sino-Soviet split. 'The decisive break between the People's Republic and the Soviet Union came as a result of China's determination to develop her own nuclear capacity-the ultimate symbol and basis of independent, national strategic and military power in the postwar era' (Skocpol 1979: 276). So it was the changing balance of power that had freed China from the Russian tutelage in the 1960s so that China was able to pursue a more 'balanced' national

development (ibid: 269). Where did the balanced strategy originate? Skocpol returns again to the very internal structure of the pre-revolutionary agrarian society; ‘the rural economy of China had characteristics very different from those of Russian agriculture’ (ibid: 275) which was more compatible with a ‘mass-mobilizing state’ built upon a highly ‘politicized bureaucracy’ than the Soviet rationalist bureaucracy (Skocpol 1979: 265). By this point, Skocpol has reconciled with her teacher Barrington Moore to re-adopt an ‘intra-societal’ analysis by suggesting that ‘the economic legacies of pre-1949 China help explain why the Chinese Communists abandoned Stalinist-style development plans’ (ibid: 275-280).

Based upon this explanation, Skocpol’s understanding of the nature of ‘peasant socialism’ in China’s case could be summed up as a simple causation. Geopolitics rendered the peasant class autonomous in China by uprooting the pre-existing state-administration, and from the autonomous peasant society arose the mass-mobilizing state, which, under ‘world time’, copied the Soviet model of industrialization; whereas the deep-seated structure of the peasant economy has eventually subsumed the Soviet model. To avoid anachronism, Skocpol has incorporated the dimension of multiple temporalities to produce more conjunctural explanations. However, the several temporalities she has been switching between are not really integrated in one coherent theoretical framework; instead they are in competition with and struggling to outweigh each other. Whereas geopolitics and world time are both significant temporalities of the twentieth century, how could geopolitical transformation, for example the possession of nuclear power redirect a developmental path which was previously set by the world time of ‘state-propelled national industrialization’? By allowing this outweighing, Skocpol is also to imply that the pre-1949 ‘*longue agrarian durée*’ is of ultimate determinacy. In this sense, ‘the international’, namely geopolitics and world time is only treated as a field of *externalities* of the Chinese development. However, it is problematic to argue that the period of Soviet-informed industrialization was external to the course of the Chinese Revolution because 1) the Soviet penetration existed long before 1949 which has played a significant part in the making of the revolutionary state (Isaacs 1938; Godley 1987; Kirby 1991; van der Ven 1991; Chen 1990, 1993; Esherick 1995: 50), and 2) transplanting advanced industries to the revolutionized peasant communities was, in Marx’s original sense, an integral step taken to undermine the irrational small-holding elements in a peasant-

based socialist revolution (Duggett 1975: 176). The short-range temporality of Sovietization was part of the internal character of the Chinese Revolution *per se*, rather than an external interference that temporarily confused the way.

Even if Skocpol wanted to adopt the implicit internalist/intra-societal explanation, her analysis is still incomplete. Compared to Barrington Moore's concept of 'communist dictatorship', her conceptualization of the Communist state as a 'mass-mobilizing state' is much more nuanced. There is simply no logical and historical necessity that a mass-mobilizing state has to emerge in an agrarian economy like China. To complete this causation, Skocpol has fallen into a sophistry that uses the consequence to explain the cause. 'The revolution was successful when the massive peasants were mobilized', whereas it cannot be argued that 'the revolution was successful because the peasants were mobilized'. Instead of tracing the mass mobilization to deeper historical reasons, Skocpol has introduced an independent, weberian concept of mass mobilization, which defines it as the solidarity between the revolutionary leaderships and the rebellious masses formed in a specific revolutionary situation (Skocpol 1979: 17-18; see also Dittmer 1989: 141-142). As another weberian Lowell Dittmer has argued, 'mass mobilization was motivated partly by skillful organizational techniques, partly by the redistribution of expropriated landlord or rich peasant property', it is crucial to know how the relevant 'organizational techniques' and 'redistribution of property', which many historians have depicted without explaining (cf. Schurmann 1968: 220-297; Belden 1970; Selden 1971, 1989, 1995; Hinton 1972; Dittmer 1989), were historically developed.

To sum up, a very significant theoretical question has to be raised. Why does Skocpol fail to explain the contradictory nature of the Chinese Revolution? Somewhat paradoxically, given Skocpol's conscious application of the key concepts of International Relations to her case, she ultimately resorts to an interpretation of the 1949 state as a linear outgrowth of the traditional agrarian society. When she has utilized a variety of conceptual devices, such as interstate competition and global capitalism to capture the 'world-historical context', she has by the end reconciled ineluctably with Barrington Moore to let the internal structure of a society over-determine its state-formation. The explanatory role of 'world history' is thus tremendously marginalized in her account, remaining only as a pointer of 'triggers' of revolutions with no theoretical footing in the sociological explanation of the political

end-product. As a result, Skocpol's analysis is equally guilty of 'anachronism' in the sense that her whole analysis of the revolutionary development is ultimately reliant on an abstract formula of the 'pre-1949 Chinese economy' which will still lead to a uni-linear conception of social development. We still need to ask: why her application of International Relations (IR) is not able to rescue her from the same problem of 'anachronism'? What is wrong with the very IR she deploys? Why her synthesis of IR and historical sociology could not generate any difference? I will show in the next section that Skocpol's use of IR is problematic because it has not challenged the 'ontological singularity' in the notion of social development.

1.4 Uni-linear history, ontological singularity and 'anachronism' in International Relations and historical sociology

In all the above accounts, the problem of 'anachronism' is caused by relying too much on a certain abstraction of structural properties of the peasant society to understand the cause and form of the Chinese Revolution, which contradicts fundamentally with Marx's original view that the peasant could only be revolutionized by other classes in conjunction with historical crisis beyond the peasant communities. The wider 'national movement' in which a peasant revolution could be activated, and the transplantation of large-scale production to the revolutionized peasantry to overcome the 'irrational small-holding' were both more historically specific conjunctures which are not predetermined by the internal structure of agrarian economy (Hobsbawm 1973; Duggett 1975). In a word, peasants could become revolutionary to even transcend the capitalist stage before socialism only when the peasant rebellions were internalized to other social-developmental processes to obtain greater revolutionary energy and progressive impetus. Viewing the static and self-constitutive properties of the peasantry will inevitably lead to a unilinear notion of social development treating the present as a replication and reproduction of the past.

To overcome the problem of anachronism parasitic on the uni-linear notion of social development, it is worth introducing the concept of 'conjuncture' as a category of 'multiple temporalities' to understanding both the long-term stability and short-term fluctuation of social development (more on this in chapter 2). John Ruggie has highlighted that the conjunctural timeframe, which entails 'cycles of events', underlies 'the processes that underlie actors, properties, and events' (Ruggie 1998: 158). The

conjuncture made of historically contingent events and actors with shifting identities, would always lead to alterations of developments in the structure/epoch, which cannot be derived from the incremental growth of one single unit of actor inhibiting one social space from the very beginning. Thus only on the conjunctural level can we understand the cause of successful mass-mobilization, which, according to Skocpol, refers to the unification of revolutionary leaderships and the unconscious peasant rebellions. Without giving the conjunctural level a proper theoretical status, traditional social theories have treated the peasant's political agency as changeless throughout history, which will necessarily give rise to a uni-linear conception of social development.

Paradoxically, Barrington Moore has noted the interdependence between the contingent conjunctural events and the more stable temporality of *longue durée*; he argues that 'from the standpoint of Chinese society and politics, the (Japanese) war was an accident. From the standpoint of the interplay between political and economic forces in the world as a whole, it was scarcely an accident' (Moore 1966: 224; Nisbet 1969; Skocpol 1973: 29). Drawing upon this dialectic, Skocpol has further argued:

[W]hat is required to release forces operating in the international field from the limbo of 'fortuity', is a gestalt switch, away from theories which treat social change (here, specifically, modernization) as a process 'natural', 'directional', 'continuous', 'necessary', and 'immanent'; to each and every society (here agrarian bureaucracy) considered, and toward a theory which recognizes that large-scale social change within societies is always in large part caused by forces operating among them, through their economic and political interaction (Skocpol 1973: 29-30).

Ironically, the tension between 'fortuity' and 'immanence' has not been relieved by Moore and Skocpol for the problem of anachronism shown in the previous pages which has strengthened the notion that modernity and social change was a uni-directional and continuous process constituted internally within a single social space. The immediate reason for this mistake is that the concept of 'the international' has been simplified as a timeless generator of geopolitical crisis that can only delay or accelerate the directional course of social change which is predetermined by the internal structure of a society. So based upon this internal-external division,

historically specific conjunctures emerging from 'the international' are regarded 'fortuitous' and 'contingent', whereas Skocpol herself has recognized that 'contingency' itself could not constitute a formal mode of social-scientific explanation if the 'interplay between political and economic forces' behind it are not understood. Skocpol's consciousness about this notwithstanding, conjunctural factors generated by 'the international' such as the Soviet influences on China are still viewed as 'contingent' in relation to the more determinate pre-revolutionary 'socio-economic legacies'. This is obvious in Skocpol's comparison between China and Russia. The difference between the Chinese 'mass-mobilizing state' and the Russian 'rational bureaucracy' comes from the difference between the two economic systems, which, to Skocpol, are referring to structures crystallized at two isolated points of history¹².

Why is the realism-informed analysis of revolution unable to accommodate Skocpol's own suggestion that internationally generated contingencies are the integral components of social revolution as a process of 'economic and political interaction' among societies? In the first instance, the problem needs to be examined in relation to the ontological premise of the entire discipline of International Relations overshadowed by realism. The subject matter of IR has been regarded by founders of the discipline as an category of non-progressive phenomena, which can never be penetrated by the progressive logic of domestic political life (Wight 1960). The conception of IR as a regressive field of endless power struggles is implanted in historical sociology's analyses of domestic development (Gourevitch 1989; Jarvis 1989), leaving no room for theorizing the dimension of 'social combination' as an emergent property from international conjunctures. However, not only the theoretical premise of IR is guilty of having no 'social combination', classic sociology's theoretical *lacuna* is also conniving in treating IR as a non-progressive realm of *external* pressures. Classic historical sociology, which is trapped by the problem of 'methodological nationalism/internalism', has no alternative theoretical devices at its disposal to challenge the non-developmental logic of the IR theories inserted to it. 'In the classical sociological tradition we find dynamic theorizations of internal change over historical time; and we find comparative theorizations of external difference across cultural space...What we do not find, however, is a *drawing together* of these dynamic and

¹² Michael Burawoy identifies this problem as 'frozen history', see Burawoy, M 1989, 'Two Methods: Skocpol versus Trotsky', pp. 769-770.

comparative moments of analysis in order to theorize a specifically inter-societal dimension of social change' (Rosenberg 2006: 310-312, my italics). The theorization of 'internal change over historical time' presupposes a stagist and linear notion of development because every end-product at any moment of development is to be traced to another single point of origin on the same chronological axis. For this reason, 'comparative theorizations of external difference across cultural space' is ultimately a comparison between systems crystallized at different single moments which are not historically connected (McMichael 1990: 389-391).

Therefore, the absence of developmental logic in the realism-informed International Relations is the consequence of the absence of 'social combination' in the notion of social development of classic social theories, which conceive of societies as 'being able to, if not having to, set in motion long-term developments from within themselves without being dependent upon inter-societal conditions'. Such ontological singularity of social development in these sociological approaches has made 'the international' representing 'only facilitating or inhibiting modifications and complications of their own internal dynamics' (Tenbruck 1994: 75-76). As a result the concept of 'the international' has been reduced to a set of a-social factors un-penetrated by the social logic of development and progression. This is why Chalmers Johnson's intervening concept of 'nationalism' as well as Theda Skocpol's concepts of geopolitics and world time have all failed to reclaim 'social combination' in the Chinese Revolution that accommodates the contradictory nature of the creation of 'peasant socialism' which cannot be addressed by those explanations relying narrowly upon the internal economic structure of the Chinese peasant communities.

1.5. Conclusion: Towards an international theory of social development

The peasant, which was originally an traditional class as both the owner of means of production and his own wage labour (Marx 1973: 408), has been conventionally regarded as a social force that plays negative part in the process of capitalist development with 'non-economic access' to surplus at his disposal (Brenner 1977, 1985; Brenner and Isett 2002). The experience of England seems to imply that the removal of peasants is a significant step towards progressive large-scale production without which no further forms of social progression, *inter alia* socialism, could

subsequently take place. However, Marxism as a ultimate historical method believes in no generalization of stagist model of development which uses capitalist categories to understand non-capitalist societies; the way that socialist property relations were inaugurated in China's peasant society is posing a historical and theoretical corrective to the dogmatic Marxist notion that socialism could only emerge from the basis of large-scale production of capitalism (Mitrany 1951).

Paradoxically, extant theorizations of the Chinese Revolution are reinforcing the orthodoxy that the backward peasant could not generate progressive social transformation in China rather than providing any corrective to it. Those authors have done little to theorize the conjunctures of national crisis in which the peasant were driven to be revolutionary in broader world-historical formation (Hobsbawm 1973); and their conception of 'communist dictatorship' demonstrates very little social characteristics of the revolutionary Chinese state apart from its undemocratic aspects. The sociological poverty of these accounts is due to the understanding of Chinese state-formation as a linear outgrowth of the 'non-capitalist' nature of the Chinese agrarian society. In reducing the contemporary state-form to the past, these accounts have committed the error of 'anachronism'. It is also found that the same error has also occurred to the analyses mustered to challenge the Eurocentric understanding of China's absence of capitalism, which has highlighted the 'advanced' aspect of China's traditional economy, but is still reducing the present development directly to the preexisting structures. These approaches, though they are producing contrasting positions, have both been viewing China's contemporary development as of historical necessity predetermined by the past experiences within China's own socio-productive system. Though they have from time to time resorted to the interstate competitions and wars in 'the international field' as a 'short-range temporality' (Johnson 1962; Skocpol 1979; Sugihara 2005; Hamashita, Selden and Arrighi 2005), those conjunctural incidents were treated as external forces that facilitates or inhibits the regressive logic of peasant rebellions with no role in constituting the social whole of the revolution (Tenbruck 1994). As a result, their explanations to the Chinese Revolution lie ultimately in generalizations of the past of Chinese peasants, which makes them all fall into the problem of anachronism as a result of the common unilinear notion of historical development.

Therefore, an alternative theoretical framework needs to be introduced to account for the particular process of the Chinese Revolution which has internalized the mobilization of peasants in wider social formations that created revolutionary leaderships to not only represent the peasants, but more importantly utilize the anti-capitalist elements of the peasant communities to transcend the stage of capitalism. This transcendence, as a consequence of the convergence of multiple social developments arising from particular intersocietal interactions, has resulted in a more complex version of 'socialism' that was tension-prone and contradictory from the outset. To achieve this theorization is, in the first instance, to refute the anachronistic mode of explanation that the backwardness of peasants or capitalism over-determines everything. A conjunctural analysis that interrogates the concrete process in which peasant mobilization developed in tandem with other social formations is needed to shed lights on the end-product of China's peasant socialism as a contradictory 'social combination'. I will argue in the next chapter that Leon Trotsky's theory of Uneven and Combined Development is an alternative theory of this kind which provides a socio-theoretical account of 'multiple temporalities' based upon a reconstructed multi-linear, accumulative conception (spiral ascendance) of social development.

1.6. Structure of argument and arrangement of chapters

The remainder of this thesis will be divided in five chapters. Chapter 2 follows the discussion of the problem of 'anachronism' in International Relations to point out that the problem is caused not only by the lack of historical analysis, but also by the lack of a proper theory of social time with which the structuralist understanding of a society will not neglect the dimension of 'social combination' in theorizing social development. In the case of the Chinese Revolution, the backwardness of the peasantry and the mobilization of them represent two forms of temporalities that both need to be incorporated in theorizing the cause and nature of the revolution. The Braudelian school of historiography has noted the significance of 'multiple temporalities' in theorizing social development, whereas it lacks the dialectics of different temporal forms especially the relationship between epoch (*longue durée*) and conjuncture. Thus its awareness of temporal multiplicity cannot provide theoretical grounds to the dimension of 'social combination' in understanding of social transformation.

Drawing upon the basic method and the ‘theory of history’ of historical materialism, I will argue that a theory of social time should incorporate conjunctural analysis not only as a analytical procedure for historicizing particular concepts, but also as a device for capturing the spiral ascending character of human social development. On this basis, Leon Trotsky’s theoretical framework of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) is thought to have provided a conjunctural analysis which perceives spiral ascending development as an emergent property of ‘the international’. In this regard, I apply the generic concept of ‘Revolution of Backwardness’ to define the Chinese Revolution as a protracted process by which the leading elites of the Chinese society strove to transcend the concrete geopolitical and social crises generated by the condition of backwardness. With this idea, I will re-examine a number of auxiliary concepts that have contributed to the totality of ‘communist dictatorship’ in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 examines the premodern origins of China’s historical condition of backwardness by illustrating the pattern of China’s long-term development formed before China’s encounter with the West. *Contra* the conventional notions upholding that the peasant society was inherently backward, I will show that the backwardness of premodern China has less to do with the internal property of the peasantry itself; instead, the backward condition was an evolving property arising from the interaction between nomadic and sedentary societies which gave rise to the specific political agency of the peasnat. The historiographical argument of the chapter consists of two parts. First, the Chinese premodern history was full of internal alterations and transformations rather than self-generated ‘dynastic cycles’. The sociological foundation underlying China’s premodern development is the uninterrupted co-constitution between the sedentary agrarian society and the nomadic tribal society. Second, the internationally generated ‘wholesale transformation’ that foregrounded the pattern of China’s modern transformation was the ‘Tang-Song transition’ via which the state-bureaucratic class began to subsume the landed aristocratic class. The centralization, decentralization and military regionalization during the Qing Dynasty were unleashed from the development in which autonomous regional militarists sought to maximize their interests by maximizing their control of the state-bureaucracy. Consequently, the political agency of the Chinese peasant has become that bolstering the centralized state-authority is viewed as essential to the peasant’s

wellbeing because local manors and landed aristocracies have been dismantled by the empire.

Having identified the premodern origins of China's backwardness, chapter 4 analyses the historical origins of China's century-long 'Revolution of Backwardness'. The analysis is set against the background of the classic debate in American Sinology on whether China's modern history should be interpreted as 'West-made' or 'China-made'. It is noted that both understandings could not illuminate the 'interactive' dimension of the revolutionary development. Using the idea of U&CD, this chapter argues that the nature of nineteenth century's social transformation needs to be understood as a process of national salvation driven by politically and militarily disunited elites who attempted to graft the technological and institutional end-products of the advanced capitalist society onto the task of protecting their political and economic status defined in the premodern context. The consequence of the process was that increasing number of progressive social movements began to take place against the background of politico-military disintegration along regional and provincial lines on the eve of the twentieth century. This chapter will accentuate that the co-constitution and intersection of China's pre-capitalist imperial crisis and the universalizing capitalist/imperialist modernity is central to understanding the incentive of China's modern revolution.

Chapter 5 continues to conceptualize Mao's revolution as part of China's century-long 'Revolution of Backwardness' operated in a 'substitutionist' way. The concept of 'Revolution of Backwardness' invites us to examine concrete interactions between China's evolving political elites and the historically specific geopolitical pressures impinged by advanced capitalist societies. In doing so, several critical historical moments are identified to map out the 'spirally ascending' trajectory of Mao's revolution. I will argue that Mao's revolution, as a continuation of the 'Revolution of Backward' originating in the general crisis nineteenth century, was in nature a combined development synchronizing the restoration of rural society and anti-imperialist campaigns in a single historical process. It took its roots by crafting its organizational and ideological structures in a nationalist fashion through the interaction with the Soviet Union and the Soviet-informed KMT in the 1920s. The unevenness between China and variegated forms of advanced industrial societies exerted substantial geopolitical pressures on the Chinese Revolution which mediated

the particular course of China's substitutionist development: the peasant has been recreated into a novel agency of 'guerrilla revolutionary' in order to replace the incompetent bourgeoisie and worker for both a democratic and a socialist revolution. The chapter will also show that the nature of China's peasant socialism has also given rise to a series of mutations in the aftermath of the 1949 Revolution under varying geopolitical circumstances.

Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by drawing a closure to the debate on whether the modern Chinese history was China-made (Sinocentrism) or West-made (Eurocentrism) in Sinological studies. It argues that the present explanation of the Chinese Revolution using Uneven and Combined Development will resolve the dichotomy by providing an international conception of social development. It is noted that the particular political agency of the Chinese peasant configured in the long-run, as well as Mao Zedong's revolutionary response to the national crisis mounted in a particular conjuncture were both 'internationally generated combination' rather than any linear outgrowth of either China's past or western modernity. Concerning that Eurocentrism and Sinocentrism are two forms of anachronism, this chapter will further argue that by overcoming this problem, the theory of Uneven and Combined Development can provide a substantial contribution to the method of classic social theory (the mode of production analysis *inter alia*) by replacing its 'self-constitutive' core with an interactive, dynamic and empirically generative 'general abstraction' of 'multi-societal interaction'.

Chapter 2-Uneven and Combined Development as a Conjunctural Analysis-Overcoming Anachronism by theorizing the Spirally Ascending Character of Social Development

2.1 Introduction: Uneven and Combined Development and the problem of anachronism in social development

Via a review of extant explanations of the possibility of China's peasant revolution, Chapter 1 has demonstrated that those accounts could not properly understand the role of *peasantry* in the formation of China's socialist revolution for the problem of 'anachronism' plaguing their theories and methods. The problem of anachronism, in the mainstream interpretations of the Chinese Revolution, lies in the widely upheld conception of the 'backward' nature of the Chinese peasant. This condition of backwardness is addressed only by reference to an abstraction of the internal structure of China's agrarian, and the character of the peasant was 'sealed off' from wider horizontal and vertical global transformation (Hobson and Hobden 2002: 9). Arguably, the condition of backwardness, which emerged from the comparison between early and late developing societies, is supposed to be a relational category dependent upon the socio-historical reality of interrelationships among different polities; whereas in practice, the relationality among various socio-political entities is never mobilized as an sociological device. In IR theories, the mainstream conception of 'the international' is used only as a field of residues and externalities of domestic social development (Wight 1960; Rosenberg 2006: 329-332). As Justin Rosenberg has problematized, '[t]he geopolitical premise...drawing new life from every sociological shortfall, tends in the opposite direction-towards ever more abstract formulations of anarchy, as if it were a supra-sociological phenomenon' (Rosenberg 2007: 454). For this problem, authors who deploy the explanatory category of 'the international' (e.g. Skocpol 1979; Gourevitch 1989) cannot avoid reconciling with the internalist analysts who explain away the nature of the Chinese Revolution as a linear outgrowth of the agrarian society.

The pressing problem here is that if 'the international' could not be utilized as a sociological device for historical evolution and development, any intervention of IR would not help solving the problem of anachronism. The misconception of 'the international' can be dated to the scepticism about progressiveness to which the

disciplinary identity of 'International Relations' has been attributed (Carr 1939/2001; Schmidt 1998: 27). Realism, which perceives international activities as a realm of person-like states struggling for material power has been regarded as the 'definitive tradition' of International Relations, which, for various reasons, has been separated from all other forms of social developments of progressive logic. As the last chapter has indicated, mainstream IR's lack of 'developmental logic' is not only a matter of IR being a-sociological, but more fundamentally a socio-theoretical problem about the ontology of social development (Tenbruck 1994; Rosenberg 2006, 2007, 2010). Without reconstructing the concept of social development as a multi-spatially determined category, any superadded lateral field concept of spatial plurality such as geopolitics or the condition of 'many states' could not alter the singular understanding of social development and its problem of anachronism. Therefore, the absence of 'the international' (socio-spatial plurality) in classic social theories and the absence of development in mainstream international theories are actually two sides of a same coin of the problem of ontological singularity of social development (Rosenberg 2006).

Having recognized this problem, this chapter argues that Leon Trotsky's idea of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD), which has recently been reconstructed as the sociological basis of international theory by Justin Rosenberg (1996, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2013) provides a theoretical antidote to anachronism in extant theorizations of the Chinese Revolution. The reason that U&CD can potentially do this is that with its inbuilt method of conjunctural analysis, U&CD can successfully accommodate the historical-materialist conception of 'spirally ascending' development by theorizing it as a social combination. The so-called spirally ascending nature of historical development has been captured by Friedrich Engels as a process determined by 'innumerable intersecting forces' and 'an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant historical event' (Engels 1895/1972)¹³. Because the intersecting forces emerge from different times and different places embodying variegated 'temporalities', the particular 'parallelogram' they coproduce would necessarily involve reorientations and redirections from time to time, which has determined that the course of historical development is inherently un-linear. However, an individual force of history would not only interact horizontally

¹³ See Friedrich Engels' Letter to J. Bloch in Königsberg, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1890/letters/90_09_21.htm

with forces of its own time-it also interacts and intersects with forces originating in other historical times and even its own patterns in the past. Therefore, historical development is also intrinsically accumulative based upon critical inheritance and negation of previous experiences.

The model of ‘spiral ascendance’ like a ‘parallelogram of historical forces’ is not an empty metaphor. The particular causes of development, and the *differentia specifica* of its consequences all needs to be theorized with reference to concrete history-then it comes the role Uneven and Combined Development. As for the case of the Chinese Revolution, the world-historical riddle of ‘peasant socialism’ could be properly understood by U&CD as a peculiar consequence of ‘combined development’. By defining social combination as an interactive category, U&CD will not only provide a formal theoretical explanation to Marx’s unaccomplished envisioning of the possibilities of socialist revolution *before* or *without* capitalism, but in a more dialectical way go further to demonstrate the contradictory nature of building socialism in a backward society like Russia and China. The theoretical advance thus achieved will generate two positive results. For international theories, it enables theorizing variegated agential perceptions against the backdrop of the anarchical ‘deep-structure’; and for classic social theories, especially the vulgar misconception of ‘mode of production’ analysis, it enables progressive theorizations of heterogeneous social formations and developmental trajectories under global capitalism without losing the theoretical core of historical materialism.

This chapter will develop the aforementioned argument in the following sections. I will first show in the next section that Leon Trotsky’s theory of Uneven and Combined Development has continued and completed late Marx’s enterprise of conceptualizing social development as a ‘spirally ascending’ process; this is manifested in Trotsky’s theorization of the Russian Revolution as a historical movement that may both ‘skip over stages’ and ‘fall further backward’. I will then show that historical materialism’s ability to envisage social development as a ‘spirally ascending’ process lies in the dimension of ‘multiple temporalities’ which Marx as well as a larger body of authors has implicitly drawn upon without formally theorizing. In this regard, I will further demonstrate why Uneven and Combined Development as a conjunctural international theory is able to theorize the problem of multi-directionality and spiral ascendance as an internal property of ‘social development’: this is due to the premise

of plurality and interactivity in U&CD's ontology. On this basis, I will further demonstrate how U&CD can possibly resolve the problem of anachronism in both IR and social theories overshadowed by either the logic of anarchy or the logic of capital with its inbuilt method of conjunctural analysis.

2.2 Social development as a 'spiral ascendance': from Marx to Trotsky

As for the Chinese Revolution, the central question that is most attended to is the so-called nexus between peasantry and socialism; in a country like China which has undergone a prolonged history of agrarian economy and rural insurrection, could a socialist revolution be reasonably envisaged without a proper working class that was conscious enough. A question posed in a similar way has directed Marx's attention from Europe to Russia in his late years; 'can the Russian *obshchina*, though greatly undermined, yet a form of primeval common ownership of land, pass directly to the higher form of Communist common ownership?' (Marx and Engels, Preface to The 1882 Russian Edition of *The Communist Manifesto*). The potentialities of 'bypassing the capitalist stage' detectable in the Russian case have at face value unsettled early Marx's materialist conception of social development. However, it is the coexistence of both formulations in Marx's theoretical edifice that has posed a more complex question about the nature of Marx's 'theory of history'. How does Marx understand social development?

Firstly, the question of revolutionary class-formation is ultimately a question of the correlation between a certain material condition and class identity. In historical materialism, it remains debatable whether class identity, or a wider state of 'social consciousness' could be directly derived from a certain material basis, especially 'forces of production' under which an individual society operates. Ambiguities have arisen from the inconsistency in Marx's statements dispersed in his writings on different stages. The one that does justice to a relatively rigid vision of the relationship between 'the material' and 'the social' could be found in Marx's seminal statement on the origin of social revolution in the preface of his *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* (1859). As Marx argues,

The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines

their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or—this merely expresses the same thing in legal term—with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure (Marx 1859/1977).

The opening and ambivalence of this text is both stimulating and bewildering at the same time as it poses further questions of both historical and theoretical significance. It is central to this statement that the unfit between forces of production and superstructural relations ushers in the so-called ‘era of social relations’; but it is nevertheless unwarranted even by Marx’s own empirical studies that this process would take place necessarily and in any universal forms. For example, Marx’s early observation of the 1848 Revolution in France (*The Eighteenth Brumaire and Louis Bonaparte*) serves as a testimony to the possibility of abortive class formation and social revolution facing ‘changes in the economic foundation’ (Marx 1852/2008). The French case that monarchical state-structure with its root in the inarticulate and unorganized peasants allied with the French bourgeoisie under capitalist development has later been rearticulated to espouse the Gramscian thesis of ‘passive revolution’, which addresses the historical paradox that tensions within capitalist ‘production forces’ incur no socio-political upheavals (Cox 1979: 166; Anievas and Allinson 2010: 471-474; Gray 2010).

The logic of ‘passive revolution’ can be understood as a process by which a society entered a new epoch of social development (e.g. capitalism) without radically displacing the pre-existing class relations and state-structure. More significantly, this logic, on a more general level, is central to Marx’s analysis of the nexus between the peasant and social revolution beyond the experience of England. For late Marx, ‘it was Russia from which news of revolutionary came’ whereas revolutionary activism had largely been exhausted in western Europe (Shanin 1983: 7). Central to the Russian experience was the plausibility of progression into an era of anti-capitalist revolution without displacing the traditional peasant class. The Russian peasants and their

communes, for late Marx, was not much a barrier of backwardness to social progression, but more a carrier of ‘the collectivist tradition of the majority of Russian people’ (ibid: 12). Such a tradition to which the Russian populist (*narodnik*) held fast ‘assumed the ability and desirability of Russia ‘bypassing the stage’ of West-European-like capitalism on its way to a just society’. The element of communal property relations in Russia, perceived by narodniks such as N. Chernyshevsky and P. Chadaev as ‘uneven development’, produced a proletarian class which was more resistant to capitalism (ibid: 9). As the Russian populism withered in the 1880s, Marx began to develop more nuanced thoughts of the Russian peasant-communes, which has then culminated in his *Letter to Zasulich* in which the role of the peasant was understood in a world-historical context of global capitalism.

Central to the letter is Marx’s awareness of the paradoxical fate of the Russian commune in the context of global capitalism. ‘The very existence of the Russian commune has been jeopardized by a conspiracy of powerful interests, crushed by the direct extortions of the state, fraudulently exploited by the ‘capitalist’ intruders...’, whereas on the other hand, ‘if revolution comes at the opportune moment, if it concentrates all its forces so as to allow the rural commune full scope, the latter will soon develop as an element of regeneration in Russian society and an element of superiority over the countries enslaved by the capitalist system’ (Marx 2000). What Marx has offered here is not any linear anticipation, but a vision of configuration of possibilities that effects of ‘regeneration’ and ‘degeneration’ could both take place as a result of the historically situated conjuncture¹⁴; ‘for either one to prevail over the other it is obvious that quite different historical surroundings are needed’ (Marx 2000: 623; see also Knei-Paz 1978: 592-594). The ‘historical surroundings’, as Marx understands, refers to not only the wider social milieu of capitalist development that generated pressures on the peasants, but also a *world time* of socialist revolution in which the ‘peasant chorus’ was sung; without this, ‘the proletariat’s solo song, becomes a swan song, in all peasant countries’. To turn the Russian commune into ‘a major vehicle of social regeneration’, it is significant that ‘a grass root framework for ‘large-scale cooperative labour’ and the ‘use of modern machinery’ both needed to be introduced (Marx 2000; Shanin 1983: 14-17).

¹⁴ By regeneration, Marx is more likely to mean ‘skipping over stages’.

So far, it can be argued that late Marx has given great historical nuances to Eastern experiences, Russia *inter alia*, as a latent alternative to the western archetype of capitalist development. ‘One must *descend* from pure theory to Russian reality’ (Marx 2000, italics added). The question, however, is whether Marx’s historicization of the Russian case has contradicted his materialist notion of social development set out in his earlier writings. The ambivalence here is that though Marx has highlighted the co-determination between the ‘economic foundation’ and the ‘superstructure’ in his early writings, there has never been specification of the mechanism in which the two categories correspond with each other. Marx’s materialist conception of social development has never indicated that change in social relations would automatically grow out from the progression of productive forces, neither does it mean that productive forces (e.g. technology) should be deployed as the main index of social development¹⁵. Reading history in a materialist way does not assume recourse to rump material settings taken as the first step to analyze concrete social formations. As Derek Sayer has correctly argued, Marx’s materialist conception of history and his critique of Hegel imply not a method that reduces everything to the material, but an ontology based upon ‘a prior denial of the very existence of the ideal as a separable entity’, according to which ‘[c]onsciousness is precisely not a thing in itself’, but the relationships of living individuals to their external environments. This means that the material basis in most historical case constitutes only the ‘determinant in the last instance’ rather than the sole driver of history. Though the material premise is set as an objective starting point, the social significance of the material could only be constructed when ‘purposeful actions’ is taken against it upon the basis of living individuals’ subjective perceptions developed out of the complexity of human activities (Sayer 1987: 86-88). The epitome of ‘the material’ as ‘the determinant in the last instance’ could be found in the classic Marxist interpretation of the variety of concrete forms of social movement. As for mechanisms of different political mobilizations, historical materialism has no ready-made theoretical axiom that explains away how and why a specific social movement revolves around a certain discourse (e.g. environmentalism, feminism, nationalism and aestheticism etc.);

¹⁵ On the folly of technological determinism see Daniel Bensaid’s critique of structural Marxism, 2009: 43.

however historical materialism would set for more concrete historical explanations a materialist starting point, that is, in most cases, social movements as an important expression of working class politics, are derived from the antagonism between the worker and the employer as a fundamental materialist condition (Lebowitz 2003: 179)¹⁶. Diverse social values, such as environmentalism and feminism, though they are predicated upon the worker-capitalist contradiction, are not deducible from it. Therefore, ‘the material’ as ‘determinant in the last instance’ means that the abstraction of material forces can in no sense be reasonably deployed to pinpoint the nature or the direction of a certain social development; instead, it only sends out invitations to further historicization of a particular conjuncture underneath a general material condition, in which the nature of social development is to be understood as another form of historical movement.

So what is the conceptual category Marx has deployed to indicate social development? Looking back at our previous consideration of late Marx’s observation of the multi-directional Russian fate as well as early Marx’s emphasis on the revolutionary leadership of ‘the communists’ in *The Communist Manifesto*, I will argue that to Marx, the historical-materialist notion of social development is defined as *the evolution and transformation of human agency* from lower to higher forms. In *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx avows that social revolution would not happen automatically in tandem with the growth of productive forces unless the proletariats from all strata of society are mobilized to form a revolutionary class¹⁷. In turning the scattered workers who were originally in conflict with each other for short-sighted interests to revolutionary proletariats, class struggle would be immediately turned into political struggle, which as a historical task should be taken by ‘the communists’, the trade union and other undertakers of revolution who are able to educate workers in a socialist direction. It is also noteworthy that for early Marx, if the experience of

¹⁶ As for Michael Lebowitz, the origin of the diversity of ‘New Social Movement’ is that ‘they (the workers) are immiserated is why workers constantly attempt to satisfy more of their social needs’ (Lebowitz 2003: 179). These social needs could be ethnical, environmental, familial, religious and aesthetic which all appear non-materialist.

¹⁷ Trotsky in his writings has further noted that this process involves not only the formation of communist party as a political tool for educating the workers, but also the process that workers themselves reveal their identity and belonging. See Knei-Paz 1978.

bourgeois revolution had introduced any progressive forces, it was because that it has replaced corrupted old social forms such as feudalism, provincialism and superstition with relatively progressive ones such as private property, nationality and enlightenment (Loewy 1981: 3). The conception of social development as evolving human agency is generalized in *The German Ideology* which argues that historical development was started off by man labouring against his natural constraints, through which social relations began to differentiate in size and depth. ‘Division of labour’, as Marx defines in the text, is the miniature of how human agency gets increasingly complicated over time. The centrality of human agency in Marx’s entire theory has become more obvious in Marx’s late writings such as *Critique of Gotha Program* (1875) which has placed heavy emphasis on spontaneity of the workers as a force that bursts out of the capitalist system and reverses its terms (Marx 1970).

If the process of the evolution of human agency, including its sequencing of stages, could be corresponded to the general material setting of a society with ease, the tension between the Russian (or maybe Chinese) experience and many vulgar economic-materialist determinisms¹⁸ would be much relieved. Historically, however, it is easily noticeable that a variety of mutually propelling, but also logically contested social processes as well as political practices, which, by definition all fall into the ‘superstructural’ phenomena are always coeval against a relatively static backdrop of material condition. This is simply because that development, such as social revolution, can only take place in a conjuncture when perception of human agency has changed; whereas such change in human agency is always present in a ‘spirally ascending’ form (Anderson 1979: 529-532). How is the spirally ascending nature of social development manifested in concrete historical process? Here comes Leon Trotsky’s systematic extrapolation of this ‘theory of history’ from the case of the Russian Revolution (Trotsky 1980). Trotsky’s reformulation of social development has accommodated almost every single pattern of change concretized in Marx’s historical writings, which have all been organized as concretions of the general theory of ‘Uneven and Combined Development’ (U&CD). For example, In Trotsky’s

¹⁸ For example the Stalinist mechanistic understanding of social development, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>, (last access 10:54am, 20th Feb, 2013).

exposition of the Russian spiral ascendance, one can first see Trotsky's recapitulation of the problem of 'passive revolution' recognized by early Marx. That the Tsarist state, with its complicity with European capitals, rendered the Russian bourgeoisie un-revolutionary was an epitome, alongside the French case, of the process by which monarchical state-structure managed to dissolve the counter-forces generated by capitalist development (Trotsky 1980: 6-7). The bourgeoisie's 'incapacity of political action' prefigured the possibility of 'skipping over stages' in a dialectical way-that Russia could move onto the stage of proletarian revolution with a more 'youthful' proletarian class that revolutionized the Russian peasants (ibid: 8). Like Marx who conveyed profound uncertainty about the status of Russian peasant, Trotsky has also warned against the danger of a revolutionary proletarian state sliding further backward towards some 'degenerative' political form (Trotsky 1936/2009). Since the victory of the Russian Revolution came too quickly, there was a risk that the worker's state might operate without corresponding maturation of working class identity¹⁹.

Therefore, it could be seen that there is an intellectual progression from Marx to Trotsky through which the spirally ascending nature of social development has become more and more explicit and theoretically fundamental. Whereas Marx's understanding of such nature of social development is detected in his various historical writings, this theme is *inherent* in Leon Trotsky's theoretical formulation, namely, the idea of Uneven and Combined Development. How could Trotsky's idea of U&CD reinterpret the spirally ascending nature of social development as an 'emergent property' of human social development rather than a series of empirical aberrations that would do nothing but problematizing the theoretical unfit between 'the material' and 'the spiritual', 'the economic' and 'the political' and 'the infrastructural' and 'the superstructural'? To answer this question, a characterization of the theoretical quality of Trotsky's theory needs to be made. I will then show in the following sections that this quality lies in the inbuilt method of conjunctural analysis that is central to both historical materialism and the theory of U&CD. But first of all, a brief review of the nature of the problem of 'spirally ascending development' is in order.

¹⁹ As for the thesis of the Soviet Union as a deformed worker's state, see Marcel van der Linden 2007, *Western Marxism and the Soviet Union*, pp. 103-106

2.3 The premise of ‘multiple temporalities’ and conjunctural analysis in historical materialism

What is the theoretical and methodological nature of the notion of spiral ascendance?

This has to be understood in terms of tensions between Marx’s emphasis on the spontaneity of ‘subjects’ of history in documents such as *The Communist Manifesto* and *Critique of Gotha Program* and his caution about perseverance of the deep-seated structure of a society characterized by production. Whereas the workers were invited to pursue the proletarian dictatorship to facilitate the transition from capitalism to communism, it is nevertheless alerted by Marx himself that ‘[n]o social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society’ (Marx 1970: 21). What can be questioned here is whether there is an hidden ‘level of analysis’ between the impervious material structure and the multiplicity of agential practices which seem only intelligible by pure description. To Marx, this question appears as a matter of ‘levels of concreteness’ at face value. It is noted in *German Ideology* that whereas a certain ‘mode of production’ as a general category that characterizes an epoch (for example capitalism) always demonstrates some ‘common traits and characteristics’, it is itself ‘segmented many times over and splits into different determinations’ (Marx 1970a). ‘Mode of production’ stands only as a ‘rational abstraction’ that enables comparisons of operations of production in different conjunctures, because ‘the object of historical materialism cannot be production in general, but the specification of determinate *modes* of production’ (Bernstein and Delpechin 1978: 3, my italics; Anderson 1979: 417). The implication of this statement is clear that in order to understand the variety of one general mode of production, one needs to deploy the method of concrete historical analysis after having recognized the generic organizing principle of a certain epoch.

This methodological principle is formally set out in Marx’s *Grundrisse* based upon the dialectic of ‘concretion/abstraction’. The analytical procedure of historical materialism, in Marx’s sense, will necessarily involve a conjunctural timeframe that entails the notion of multiple determinations and the method of historical concretization. On one hand, Marx argues that social analysis should always start

from some 'general abstractions', for example, 'population'. General abstractions are always 'chaotic conceptions' which involves little flattening causal mechanisms. When moving from the abstract to the concrete, or 'thinner abstractions', the analyst will confront a set of more direct and simple determinations, since '[t]he concrete is the concrete because it is the concentration of many determinations' (Marx 1973). Having concretized the general abstraction by theorizing the correlation of determinations, one will replace the original 'chaotic conception' with 'a rich totality of many determinations and relations' when one retraces to the concept of the population as a whole.

Moving from the level of abstraction to the level of concretion is not only an analytical procedure, but is determined by the accumulative nature of social development, due to which a certain ideal-type needs to be historicized in the context of different historical conjunctures. Some analytical concepts that seem general and transhistorical at first blush always predate the existence of particular social relations they are deployed to analyze. These general concepts, in Marx's sense, could easily explain less developed forms of society which they originally referred to; but when these concepts come to the more developed sets of social relations in the contemporary time, they may imply more 'many-sided connections and relations' they did not mean to express at the start (Marx 1973). No matter where a concept is derived from, the complexity of social relations it entails varies from case to case when its use is extended to wider historical scenes. Being unable to historicize a conceptual type, one is then trapped by the mistake of anachronism. To Marx, The bourgeois economists' ahistorical understanding of historically specific concepts such as division of labour is a classic example of this fault. 'Proudhon doesn't understand!' In his early correspondence with PV. Annenkov Marx criticizes Proudhon strictly for that he has mistaken bourgeois forms of economic relations, such as division of labour for 'universal reasons' by which the developmental logic of history is ruled out. Proudhon fails to understand that the so-called economic categories rendered 'eternal law' by him are only the conceptual expression of 'real relations' that appear historically in the temporary bourgeois society. Proudhon's history, which is no more than an artificial 'dialectical phantasmagoria' only takes place 'in the nebulous realm of the imagination and soars high above time and space' (Marx 1975). Due to the underlying problem of anachronism, Proudhon's use of economic categories has not only lost

sight of the spatio-temporal specificity of those concepts, but also ruled out the emancipatory vision of the future eclipse of bourgeois economic order.

So if Marx's analytical procedure of moving from the rational-general abstraction to the concretion and then back to an enriched totality means not only different levels of analysis, but also the demand for addressing the historical realities of social development, the level of conjunctural analysis should mean much more than only a level of greater concreteness. The so-called conjunctural timeframe should enable theoretical understandings of the spirally ascending characteristics of social development in Marx's conception. To achieve a definition of 'the conjunctural' as a sociological category, I will now take a glance at how this level of analysis was operationalized and interpreted by historical sociologists.

Fernando Braudel has outlined a dialectical understanding of the epochal and the conjunctural as two differential temporalities in terms of not only their lengths, but also their different sociological meanings. The epochal, namely the timeframe of *longue durée*, refers to a historical understanding of 'the structure' which is defined as 'a reality that persists through time' (Braudel 1960: 6). The accumulative nature of *longue durée* involves a notion of 'conditionality of history' which assumes that once things happened (no matter how contingently they did), their effects would build into 'environments in which a change in one variable is associated with a change in another variable' (Stinchcombe 1968: 31). Whereas the epochal timeframe stresses more on the nature of history as 'a sum of days', there is another form of temporality, 'the conjunctural' that unfolds as 'the cycle, and even the 'intercycle' of events. A conjuncture may embrace a decade, a quarter of a century or the classic half-century of Kondratieff, which needs to be specified in terms of the additional determinations the very period of time has introduced to alter the pattern of the epochal time. In line with Braudel's logic, John Ruggie has further conceptualized the conjunctural timeframe as a depiction of 'the basic units in social time as cycles or some other representation of temporal movements'. The conjunctural time thus denotes temporal movements that occur in the form of processes that 'underlie(s) actors, properties, and events'. Ruggie gives the example of post-war 'baby boom' in American demographic history as an epitome of the causal role of conjunctural time. The 'baby boom' was certainly a result of the combination of numerous social forces that developed in

uneven pace in the aftermath of the Second World War. Once such a conjunctural move took place, its effects would reach into the pattern of world population on the systemic level (Ruggie 1998: 158).

So Braudel has extended Marx's general understanding of the conjunctural time as either a level of concretion or a notion of multiple determinations to a specific form of historical reality *vis-à-vis* the epochal time. To Braudel (and Ruggie), the general pattern of the *longue durée* is largely constituted by the conjunctural movement of history because of the accumulative nature of historical structure. This dialectics of epoch and conjuncture underlies Marx's method of moving from the abstract to the concrete and then back to the 'enriched totality'. The reason that 'the conjunctural' is constitutive of 'the epochal' is understood by Braudel as a matter of 'multiple temporalities'. '[T]here is no guarantee that a social and economic correlation will move at the same pace', reports Braudel, '[o]n the other hand, two such correlations must not be formulated to the exclusion of others more difficult to measure. Sciences, techniques, political institutions, mental tools, and civilization also have their rhythm of life and growth, and must be included in the new 'correlative' history' (Braudel 1960: 5). Drawing upon the same logic, Robert Marks has also interpreted the conjunctural phenomenon as the intersection of multiple historical processes; '[a] conjuncture happens when several otherwise independent developments come together in ways that interact with on another, creating a unique historical moment' (Marks 2007: 31). However in Marks' account, the emergence of a conjuncture is viewed as contingent.

Here the problem becomes whether the Braudelian notion of 'multiple temporalities' can really stand as a explanation to Marx's notion of 'spirally ascending' development. It is clear that Braudel and the *Annales* School has recognized the heterogeneity of historical movement in form, for example, the 'conjuncture' is a collection of historical contingencies and accidents which could not be derived from any abstract form of epochs. It is nevertheless unclear whether the dialectics of epoch and conjuncture can explain the historical origins of the differentiation of social time. As for Robert Marks, his category of 'contingency' or 'accidence' could not by itself constitute a mode of

explanation (Skocpol 1973: 28)²⁰; and no Braudelian accounts have explained why ‘the conjunctural’ as a particular historical reality has emerged, despite their effort made to describe the variety of conjunctural phenomena and the multiplicity of social time. If the conjunctural timeframe is regarded as a specific form of historical reality that will build into the creation of the more generalizable ‘epoch’ as a ‘rational abstraction’, the socio-historical origin of a certain conjuncture needs to be explained in the first instance in order to reveal the more deep-seated explanation underlying ‘multiple temporalities’. For example, as Giovanni Arrighi and Sugihara Kaoru have identified, the East Asian *longue durée* of ‘industrious revolution’ and internal market dynamics could only operate in the modern time with the catalyst of interstate competitions and social revolutions in the region as a ‘short-range temporality’ (Arrighi, Hamashita and Selden 2005: 2-4; Sugihara 2005: 78); it is nevertheless unknown why the short-range temporality came into effect in the postwar conjuncture, neither is the sociological nature of the short-range temporality theorized within the framework of Braudelian historiography .

Since the idea of ‘multiple temporalities’ exists as more a historical description than a sociological explanation, it is in a larger sense a strategy of entailing more levels of concretion rather than denoting any ‘theory of history’. Needless to say that only the notion of ‘multiple temporalities’ could not shed lights on the spirally ascending nature of social development in historical materialism. Here is the problem. It is a relatively easier task to understand Marx’s notion that social concepts *vis-à-vis* relevant historical realities are being constantly enriched by reference to Braudel and Stinchcombe’s idea of accumulative and conditional historical development (Braudel 1960; Stinchcombe 1968); whereas it is still a unfinished task of explaining why social development is spirally ascending as what Marx implies. To resolve this problem, it is pressing that the deeper mode of sociological explanation behind ‘multiple temporalities’ needs to be revealed so that the meaning of conjuncture could be understood in relation to the problem of ‘spiral ascendance’. As Marx’s method of

²⁰ Viewing history as either a ‘contingent butterfly’ or an objective structure is the line that separates the mega and meso/micro levels of historical analysis which seem to be unbridgeable, see Lawson and Hobson 2008: 428.

political economy has suggested, we should always start from a ‘general abstraction’ around which secondary ‘chaotic conceptions’ could be organized. Now, the question has become what exactly should the so-called ‘general abstraction’ be in our theorizing of social development? I will now turn to Leon Trotsky’s theory of Uneven and Combined Development to show that what makes his idea a formal theorization of the spirally ascending nature of social development in historical-materialist terms is his identification of the generic ‘rational abstraction’ (Rosenberg 2006, 2007, 2010; Rosenberg in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008 etc.).

2.4 Uneven and Combined Development, conjunctural analysis and social development as an emergent property of ‘the international’

So far a brief summary of the procedure of Marx’s conjunctural analysis could be made. In the first instance, a generic ‘rational abstraction’ needs to be made from which multiple determinations could be historicized. In further historicizing the constant enrichment of the original abstract concept, one also explores the particular trajectory of development which unfolds in a spirally ascending manner. What should our ‘rational abstraction’ be?

In *History of the Russian Revolution*, the *locus classicus* of the theory of Uneven and Combined Development, Trotsky’s analysis of the peculiarities of Russian’s historical development interrogates the possibility for not only capitalist but also socialist transformation in Russia’s context. Necessarily, the first question Trotsky needs to address is what ‘general abstraction’ he would start from. This generic category, as what Marx has suggested in *German Ideology* (1970a), has to be an organizing principle that demonstrates ‘common traits’ of human activities tending towards social revolution; whereas on the basis of those ‘common traits’, a roadmap for historicizing and theorizing concrete causal properties of individual determination could also be generated. Identifying this abstraction wrongly could easily lead to reified causal formula which are displaced from their spatio-temporal conditions. Like in the case of the Chinese Revolution, authors starts from ‘dictatorship’, ‘nationalism’ and ‘peasantry’ which are all historically specific categories with no general implications. Alternatively, Trotsky starts off his analysis by disposing of all those temporally bounded categories; he identifies the basic condition of Russia’s modern revolution as a state of ‘backwardness’ which is an concrete expression of the intersocietal

relationship between Russia and the outside world. Thus unlike all the structuralist treatment of the so-called ‘Russian uniqueness’, the basis of Trotsky’s Uneven and Combined Development is a relational category whose concrete causal properties have emerged from interactions between variegated societies. These interactions involves societies of both the turbulent nomadic pressures from the East (the Tartar yoke) and the ‘wider, staggered process of European industrialisation’ from the West (Trotsky 1980: 2), which have altogether created a field of determination known as ‘the international’ (Teschke 2005; Rosenberg 2006, 2007).

Let us first consider the theoretical status of ‘the international’ as a general abstraction. I will argue that this conception is firstly a sociological and materialist category, and because of this, it is a ‘concrete abstraction’ that enables ‘non-deductive’ concretions progressively. To demonstrate the sociological and materialist nature of ‘the international’, the so-called ‘value analogy’ made by the contemporary interlocutors of U&CD is worth considering. Marx’s analysis of the capitalist social relations is predicated upon a theory of surplus value that unravels the objectified exchange value under which ‘socially necessary abstract labour-time’ exists as the social form of value in a capitalist society (Marx 1977, 1992; Rosenberg in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008: 91-92; Glenn 2012: 78). But what lies behind surplus-value in a capitalist society, according to Rosenberg, is a more fundamental fact that the exchange of commodities is conditioned by social relations. ‘A crucial element’ of Marx’s analysis is ‘already present, *in nuce*, in every instance of exchange’ though it becomes more significant in a capitalist society (Rosenberg in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008: 92).

This element, being the ‘inversion and reification’ of social relations ‘latent in all exchange relations’, is a general abstraction based upon the understanding of concrete causal properties of different human exchange relations. As labour against the material world is the first act of human society to Marx, the process of ‘objectification of human agency’ is thus a concretion of ‘labouring as the first human act’ which is obviously a sociological and materialist category. However, the idea of ‘objectification of human agency’ could in the meantime be used as a ‘general abstraction’ which provides a roadmap for historicizing evolving human activities as derivatives of ‘the first human act’; for example, it is immediately theorizable that the making of wage

labour which has prefigured the social form of surplus-value or even the capitalist state is predicated upon ‘objectification of human agency’, whereas the concrete formation of wage labour is never presupposed by the value theory *per se* (Marx 1992: 117).

So in this sense, is ‘the international’ defined as ‘multisocietal interaction’ a sociological, materialist and concrete abstraction? The answer is yes. First of all, the statement that there are more than one societies whose interactions constitutes human development is not only a general theoretical stance, but also a concrete analysis of a basic aspect of human social development, which according to Justin Rosenberg refers to the ‘non-simultaneity’ and ‘internally staggered’ character of social development (unevenness) as a historical reality; for example some hunter-gatherers began to settle down earlier than others (Rosenberg 2010: 182-183). In the Russian case, this general abstraction is set out by Trotsky as below,

‘Russia stood not only geographically, but also socially and historically between Europe and Asia. She was marked off from the European West, but also from the Asiatic East, approaching a different periods and in different features now one, now the other’ (Trotsky 1980: 2).

What this abstraction has suggested is not a definite characterization of Russia’s developmental path, but an guideline for analyzing individual processes of interaction including that among Russia, the nomadic East and the advanced Europe. The result of this is clear that Trotsky has discovered two historical processes which were both internal to the Russian development. On one hand, ‘[t]he history of Russia’s state economy is an unbroken chain of efforts – heroic efforts– aimed at providing the military organization with the means necessary for its continuing existence’ through which the Tsarist exploitation over the peasants intensified; on the other hand, ‘[a]s a result of this pressure from Western Europe, the autocratic state absorbed a disproportionately large share of the surplus product’ which has resulted in the congenital weakness of the Russian bourgeoisie (Trotsky 1973: 20-23, see also Trotsky 1980: 4-7). Now, ‘the international’ as a rational abstraction that enriches itself by inviting endless concretizing analyses of one interactions after another has succeeded in finding the conjunctural register of the Russian *longue durée*. Whereas Marx has not specified how to reveal the so-called ‘multiple temporalities’ apart from historical description, Trotsky has made it more tangible on a theoretical level by specifying

‘intersocietal interaction’ as the departure for conjunctural analysis. As a result, Trotsky’s conjunctural analysis has organically ascended to a more generalizable level of epochal analysis that characterizes Russia’s premodern condition as ‘incompleteness of feudalism’, ‘formlessness’ and ‘lack of cultural monuments’ (Trotsky 1980: 2). Again, this characterization never stands as Theda Skocpol’s understanding of China’s ‘pre-1949 economy’ that will over-determine the subsequent social formation (Skocpol 1979: 265-266); it invites a new round of historical concretization along the line of ‘multi-societal interaction’.

Here the ontology of interactivity enables a theoretical understanding of the origin of ‘the conjunctural’ without rendering it a field of unintelligible contingencies. In 1825 the Dekabrist uprising took place under the pressure of ‘European bourgeois development’ which expressed bourgeois incentives without abandoning the traditional ‘caste domination’. Decades later, serfdom was overtaken by wage labour via the peasant reform (1861) favourable to the noble castes’ capitalist interests. These momentous events that took place at very specific geopolitical locales had started off the formation of Russian proletarian class against the double exploitation of domestic ‘noble capitalists’ and foreign capitals. Then Trotsky goes down to the short decade from 1905 to 1917 for micro-level explanation to the outbreak of the revolution. That the Russo-Japanese War tottered the Tsarist government, that the bourgeois revolutionary force, which was congenitally dependent upon foreign powers got discredited as the leadership of the revolution after 1905 had both prepared the historical circumstances under which the proletariat was to give ‘a programme, a banner and leadership’ for not only the peasant class but also the entire revolutionary movement (Trotsky 1980: 8). Within the short eleven years Russia’s revolution had transformed from a democratic revolution to a proletarian revolution ‘placing the Communist Party in power’ with the bourgeois class descending to conservatism (ibid). Where did this conjuncture come from? First of all, these ‘fortuitous events’ were all derivatives of either Russia’s ‘revolution of backward’ taken to withstand the ‘external whip of necessity’ or geopolitical relationships that unsettled preexisting governments, which in Barrington Moore’s words, consequences of ‘the interplay between economic and political forces in the world as a whole’ (Moore 1966: 426; Skocpol 1973: 29). Because such an interplay is both the historical expression and the ontological premise of the structural/epochal property of ‘backwardness’, the

unexplainable 'limbo of fortuity' becomes co-constitutive with the generalizable structure/epoch (Skocpol 1973: 29).

Still, the more important question is how the conjunctural analysis elicited by Uneven and Combined Development can in the meantime provide a theoretical grounding to Marx's historical-materialist notion of 'spirally ascending' development. Certainly, as I have shown in the first section, Trotsky's identification of contested historical orientations is remarkably comprehensive. The dynamics of spiral ascendance is captured by a cluster of auxiliary concepts which are all inbuilt in Trotsky's idea of 'combined development'. According to Trotsky, the compression of early and late developmental forms at the national level assumes two contradictory consequences of 'skipping over' and 'being thrown backward' that both oppose stagist accounts of social development. As Trotsky moves on to historicize, the effect of 'skipping over' was so dramatic in Russia's history that 'at the level of the seventeenth century, Russian industry in its technique and capitalist structure stood at the level of the advanced countries, and in certain respects even outstripped them' (Trotsky 1980: 6). Nevertheless the effect of 'being thrown backward' was also notable especially in terms of development of human agency, that 'the social character of the Russian bourgeoisie and its political physiognomy were determined by the condition of origin and the structure of Russian industry' which was highly dependent on the complicity between the Tsarist government and foreign industrial and bank capitals. This dependence rendered the Russian bourgeoisie 'politically isolated and anti-popular', which was immature to reproduce the bourgeois revolution of English or French kind (Trotsky 1980: 5, 7). More importantly, for Trotsky, the two processes of 'skipping over stages' and 'sliding further backward' are never processes that took place one after another; they were generated simultaneously as both predicates of social development, and they prefigured each other. As for the Tsarist state which were 'compelled to make leap under the external whip of necessity' from its own 'backward culture' (Trotsky 1980: 3; Knei-Paz 1978: 178), it produced not only a weakened bourgeoisie but also a 'power vacuum' of capitalist social relations which enabled the proletariats to seize state-power. The demise of the revolutionary bourgeoisie and the rise of the 'youthful proletarian class' were both featured in the inter-revolutionary conjuncture between 1905 and 1917 in which the revolutionary leadership of Russia was radically restructured (Trotsky 1980: 5-7).

The co-constitution of ‘skipping over stages’ and ‘sliding further backward’ as two predicates of ‘spirally ascending’ development has been further elaborated in Trotsky’s analysis of the post-revolutionary state-formation concerning the maintenance of worker’s agency in the Soviet state. Unlike Lenin who emphasizes the possibility of ‘skipping over stages’ as a natural result of the accumulation of contradictions of global imperialism, namely the ‘weakest link’ (Althusser 1967: 21-24; see also Resch 1992: 60-64), Trotsky argues that the possibility itself has in the meantime precluded further ‘impossibility’ in the sense that the revolution itself, even in Lenin’s own sense did not emerge automatically from accumulated contradictions; instead, its crisis was conceived in the particular agency, namely the ‘avant-garde’ party mustered to utilize those contradictions. The organizational structure of the avant-garde party, which to Lenin was only a ‘technical’ method for controlling the party’s membership, was viewed by Trotsky as detrimental to the awakening of ‘working class consciousness’. Such organizational structure ‘could not stem the growth of political and revolutionary consciousness among the workers but its consequence would be to *sever the party from its growth*’ (Knei-Paz 1978: 181, italics added). In a deeper sense, the dispute between Bolshevism and Menshevism is regarded by Trotsky as a matter of whether the workers or the revolutionary party should occupy the centre of the revolutionary leadership. The status of the worker could be jeopardized by the possibility of ‘skipping over stages’, because in a backward society like Russia, revolutionaries were always tempted to ‘find a short-cut to success’ rather than ‘undertaking the difficult but necessary task of surmounting the distance between objective class interests and their conscious, subjective assimilation’ (ibid: 192-197). In this sense, the development of ‘skipping over stages’ that was realized by the particular agency of ‘avant-garde party’ via a ‘simplification of revolutionary tactics’ simultaneously has prefigured the development of ‘sliding further backward’ of the loss of working class identity, which has finally resulted in a ‘deformed worker’s class’ as well as a ‘revolution betrayed’ (Trotsky 1936/2009). In all the above formulation, it is obvious that Trotsky has recognized the spirally ascending nature of social development in historical materialism.

Has Trotsky captured all these forces simply with summate analytical skills or are those processes organic derivatives of the theory of Uneven and Combined Development? The latter is certainly the case, but the reason for that does not lie in

those concepts deployed by the theory of U&CD. It lies in the ontology of ‘multisocietal interactivity’ and its philosophical premise. Why social development as a ‘historical reality persisting over time’ conveys a spirally ascending tendency as part of its accumulative nature? This is grounded in Trotsky’s dialectical understanding of ‘identity’ and ‘non-identity’. In the Aristotelian logic of syllogism, logical inference is expressed as a formula that is stripped of all historicity: if $A=B$ and $B=C$, then $A=C=A$. Here A is regarded as a timeless category definable by reference to a fixed quality ($A=A$) (Trotsky 1942: 18; Rosenberg 2012: 6-7). The problem is that the immense different properties between the two objects in comparison is systematically ignored, with some key similarities singled out in abstract forms. In this sense, Trotsky’s dialectical method has identified ‘ $A \neq A$ ’ as the starting point, concerning that all statements of ‘ $A=A$ ’ are all abstracted from concrete historical realities.

The ‘margin of tolerance’ where exists the immense difference between two objects matter dramatically when history unfolds in an accumulative form. At the moment when $A=A$ could stand as an abstraction, the margin of tolerance could only be historicized without being theorized; however, it does not mean that the difference, which might even be infinitesimal within the margin would not flow beyond the time and space in which the abstraction of $A=A$ stands. As Rosenberg has summarized,

‘At key points, by dint of this accumulation, ‘tolerance’ is finally exceeded. At these points, incremental quantitative difference passes over into categorical qualitative change. And then the first premise of dialectical logic— $A \neq A$ —comes into its own.’ (Rosenberg 2012: 7-8)

Here the ‘spatio-temporal partiality’ of abstract concept presupposes that ‘change can and does always flow *unpredictably* from the growing impact of determinations originating in the marginal(‘spatial’) non-correspondence of ‘ A ’ with ‘ A ’ (ibid: 8, italics added). The unpredictable nature of social change is theoretically immanent in interactions among multiple societies. The most extreme case is that,

‘[E]ven if two instances of some- thing were completely identical, they would still not actually be each other. And, co-existing therefore, they might potentially affect each other. Thus, over and above any qualitative multiplicity of properties (variation), the quantitative multiplicity of being,

(the condition of more-than-one) has a potential significance of its own.'

(Rosenberg 2012: 13)

Thus in Trotsky's philosophical premise, the unpredictability of historical development is internal to not only the accumulative nature of the *longue durée*, but more importantly the lateral field of interactive multiplicity, in which the heterogeneous properties in the 'margin of tolerance' have brought in further determinations that give rise to the so-called 'cycles of events', the conjunctural temporalities. Since stagist notions of historical development, such as that socialist revolution could only emerge after successful bourgeois revolution, is based upon an abstraction of 'successive categories' from a concrete history (e.g. England), whereas each category in that history bears immense properties different from that in other histories (e.g. France and Russia), not to mention the additional differential properties interpolated to the course of development via interactions with other societies. Therefore, at key moments when qualitative change emerges due to accumulated quantitative difference within 'the margin of tolerance', 'the rigid assumptions of formal classification and comparison (A=A, etc.)' will be unsettled inevitably, and it is allowed instead to 'model the processes of change in continuity whose effects repeatedly 'smash the limited boundaries of classification'' (Rosenberg 2012: 9).

Therefore, with 'multisocietal interactivity' postulated as the ontology of 'the international' in Uneven and Combined Development, the Braudelien conception of 'conjunctural analysis' as a specific form of temporality has become *theorizable* which emerges from the interactions of social forms coexisting and accumulating in the epochal/*longue durée* structure. With 'conjunctural analysis' as an inbuilt method of U&CD, the spiral ascending nature of social development, which is captured by Karl Marx with 'intuition of historicism', can be theorized as an emergent property of 'the international'. In what follows, I will open the problem of anachronism in contemporary International Relations Theory and social theories informed by both the 'logic of anarchy' and the 'logic of capital' to the scrutiny of Uneven and Combined Development. I will then propose that to transcend their common problem of anachronism, they need to start from the ontology of 'multi-societal interactivity' rather than 'anarchy' or 'capital accumulation'.

2.5 Conjunctural analysis, IR and classic social theories

2.5.1 U&CD and the ‘anarchy-problematique’ in International Relations

Firstly, let us see why the discipline of International Relations which rests upon the concept of anarchy has committed the error of anachronism. IR was born to criticize the utopian design of the post-WWI international order that aspired to create a ‘harmony of interests’. In order to address the pressing political question of his time, Edward Carr, the founder of realist IR claimed assertively that ‘power’ is ‘a decisive factor in every political situation’ (Carr 1939: 301). The international life could hardly be penetrated by human reason, benevolent education, international law and interstate coordination such as the League of Nations as a result of the anarchical condition (ibid: 232-263). By drawing a hard line between the domestic and the international, IR thinkers came to recognize the empirical particularity of the discipline as a distinctive field of causality that cannot be penetrated by the development in domestic life. In Martin Wight’s early query on the absence of international theory, the international life was depicted as the ‘untidy fringe of domestic life’ which entails no more than ‘the system of balance of power’. (Wight 1960). ‘There is a basic distinction between international and domestic politics to be made’, says Wight in an apocalyptic tone, ‘that international politics are less susceptible of a progressivist interpretation’ (ibid: 42). Wight’s reservation about plausibility of progression in the international system populated by self-referential states, was further accentuated by the effort made to theorize the ‘uniqueness’, or the so-called ‘theoretical hardcore’ of international politics. In Hans Morgenthau’s formulation of ‘political realism’, which was thought to be the guiding principle for understanding the logic of both interstate relations and foreign policy, Morgenthau starts by postulating ‘the international’ as a law-dominated realm of human activities. As he argues, ‘politics...is governed by the objective laws that have their roots in human nature’; and because ‘human nature...has not changed since the classic philosophies’, ‘novelty is not necessarily a virtue in political theory, nor is old age a defect’. Morgenthau has strongly suggested that realism as a study of endless power struggles would ‘never be outmoded and obsolete’ (Morgenthau 1985: 8-12).

Though the post-war birthmark of IR is historically specific enough to circumscribe the explanatory scope of anarchy, the specific temporality is always forgotten when theorists come to universalize the causal mechanism of realism. Anarchy is viewed as

the epochal condition under which modern international history unfolds; on this basis, a number of auxiliary concepts and causal mechanisms have been misattributed to the anarchical epoch. It is argued that the absence of overarching authority in the anarchical world has reduced the functional roles of the state-actors to a common self-helping tendency that dominates their behavioural logic, which is either security maximizing or power maximizing (Waltz 1979; Mearsheimer 2001). It is further argued that the states acting in the logic of self-help are inclined to reach a situation of balance of power among each other. Though realist thinkers have made a lot of recapitulations to acknowledge the heterogeneity of agency, with the above causal mechanisms misattributed to the anarchical epoch, they still could not avoid 1) constantly deriving their understanding of agency from anarchy as the *only* relevant structural determinant; and 2) viewing the ‘abnormalities’ caused by human heterogeneity on the agency-level as deviants lying beyond the consideration of international theory. As Morgenthau argues in this chapter on political realism, ‘[d]eviations from rationality which are not the result of the personal whim or the personal psychopathology of the policy maker may appear *contingent* only from the vantage point of rationality...It is a question worth looking into whether modern psychology and psychiatry have provided us with the conceptual tools which would enable us to construct, as it were, a counter-theory of irrational politics, a kind of pathology of international politics’ (Morgenthau 1985: 4-6). Waltz makes it more explicit that though the levels of analysis of individual thinking and domestic politics (the first and the second images in his own terms) ‘describe the forces in world politics’, those could by no means predict the result of the operation of forces in world politics if they are not examined in the third image, namely the level of interstate system (Waltz 1959: 238). For both thinkers, irrational conducts by policy makers, as well as events that departed from rational calculation of power and interests in relation to material capabilities are all pathological phenomena *external* to the normal operation of international system and practices of foreign policy. Once such things occurred, for example like the Indochina War waged by the United States, it created nothing but bitterness to the irrational practitioners of it, which would then add up to counter-currents in both theory and practice that helps to normalize state-behaviours, leading irrational actors unexceptionally to the consequence of ‘balance of power’ despite the variances of individual intentions at the beginning. After the end of the Cold War, Waltz has announced more specifically that ‘a relative harmony can, and

sometimes does prevail among nations, but always precariously so', and the thawing of the Cold War implied not only long peace, but more likely 'latent conflict to boom', because 'despite changes that constantly take place in the relations of nations, the basic structure of international politics continues to be anarchic' (Waltz 1993: 59, 78). To Waltz, the *interregnum* conjuncture in the post-Cold War era cannot falsify his theory because balance of power as a corollary of anarchy will emerge sooner or later as long as the human societies continue to live in the anarchical epoch (Waltz 2000: 27).

Realist theorists have adopted two major strategies to explain away the empirical anomalies they have confronted. The first strategy is to announce that 'balance of power' will come as the only result of any 'times of uncertainty' (for example, 'placid times' such as the post-Cold War era, see Waltz 1993: 78). It is argued that 'units in a self-help system engage in balancing behaviour' under the enduring epochal structure of anarchy, and irrational states who fail to engage in balancing strategies will finally be penalized, disciplined and normalized by the system (Waltz 1993: 71-79). The problem is that this timeless law of the anarchical epoch can never tell when exactly the moment of 'balance of power' will be. Another strategy usually deployed by realists to modify their theory is to reduce or over-specify their scope of analysis. Theorists under the rubric of realism have come to argue that the state's balancing behaviours are also determined by a series of contingencies such as perceptions of threat, domestic political processes, cultures and institutions (e.g. Walt 1987; Zakaria 1992; Christensen 1996; Schweller 2006). This strategy has directly resulted in theoretical degenerative-ness in a philosophy-of-science's sense, and gives good reason for questioning 'whether there is still anybody a realist' (Legro and Moravcsik 1999) or how small and specific the scope of empirical referents realism is addressing (e.g. Vasquez 1997)²¹.

The problem of anachronism is ultimately caused by a series of 'successive categories' that is rendered universal law of the anarchical condition. As realists conventionally believe, anarchy will cause 'self-helping' power struggle between states which tends to

²¹ Notably in John Vasquez's critique of realism in 1997, he argues that realism could not survive a Lakatosian reappraisal as a progressive research programme because realism has failed to maintain a consistent 'hardcore' of its theoretical assumption.

create ‘balance of power’. Stanley Hoffman has pointed out correctly that the balancing mechanism of the anarchical international system is an abstraction of a very specific period of history which was contingent on a conjunction of factors. ‘The model of the realists is a highly embellished ideal-type of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century international relations. This vision of the golden age is taken as a norm, both for empirical analysis, and evaluation’ (Hoffman 1959: 351). The spatio-temporal specificity of the ‘golden age’ is inherently allergic to the generalizing attempt made to establish the causal necessity between anarchy and self-helping state-behaviours. Paul Schroeder has further demystified the realist concept of ‘balance of power’ by showing that secondary states in the international system did not always balance against newly emerging hegemonies in the first instance; for example, when the Napoleon War broke out and the French hegemony began to overrun Europe, small states chose to bandwagon or hide themselves from the hegemonic expansion on the early stage (Schroeder 1994: 120-121). Both authors have indicated that anarchy epochal feature of the international system produces different conjunctural developments through which actors of the system have conveyed heterogeneous rather than homogenous behavioural logics.

However, historians like Schroeder have not propounded any alternative theoretical frameworks that transcends realism’s anachronism. What Schroeder has suggested is that historians should turn away from the neo-realist paradigm and return to concrete historical methods (Schroeder 1994: 147-148). In this sense, constructivism’s effort made to instate the ‘transformative logic’ by reconstructing the structure-agency relationship of ‘the international’ deserves attention. Drawing upon Emile Durkheim’s theory of social differentiation, John Ruggie argues that what matters more for social studies is not the systemic framework, but the form in which different social constituents associate with each other, which captures the ‘social facticity’ rather than metaphorical abstractions that stand off social reality. ‘The possibilities for individual action in the short run, and collective evolution in the long run, were to be accounted for by the changing forms of social *solidarity*’ (Ruggie 1986: 131, my italics). With the case of the transformation from the medieval to the modern international system which is deemed ‘the most important contextual change in international politics in this millennium’, Ruggie argues that the fundamental difference between the two modes of international system is that sovereignty and territoriality were perceived in

different ways in spite of the common structural condition of anarchy. Whereas ‘the institutionalization of public authority within mutually exclusive jurisdictional domains’ exists as the temporal character that distinguishes modern international system from previous structures, the feudal system of Medieval Europe was marked by a multi-layered system of interwoven allegiances and stratified jurisdictions in which the feudal ruling class could ‘travel and assume governance from one end of the continent to the other without hesitation or difficulty’ simply because of the overlapping and mutually inclusive private property rights and authority (ibid: 141). Like other constructivist theorists, Ruggie argues that what sets different epochs apart needs not be changes in the deep-seated structure of a system (anarchy), rather, it can be changes in ‘inter-subjectivity’, which, for Ruggie, refers to the way that ‘the constituent units (of the system) are separated from each other’ (ibid). Alexander Wendt, as well as Ruggie is fully aware that the structure of anarchy needs to be perceived by the state-actors as common knowledge. That is to say, though the absence of overarching arbitration as the structural reality in international system is real and objective, its effects on human practices on both the agential and the systemic levels depend on the way it is reinterpreted by its constituents in the form of ‘systemic culture’. With a particular set of terminologies, Wendt has further subdivided the meaning of anarchy into three auxiliary categories, which are theorized on a *lower level of abstraction*. Those famous terminologies for systemic cultures (Kantian, Lockean and Hobbesian) are sustained on the basis of three types of ‘inter-subjectivity’ constituted as collective identities of structural stability (Wendt 1999: 246). Once these systemic cultures have arisen, they have become social realities that enable and constrain agential practices regardless of the existence of individual cases of disagreement. Wendt has retold Rousseau’s story of stag-hunt as an example of how collective identity and systemic culture change, when one hunter *happens to* lunge at the hare, the consensus of the group begins to change from a cooperative culture to a distrustful one. In this process, the meaning of conjunctural analysis is twofold. One is the awareness that historical contingency could result in structural transformation of systemic culture, such as the accident betrayal of one hunter. However, ‘contingency’ alone cannot constitute any theoretical explanation. As for John Ruggie, it is misleading that the common perception of the meaning of sovereignty and territoriality were merely a product of inter-subjective construction as if it was negotiated among elites (Teschke 2003: 31). The other aspect of their conjuncture is

that there exist different forms of systemic cultures (e.g Hobbes, Kant and Locke) , these modes of collective identity all seem to have remarkable structural stability. Apart from Giddens' theory of structuration which is deployed by Wendt as a metaphor rather than a 'substantive social theory' (Wendt 1987: 359), transformation between different cultures is not theorized. Therefore, though there is a shared awareness of 'multiple temporalities' under the epoch of anarchy, there is no theorization of the emergence of the variety of conjunctural developments in relation to the epoch of anarchy. The reason for this is that constructivism and realism have both taken 'anarchy' as their starting point, whereas the concept of anarchy, namely the condition of 'a world without overarching authority' is by no means a sociological and materialist 'concrete abstraction'; also, it assumes no accumulative logic in a historical sense. To resolve this problem, we certainly needs to adopt a sociological and materialist starting point as the 'rational abstraction' to begin with. The problem is, does the sociological-materialist starting point have to be 'the logic of capital accumulation'?

2.5.2 U&CD and the problem of capital/capitalism

The non-sociological and non-materialist characteristics of the concept of anarchy and its problems demonstrated above have called forth a social approach to reconceptualizing the phenomenon of geopolitics. Recent studies have attempted this by defining geopolitical competition as a political expression of capital accumulation on the global scale (Harvey 2003; Callinicos 2007; Pozo-Martin 2006; Ashman 2009). 'Capital accumulation' is taken by these authors as the point of departure, the 'rational abstraction' by these authors to address the pertinence of geopolitical competition, especially the persistence of interstate system after the Cold War which is regarded by Kenneth Waltz as a result of anarchy (Waltz 1993, 2000). Alex Callinicos has provided the most general theorization of the interplay between the logic of capital and the phenomenon of geopolitical competition-because 'many capitals...jointly control the means of production from one another' and 'their competitive interaction...places units of production under systematic pressure to maximize profitability and to accumulate', capital accumulation would eventually manifest itself on the international level in the form of inter-imperialist competition. The rise of industrial capitalism (McNeil 1982) has made capitals 'increasingly

dependent on the support of their nation-states for the prosecution of their interests', thus 'both economic and geopolitical rivalries brought about a growing interdependence of state and capital, as a result of which the process of inter-state competition became *subsumed* under that between capitals' (Callinicos 2007: 540-541). Like Michael Mann who has recognized that geopolitics predated capitalism but is conducive to capital accumulation (Mann 1988: 126-127, 136-138), Callinicos has placed great emphasis on the functional dimension of geopolitics in relation to capital accumulation. Thus the 'logic of capital' is the rational abstraction deployed in his work. A similar formulation in line with Callinicos is Samantha Ashman's understanding of the uneven and combined quality of social development as an expression of global capital accumulation, '[f]or those parts of the world that are forced into capital's orbit via colonialism, the colonial state needs to be seen as a variant of the capitalist state-indeed as a remarkable example of the fusion of economics and politics'²², and 'in sum, capital can be seen to introduce a single logic, but one which results in diverse forms' (Ashman 2009: 38)²³.

Here comes the tension in these works, though geopolitics as well as postcolonial state-formation are both external to the making of capital accumulation, they are nevertheless regarded as functionally coterminous with the logic of capital by the above authors²⁴. As a result, modernity is further equated to capitalism, which implies an epoch in which *capital* remakes the world in its own image into *capitalism*. Can such an equation stand? As many other authors have noted with greater nuances, when capital as well as other forms of modern life strives to render other social forms fully conducive to its own logic of reproduction, counter-currents would emerge as an inevitable consequence (Dirlik 1997; Anderson 1998; Charabarty 2000: 47-71; Lin

²² Positing colonial states as variants of capitalist states with no way out of it also jettisons Trotsky's 'normative desire to emulate the bourgeois culture of Western civilization', see Shilliam 2009: 69-70.

²³ A typical example of this is David Harvey's *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* which views Deng Xiaoping's Reform project as of no other consequences but capitalist accumulation leading to dispossession of labours.

²⁴ For the historical critique of Callinicos's thesis, see Benno Teschke and Hannes Lacher, 2007, 'The Changing 'Logics' of Capitalist Competition', in *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 20, no. 4, pp. 565-580

2006, 2012; Wang 2004, 2011 etc.). As for the logic of capital, Dipesh Charabarty's identification of the 'two histories of capital' has crudely repudiated Callinicos and Ashman's thesis that geopolitics and post-colonial states are subsumed by capitals. The 'History 1' of capital accumulation involves the process by which capital posited its antecedent as part of its life-process; whereas there has also been 'History 2' in which capital accumulation confronts its antecedent that 'does not belong to its life process' and 'does not contribute to the self-reproduction of capital' (Charabarty 2000: 62-64). Similarly, within the general process of modernity is the wave of postmodernism conceived as part of 'the multiplicity of historical trajectories' that proclaims to 'dethrone the modern' (Dirlik 1997: 3-4). For example, when backward societies are industrializing themselves in a state-led way facing 'external whip of necessity', what is being implanted in those societies is actually industrialism rather than capitalism. Political elites in backward societies who pursued radical and speedy industrialization under geopolitical pressures could not be easily viewed as capitalism even though capital accumulation was promoted from time to time by these elites. For instance, the formation of developmental state was ultimately a geopolitically defined, rather than capital-defined project. The legacies of state-led development in many societies are not only that the state is in charge of industrialization by disciplining and weakening the civil society (Gray 2011: 584), but also that the state is held accountable for provision of social service and welfare to the workers (see for example Bian 2005: 127-135). Needless to say, these two traditions are contested and the latter will conceive potential antidotes to capitalism²⁵. Furthermore, in pursuing industrialization rather than capitalism, backward societies mobilized not only socio-political elements conducive to capitalism, but also vernacular and native elements which are conducive to industrialization but counteractive to capitalism. This is what Giovanni Arrighi and Sugihara Kaoru have recognized as China's industrious revolution based upon the thorough mobilization of human resources rather than capital. The interaction between western capitalism and East Asian societies has not remade East Asia in the image of the former; instead, it has driven some of those

²⁵ For analyses of anti-capitalist antidotes in late-developing industrialization, see Kees van der Pijl, 'Is the East Still Red' in *Globalization*, 2012; Lin Chun, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism*, 2006 and Li Minqi, *The Rise of China and the Demise of the Capitalist World-Economy*, 2008 etc.

societies further away from becoming self-sustaining capitalist systems by stimulating them to pursue an alternative approach to industrialization on the basis of ‘thorough utilization of human resources’ that differs sharply from ‘accumulation by dispossession’ (Sugihara 2005: 81-92)²⁶. Therefore, it is arguable that reading geopolitics and state-formation in the image of capital accumulation, one is likely to view everything as an linear outgrowth of capital accumulation no matter they have recognized the different origins of capital and geopolitics or not; by doing this, the spirally ascending logic of social development is ruled out in the sense that the *telos* of modern transformation is only capitalism no matter how many additional concepts have been deployed to ‘furnish the particularities’ of it (Rosenberg in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008: 87-89).

Viewing this problem in the perspective of Trotsky’s dialectics, it can be told that the problem with Callinicos et al. is the conflation between *capital* and *capitalism*. Capital accumulation as an general abstraction of a form of human activity is theorized at the expense of immense historical properties which might or might not be conducive to the logic of capital; whereas capitalism as a historically specific conjuncture refers to a state that major social forces were facilitating the process of capital accumulation. This conjuncture involves ‘the expropriation and partial eviction of country population’²⁷, the rise of new manufacturing centres against the old feudal towns, the eruptive supply of gold and silver in America (Pomeranz 2000: 264)²⁸, and the

²⁶ It has to be noted that Sugihara has placed too much emphasis on the dimension of thorough absorption of labour into industrialization, whereas Arrighi has more comprehensively addressed the dimension of protecting the labours and redistributing surplus among them.

²⁷ For example, Robert Brenner has documented the crucial role of contingently changing demographic pattern in England that has enabled the social property relations conducive to capitalist development, see Brenner 1985 and Brenner and Isset 2002.

²⁸ It needs to be noted that in terms of the origins of capitalism, Pomeranz’s thesis should not be treated as fully antithetical to that of Robert Brenner. The discovery of the circum-Caribbean periphery produced enough labour-intensive industries that came to replace their equivalents in England (Pomeranz 2000: 264). The nature of some industries determines that they have to be produced in a labour-intensive way and cannot be easily capitalized. Thus the social property regime that enabled capital-intensive industries and the discovery of overseas

removal of feudal check on usury and merchant capitals (Marx 1992: 527). More specifically, to be a *capitalist* society means to enable self-sustaining reproduction of capital. In the capitalist conjuncture, '[s]truggles over domination and exploitation that historically have been inextricably bound up with political power' have been turned into 'distinctively economic issues' (Wood 1981: 67). Since the workers are fully dispossessed of their means of production, '[t]he owner of labour power must therefore appear continuously in the market as the only means within capitalism of securing material reproduction'. Labour therefore needs no normative commitment to the economic exploitation that used to be maintained politically in the pre-capitalist society; the 'brittle bond of the callous cash nexus which is liable to snap in recession' will suffice to maintain the capitalist system on a self-sustaining basis (Burnham 2006: 38-39). With economic exploitation instituted as a private realm of social activity, the political sphere yielded to politicians and bureaucrats has become able to appear 'public' that is justified, moralized and fetishized by modern dogmas of democratism and legalism, which are more insidiously conducive to private capitalist accumulation in social-functional terms (Woods 1981; Rosenberg 1994: 124-129)²⁹. These all mean that capitalism which in reality refers to a historically specific conjuncture *only* in which major social forces serve the function of capital accumulation is in theory abstracted as a universal narrative (Chakrabarty's History 1). Historically, however, such an abstraction cannot rule out the existence of social forces reactionary and antithetical to capital accumulation (History 2) which were temporarily silenced in a capitalist conjuncture. Certainly, it is highly imaginable that at key points, those counter-forces operating 'within the margin of tolerance' would build into qualitative change of anti-capitalism because of the accumulation of these forces and interactions among societies. Therefore, both capitalism and capital accumulation cannot constitute a rational abstraction as a valid point of departure as they may rule out the spirally ascending logic of social development. 'The international', which is understood by Leon Trotsky as a field of interaction of multiple social forms, has to be the starting point of 'rational abstraction'. To study the peculiarities of national

replacement of labour-intensive industries are two necessary temporalities that co-produce the formation of capitalism in England.

²⁹ The manifestation of such role of the capitalist state can also be seen in David Harvey, *New Imperialism*, 2003.

histories is not to study the way in which a particular society is recreated by the logic of capital, but to clarify this society's *relationship* with the global context of which global capitalism is only a part (Lin 2012).

2.6 Conclusion: Uneven and Combined Development as a conjunctural international theory

To understand China's peasant-based socialist revolution is not only to transcend the Stalinist mechanistic notion of economic determinism, but also to break free from the orthodox narrative of 'succession of categories' built upon abstraction of the classic case of England-Both modes of explanation are epitomes of the problem of anachronism which rules out the imagination of multiple trajectories of social evolution. To probe for possibilities of alternative developmental trajectories, both Marx and Trotsky has looked into the Russian case for roots of socialist revolution without capitalist mode of production. Whereas Marx has demonstrated his 'theory of history', namely social development as a spirally ascending process via concrete historical analyses, Trotsky has organized the notion of spiral ascendance into a dialectics of 'skipping over stages' and 'sliding further backward'. This particular nature of social development in both of their works manifests itself in historically specific conjunctures that seem to have deviated from the structural tendency of development.

As Braudel has recognized 'the epochal(*longue durée*)' and 'the conjunctural' as two distinctive forms of historical realities, it has become questionable how the two forms of realities are theorizable in relation to each other. To render the two forms of social time co-constitutive, Trotsky starts by conceptualizing social development as inherently a process of multi-spatial interaction, in which the epochal-structural dimension of development is treated as a creation of multi-societal interaction (e.g. backwardness in the Russian case); and because interaction among societies is immanent, to understand the effect of a certain structure one always need to study the concrete processes of interaction which would altogether generate a 'cycle of events (conjuncture)' only via which could the product of a social development be theorized. Furthermore, according to Trotsky's dialectics of identity and non-identity as the philosophical premise of U&CD, the stagist notion of social development which is understood as a 'succession of categories' would be unsettled inevitably due to the

accumulative and interactive properties of social development; whereas ‘spiral ascendance’ could be theorized as an emergent property of ‘the international’.

The implications of U&CD are twofold. Firstly the starting point of socio-theoretical formulation needs to be a sociological and materialist concept which presupposes the logic of historical accumulation; thus the logic of anarchy, which assumes none of these qualities should not be treated as the abstraction where further historical determinations are to be derived. Secondly, it needs to be further noted that the starting point as a rational abstraction should enable one to envision social transformation that unsettles pre-existing causal orders because the immense historical difference ‘within the margins of tolerance’ ignored for abstraction will inevitably lead to qualitative change due to the accumulative and multi-spatially interactive logic of social development, the logic of capital should also be repudiated as the generic ‘rational abstraction’ because it bears the danger of ruling out spirally ascending social development by viewing everything as conducive to capital accumulation.

A recapitulation further to the above methodological consideration needs to be made before we proceed with the substantive analysis in the next chapter. By dropping both ‘anarchy’ and ‘capital’ as the departure of rational abstraction of modern Chinese development, I will by no means suggest that the logic of capital and capitalism as a global phenomenon is no longer relevant to understanding the history of modern state-formation in general. It is true that capitalism’s status as the *zeitgeist* and general temporal context of human time ever since the Industrial Revolution cannot be discounted. However, in conventionally speaking of the ‘general problems and issues of capitalism’, one can by no means assume that the word capitalism by itself constitute any independent mode of explanation. One can never deny that the operation of capitalism as a world-historical system is dependent, parasitic but also contingent upon a series of conjunctural factors such as geopolitical competitions and various national socio-political struggles, but what kind of deeper, theoretically active ‘organizing principles’ are those conjunctural factors subject to? The answer can certainly not be the logic of capital *per se* which only narrowly assumes the motive of endless need for surplus value. From the points of view of U&CD, the deeper organizing principles, with which one can understand the role of capital and the nature of capitalism by putting them into place, is the rational abstraction of ‘interactions among societies’ from which the uneven and combined texture of human

society beyond the time of capitalism has arisen as an emergent quality of multi-societal coexistence. Therefore, the rationale of U&CD is not to deny the significance of capitalist mode of production in the making of modern history, but to reveal the deeper theoretical underpinning of the concept of capitalism knowing that capitalism alone is by no means an independent mode of theorization.

Chapter 3 The Premodern Origins of the Peasant's Political Agency in China: Uneven and Combined Development and the Specificities of China's 'Condition of Backwardness'

3.1 Introduction: empire, bureaucracy and decline of the dynastic order

From this chapter, I will begin to develop a reinterpretation of the Chinese Revolution by critically engaging a few auxiliary concepts under the framework of Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD). The present chapter explores the origins of China's modern revolution as a historical condition arising from China's *longue durée* development via which the specific political agency of modern Chinese Revolution has been conceived. In Leon Trotsky's understanding of the possibilities of the Russian Revolution, Russia's proletarian class-formation was not cast simply as a solution to social crises in short-run conjunctures, but a response to some more enduring 'historical peculiarities' including 'the incompleteness of Russian feudalism' and its 'formlessness' and 'poverty of cultural movement' perceived as Russia's 'condition of backwardness' in the modern age (Trotsky 1980: 3-4). The significance of such *longue durée* analysis lies in a society's particular political agency for modern transformation as well as the specific trajectory such as the possibility of 'skipping over stages' (Lin 2006: 24). In China's case, the basic context of its modern revolution is characterized by the dominant discourse of 'national salvation', 'self-strengthening' and 'awakening of identity', which was consistently drawn upon by elites and revolutionaries to justify their reformist and revolutionary projects ever since the Self-strengthening Movement of the 1860s (Chen 1970; Schwarcz 1986; Fitzgerald 1996; Wells 2001; Mitter 2004). When the 1949 state of PRC was founded, Mao said little about communist doctrines but that 'the Chinese people has henceforth stood up'. This shows that the legitimacy of China's century-long revolution is determined by the extent to which the revolution could successfully address the 'condition of backwardness' of the Chinese society³⁰. The historical paradox of China, however, is

³⁰ It is easy to see that the theme of 'the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation' draws great continuity between different generations of the CCP's leadership. President Hu Jintao (in office during 2002-2012) argued that the task of the CCP is to realize the great rejuvenation, see <http://opinion.people.com.cn/GB/15839806.html> (last access Dec. 12th, 2012); also president Xi Jinping made his first public address to the media on the same topic, see

that the task of national salvation was undertaken by the peasant rather than the bourgeoisie or the worker in other previous experiences. Social condition that has given rise to such historical specificity is not a pre-given structural property, but a constantly evolving social reality which has emerged from the *longue durée* development. Now, I will first show the problems of the extant explanations of China's long-term, premodern development, and how U&CD could possibly overcome these problems.

Conventional explanations plagued by anachronism view China's condition of backwardness as an internal property of the structure of the Chinese agrarian society. The role of the Chinese state-bureaucracy has been widely regarded as the very factor that has over-determined China's 'absence of capitalism'. Joseph Needham has attempted to tackle his own riddle by showing that China's state-bureaucracy was the major barrier to technological and industrial progression. Needham's argument is twofold. On one hand, the oversized Chinese state-bureaucracy provided civilians with the ultimate entry to property ownership and capital accumulation, driving them all towards the official examination rather than other careers; on the other hand, the power of state-bureaucracy had undermined the social status of merchants by exerting considerable institutional and ideological pressure on them. Chinese merchants were therefore given no substantial social power, thus there have never been functional equivalents of western city-states in China because the merchants were never able to form a merchant-class (*guilds* in the West). The absence of all these conditions was the genesis of China's scientific backlash, so have there been no driving forces for industrialization and capitalist development which was premised upon the rise of merchant class and the legal recognition of private property in the West (Needham 1969: 183-185)³¹. Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett have extended this argument

http://news.xinhuanet.com/politics/2012-11/29/c_113852724.htm (last access Dec. 12th, 2012). For more on this point see Lin Chun, 2006, *The Transformation of Chinese Socialism*, pp. 60.

³¹ Economists have already attempted to explain the Needham question. See Justin Yifu Lin 1995, 'The Needham Puzzle: Why the Industrial Revolutions Did Not Originate in China?', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, vol. 43, no. 2, pp. 269-292. Lin argues that modern technology requires specially trained scientists for 'experiment cum science' whereas traditional technology only needs talented artisans and farmers which would naturally emerge from a large population.

to come to terms with the thesis of 'China's non-capitalism'. They argue that China's rural structure had constituted a social property regime that enabled 'extra-economic way of surplus extraction', which had in turn blockaded the peasant and the landlord's way into complete market competition (2002: 614). Such an argument has precluded the conclusion that the Chinese Revolution has generated nothing but a 'dynastic cycle' of recurrent dictatorial states if the basic structure of agrarian society cannot be replaced by capitalist social relations (more on this in chapter 1). This mode of explanation has dramatically simplified the meaning of the Chinese Revolution by treating it as an linear outgrowth of China's past experiences. This line of argument may also imply that to revolutionize China's traditional society is to replace the agrarian economy with a set of capitalist social relations; such an argument will in turn reduce the meaning of the Chinese Revolution to the simple idea of modernization or even westernization (Fairbank and Teng 1979; Bergere 1986). For sure, such arguments cannot possibly understand specificities of the Chinese peasant's political agency.

Why China's 'condition of backwardness' could not be understood as a simple matter of 'backward dictatorship' or 'absence of capitalism' which was self-generated within a 'dynastic cycle'? This is mainly because such absolute notions of China's premodern development would prevent understanding of the nature of the Chinese Revolution as an epochal leap-forward from China's past. Their common method, by viewing 'backwardness' as a inherent property of the Chinese society, could hardly prelude an idea about the Communist Revolution radically altering the traditional social relations. This problem has suggested that the meaning of China's backwardness, as well as the nature of China's premodern development will need to be reexamined from the vantage point of modernity, rather than the premodern history as a self-constitutive cycle. Regarding the revolutionary spirit of 'national salvation' that has run through the entire course of China's modern revolution, backwardness refers to the concrete condition that set China and her ruling elites in crisis of survival even *before* they came to encounter the capitalist West (ibid). Disparity in material power between China and the West could not be easily translated into a collective perception of 'crisis of survival' because even China did not have the European capitalist development, it does not necessarily mean in practice that China could be easily conquered by western powers. Furthermore, loosing battles to the West had to be

perceived as threatening to the existence of the Qing Dynasty otherwise no reform or revolution would have been incentivized. Therefore, the question of China's backwardness should be reframed as this: what specific social structure of the Qing state has constructed the meaning of the very 'crisis of survival' for the Chinese elites and their traditional polity?

In order to specify the crisis of China's traditional state, Philip Kuhn's *Rebellions and Its Enemies in Late Imperial China* (1980) has highlighted the significance of the Qing Dynasty as a conjuncture of deviation from the traditional pattern of Chinese history which needs to be viewed separately from the periodic breakdown of the traditional state. '[A] more profound process that is leading Chinese history irrevocably out of its own paths and producing basic changes in social and intellectual organization' was underway in the period of Qing (Kuhn 1980: 2-6). According to Philip Kuhn, there was an enduring tendency in the traditional society that the landed upper class, which served as the 'vital link between the bureaucracy and the local communities', could always 'made possible the reintegration of the traditional state in a shape similar to that of its predecessor' (Kuhn 1980: 3). The Qing Dynasty is the first historical period during which the traditional 're-integrative' state-formation facilitated by the landed aristocrats after dynastic breakdown was no longer possible. It is clear that the Qing Empire had been in a prolonged history of decline before foreign political control came to erode China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. As Kuhn suggests, the internal disintegration of the Manchu rule began to take place ever since late eighteenth century. From then on, China had remained 'on the brink of a new era of political breakdown and chaos' with the Imperial court reduced to impotence (Isaacs 1938: chapter 1).

Under these circumstances was the rationale and imperative of China's modern revolution perceived in a specific way which is irreducible to both 'reproducing dictatorship' or 'reproducing western capitalism'. Mao Zedong's revolution has grown directly from the non-existence of effective central authority. Mao's revolution is characterized by its telluric characteristics, its tight connection to China's peasant communities and its unusual strategy of 'villages besieging cities' (Schram 1969; Schmitt 1967; Moore 1966; Skocpol 1979; Deutscher 1984; Anderson 2010). Mao might not be too familiar with Marx and Lenin's original texts, but he was certainly familiar with the Chinese classic *The Outlaws of the Marsh*, which told the story of

former imperial officials setting up their own ‘counter-state’ against the Imperial court in remote mountainside to ‘enforce justice on behalf of the heaven (*titianxingdao*)’ (Hobsbawm 1994: 79). It is undeniable that the burgeoning tendency of local militarization created against the backdrop of agricultural decline has provided Mao the space, method and workforce to set up his revolutionary model. Needless to say that the numerous ‘red soviet powers’ and the ‘base area’ were all built in the same arena where the late imperial state and the successive Kuomintang regime failed to establish effective control. Mao’s revolution started from the power vacuum and social incohesiveness left by China’s traditional state, and the extent to which it had filled the vacuum underlay its orientation, alteration and consolidation (Perry 1980; Tiedemann 1996).

The question has then become twofold: First, what is the sociological meaning, say, the particular syndrome of the traditional social production system as the condition of backwardness which is consistently posited by China’s modern revolutionaries as an imperative of ‘constructing a modern state bolstered by institutions and approaches that could engender the cohesion necessary for socio-political stability’ (Schoppa 2000: 23)? Second, why did a peasant revolution emerge for resolving such a problem?. As for the origins of the power vacuum and social incohesiveness, Harold Isaacs has rightly remarked on a very general level that ‘[t]he backwardness of Chinese economy was determined primarily by the stagnation of productive forces over a lengthy historical period’ (Isaacs 1938: 2). In a more comprehensive sense, the ‘stagnation of productive forces’ is not a simple matter of China’s ‘absence of capitalism’ but more specifically a structural unfit between the organization of agricultural production and the political system designed to sustain an empire of continental size in the Qing Dynasty. As I will attempt to further prove, this ‘unfit’ has produced one fatal consequence for the Qing emperors: whereas the geopolitical composition on the Inner Asian frontier urged the Qing state to enlarge the bureaucratic system which was already oversized, the state-bureaucracy became increasingly difficult to sustain itself with revenues extracted from an agrarian economy that was over-exploited by the state itself³². More significantly, this

³² This argument seems similar to some of the critiques of the bureaucratic-rentier status of the Chinese state (Moore 1966). Nevertheless, if the *paramountcy* of the state-bureaucracy is viewed by those authors as the origins of China’s backwardness, I will argue that this was

contradictory structure of the Qing Dynasty has given rise to the political agency of China's peasant as a potential generator of revolutionary energy under the condition of backwardness: because the imperial state had dismantled the local landed aristocracies, the state became the sole agent which could provide social welfare to the vulnerable small-farming peasants, the decentralizing tendency in state-authority would give rise to the revolutionary potential of the peasantry aspiring to regeneration of the 'Mandate of Heaven'. The peasant's conception of justice was thus encapsulated in the idea of constructing a 'universal sovereignty' rather than the European 'parcellized sovereignty' (Anderson 1974: 397; Bloch 1978: 142-149); this particular political agency has foregrounded Mao's idea of 'people's sovereignty' and the nexus between peasant empowerment and national unification in the modern time.

In this regard, this chapter aims to provide not only a reconstruction of the historiography of China's pre-capitalist development from which the condition of backwardness originated, but also an example of the wider application of the framework of Uneven and Combined Development beyond the confine of the 'mode-of-production analysis' (Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008). On the empirical level, I will attempt to re-periodize China's premodern development based upon the Kyoto School's thesis that the rise of the state-bureaucracy marked the 'early modernity' (*kinsei*) in Chinese history (Miyakawa 1955; Konan 1992: 10; Miyazaki 1992: 153)³³. This understanding is justified on the basis that the situation of political disintegration underlying the evolution of modern revolution was itself a consequence of the development of the state-bureaucracy that had reached its zenith in the Qing Dynasty. The state-bureaucracy was a specific source of social power that came to organize the society only after a specific conjuncture of history (the Tang-Song transition) as a consequence of the interaction between the frontier nomads and the

never a transhistorical condition that could by itself constitute any sociological explanation. The state-bureaucracy only began to overpower other social forces in the Chinese society after the Tang-Song transition as a result of commercial growth, monetary innovation and frontier wars in the Song Dynasty. Once the paramount state-bureaucracy was in place, it began to be over-expanded in the subsequent episodes facing very specific nomad-sedentary geopolitics.

³³ For western debates on the conception of 'early modernities', see articles in the special issue of *Daedalus* vol. 127, no. 3, 1998.

agrarian society. The spatio-temporal specificity of the state-bureaucracy and its world-historical significance as the origin of China's 'early modernity' proves the existence of *epochal* transformation in premodern China which has precipitated the formation of the peasant's political agency in China before the western intrusion. Thus this argument will in turn reject the model of 'dynastic cycle' that views premodern China as non-evolutionary bearing no potential for modern transformation (Cohen 2003: 49-51).

3.2 Uneven and Combined Development and pre-capitalist social transformation: theorizing the spirally ascending pattern of China's *longue durée* development

The problematique of state bureaucracy is broadly viewed as a property of China's 'feudal' or 'oriental' mode of production perceived as changeless and non-evolutionary (the model of 'dynastic cycle'). In existing literature of China's premodern development, the centrality of Chinese state-bureaucracy as a pre-existing condition of China's development/non-development has been accentuated in the works of Joseph Needham, Barrington Moore, Robert Brenner and Christopher Isett, and the leading Chinese anthropologist Fei Xiaotong³⁴. Moore has famously argued that the imperial state was sustained on the basis of a reciprocal relationship between the gentry and the emperor. In contrast to their European counterparts, Chinese landlords had their interests vested in the 'façade of administrative centralization', because on one hand population pressure has created more hungry peasants to bid for lands³⁵, on the other hand the state had to control over a continent that stretched wider than the sum of all European states. Thus the Imperial bureaucracy had emerged as the only plausible means of control, which was sustained and refreshed through the official examination. The consequence of this correlation is that Chinese

³⁴ See Fei Xiaotong, *From the Soil: The Foundations of Chinese Society*, chapter 4, 'Chaxugeju', 1992; and *China's Gentry: Essays on Rural-Urban Relations*, chapter 1-2, 1953.

³⁵ Philip Huang has provided important analysis on the relationship between demographic pattern and capitalist development. His basic argument is that China's agricultural development has fallen into the trap of growth without development because of the involutionary pattern, which means that marginal output per unit of land is diminishing as the input of labour increases. See Huang 1985, 1990, 2002.

landlords protected by the state bureaucracy was detached from direct control of land, and the state's role as the sole proprietor was exercised via taxes rather than feudal rents, which distinguishes China's state-bureaucracy sharply from European feudalism (Moore 1966: 166-167).

However the decisive role of the state-bureaucracy is in the meantime taken for granted and de-historicized in these accounts with its origins and variations unexplained. Empirical challenges are twofold. First, the landlord's dependence on the state-bureaucracy for indirect extraction of surplus was not a transhistorical phenomenon; it was instead a product of a specific correlation of temporalities which requires deeper socio-historical explanation. Second, other forms of extraction such as coercive feudal rent did exist from time to time in tandem with the expansion of state-sanctioned taxes; for example, it is recorded that manor economy was prevalent in Song China. What are the deeper socio-historical reasons that explain the correlation of the two forms of social power, and why did the feudalist elements in Chinese manorialism eventuate into 'manorialism without feudalism' (Elvin 1972: 69)?

To solve this problematic have some Marxist historians attempted to erase the structural distinction between the Chinese pattern and the European version of feudalism by generating more inclusive conceptual frameworks. This attempt, however, is in a greater sense made to sustain the mode-of-production analysis rather than to give more historical nuances to the specific causal properties in the Chinese case. By conflating tax and rent to one unified category of 'pre-capitalist surplus control', Wickham argues that the premodern Chinese state was a variant of feudalism within which there was no antagonism between tax and rent and the state and the landed aristocracy (Wickham 1985: 172-175 *passim*)³⁶. This argument has somehow justified Barrington Moore's emphasis on the interdependence and coordination between the state and the landlords as the property of one longstanding social structure, rather than a spatio-temporally specific configuration of different forms of social power (*ibid*). The tension in Wickham's argument, however, lies in his recognition of the historical emergence of the interdependent structure between the

³⁶ Barrington Moore has also noticed the local power of landlords as a result of landownership, whilst he seems to have reduced it to the paramountcy of state power; see *Social Origins*, 1966, pp. 162-177.

state-bureaucracy and the landed class which began to take form only since the Tang Dynasty, and his persistent use of the concept of 'feudalist mode of production'. Tang was a critical turning point in Chinese history that the ideological autonomy of the aristocratic class remained on the early stage of the dynasty, and began to be systematically assimilated by its involvement in state service which had dissolved not only great aristocratic families in the north, but also small land-holding militias in the south, forming a 'universal bureaucratic-gentry stratum' in which the landowners' power was anchored (ibid: 172-173). After the turning point in Tang, the scenario depicted by Barrington Moore appeared in the Qing Dynasty at the height of bureaucratisation of landownership. Wickham's historical analysis has echoed a more comprehensive reappraisal of the periodization of Chinese history-the 'Kyoto School' which identifies the Tang-Song transition as the genesis of China's modern history. The leading author of the Kyoto School, Naito Konan has argued in his historical essays that what set the premodern Chinese history apart is the *Tang-Song transition*, before which 'the monarch did not have absolute power over the aristocrats, even in the Chin-Han (Qin-Han) period' (Miyakawa 1955: 537; Naito 1992). In the post-Song era, China began to differ from 'the military feudalism of Japan and medieval Europe' because of the decay of aristocratic class and the rise of despotism founded on a team of professional bureaucrats. Concerning the rise of the state-bureaucracy as the most ground-breaking historical development in China's history, it is arguable that there must be more than one concrete determinations underlying such transformation on the political level; however, the existence of those conjunctures in this case can by no means be explained by the concept of mode of production itself. Why?

Firstly all these attempts of relaxing tensions could not explain why tax and rent, exerted respectively by the state and the landlords as two separate modes of 'extra-economic exploitation', were constantly in changing relationships with each other, and the alliance between the state and the landed gentry was not as consistent as Barrington Moore describes (Wickham 1985: 173). Secondly, by thus extending the conceptual scope of 'feudalist mode of production', it becomes increasingly questionable whether the concept of 'mode of production' could be validated by so many variants; and whether the emergence of a paramount state-bureaucracy in Song was a historical necessity or linear result predetermined by China's internal logic of development. Though Wickham and the Kyoto School have both identified the

historical transformation that combined rent and tax within one coercive system, they have provided no theoretical explanation to the existence of such combination in which the rise of state-bureaucracy would be understood as part of spirally ascending development of Chinese history rather than a linear result of it. Concerning this problem, I now turn to the role of Uneven and Combined Development and the broader debate on its theoretical status in the study of pre-capitalist China.

Leon Trotsky's idea of Uneven and Combined Development is certainly a powerful antidote that unpack the idea of mode of production in the international perspective. As Justin Rosenberg has noted, interactions between two societies will gradually lead to qualitative change in the long-run by accumulating incremental change; this interactive character of accumulative development has presupposed a spirally ascending trajectory of world history, meaning that social development would periodically deviate from the pre-existing direction though it is predicated upon the past experience (Rosenberg 2012: 9-11). This notion is epitomized by Trotsky's understanding of the origins of Russia's backwardness constituted by the 'combined development' of Russia's long-term interaction with both the capitalist West and the nomadic East. Notably, though Russia's backwardness revealed itself more sharply when it encountered the pressure from the advanced European society, some components of this condition had been created long before the penetration of capitalist geopolitical pressures in a much broader *longue durée* accumulation. The condition of backwardness, which would be reconceptualized as a potentially more favourable condition for socialism in future conjunctures, was generated geo-culturally in Trotsky's sense. 'Russia stood not only geographically, but also socially and historically, between Europe and Asia' (Trotsky 1980: 5)³⁷. This particular location perpetuated Russia's interaction and engagement with social forms from both the

³⁷ Trotsky's treatment of Ancient China is slightly problematic in terms of his own conception of uneven and combined development. 'The Ancient civilizations of Egypt, India and China had a character self-sufficient enough' (Trotsky 1980: 4). If unevenness is understood as the 'most general law of the historic process' which enters and reconstructs itself in the process of combined development, China's case could in no sense be viewed as 'self-sufficient'; in this sense such a conception of premodern China runs the risk of falling Eurocentric (Hobson 2011). Justin Rosenberg's effort made to raise U&CD from the national-level concretion to a trans-historical category of 'general abstraction' attests to this point (Rosenberg 2006, 2010).

East and the West, thus the ‘Tartar yoke’ and the western geopolitical pressures, as well as the developmental paths they represented had both entered the state-formation of Tsarism, crystallizing in the ‘incompleteness of Russian feudalism’ known for its ‘formlessness and poverty of cultural monuments’ (ibid). This argument shows that the condition of backwardness arose from a concrete historical process registering ‘differentiated, interactive temporalities of development within a wider social formation’ (Rosenberg in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008: 101). This ‘wider social formation’ indicates two further points. First, backwardness is never reducible to any mechanism attached to a certain causally enclosed ‘mode of production’; and second, backwardness was not an unchanged condition existing synchronically with China’s premodern history, it emerged in a non-linear and accumulative manner which has necessarily entailed ‘qualitative transformation’. Notably, the Kyoto School’s argument that China’s modern era (*kinsei* in Japanese, *jīnshī* in Chinese) started from the transition from Tang to Song when landed aristocracies began to give way to state-bureaucracy in exercising socio-political power (Miyakawa 1955; Naito 1992: 10)³⁸ indicates that there have been remarkable ‘wholesale transformation’ in premodern China before the encounter with western capitalism. However, the Kyoto School’s identification of premodern China’s ‘wholesale transformation’ has not been sufficiently theorized in their own account; and this is what U&CD will promise to do.

3.3 Unevenness: the nomad-sedentary interaction and the North-South Divide

3.3.1 The nomad-sedentary unevenness: origins of the centralization of social power

Before examining the historical conjuncture in which China’s premodern ‘wholesale transformation’ was conceived, I will first analyze the major differential social forces whose constant interactions have co-produced the ‘international conjunctures’ of

³⁸ Though the Kyoto School has been repeatedly referred to by western scholars (e.g. Timothy Brook et al. 2005), works of these Japanese sinologists have not been systematically translated to English except for a few introductory notes. My discussion of this part of literature is based upon a ten-volumed collection of their works in Chinese, *Riben xuezhe yanjiu zhongguo shilun xuanyi* (*Selected Translation of Japanese Scholars on China*), Zhonghua Shuju (Chinese Book-house), Beijing 1992.

China's premodern development. These forces include the engagement between the frontier nomadic societies and the agrarian society and that between the militarized northern states and the southern commercial world. When one refers to 'China' as a geo-cultural entity, the first question that requires clarity is the range and scale of such an entity. Geographically, one may easily identify the diverse forms of ecological and socio-productive systems spanning the whole Eurasian continent where boundaries of the Chinese state has been drawn differently throughout history (Lattimore 1951; Perdue 2004). Thus it is significant to understand in what way the various geo-cultural forms had been hung together through a certain set of political arrangements, and such political arrangements and its underlying correlation of social forces have co-determined the longevity of Chinese civilization (Elvin 1973: 22). It is noticeable that the centralized state-apparatus created by the northern nomadic polities in their prolonged history of military expansion has served a critical role in national unification; but in what kind of socio-historical milieu was the centralized state constituted?

The nomadic society as a pre-capitalist form of society is widely known for its life-style predicated upon mobility and military readiness rather than fixed property. It is noted that nomadism is a form of society with 'geographically extensive military action' and relatively underdeveloped civil administration (Lattimore 1962: 480-491; Mann 1986: 9). 'From the beginning, the Manchu rulers organized their society to make war' (Perdue 2005: 547). Nomadism as a militarily driven social form is marked by its 'formlessness' and 'poverty of cultural monuments' (Trotsky 1980: 4). The reason for this character is the nature of pastoral production and the living conditions of the nomadic societies, whose rise and fall was contingent upon the periodic change of aridity in pastoral fields (Khazanov 1968: 200). The high degree of mobility of nomadic tribes has made the idea of private property underdeveloped; but this does not mean that individual producers of a nomadic society were directly controlled by the state as a personified central proprietor. Marx argues that 'what exists is only communal property, and only private *possession*' (Marx 1973: 489, my italics). This does not mean that the redistribution of property in tribal societies was 'communal'. The entire landed property of one society was owned by the state in an abstract form,

whereas the possession of landed property was supported by a series of military and political institutions controlled by the state (Natsagdorj 1967: 266-272)³⁹.

The ecological and environmental hardships faced by the nomadic tribes compelled their political and military organizations to seek further sources of agricultural surplus from adjacent locations such as cities, towns and broader areas of sedentary society. Bountiful resources and higher level of economic development in their sedentary agrarian neighbours came to make towns and cities with fixed landed property 'the centre of warfare' (Marx 1973: 489-495). So even though shortlived peace between the nomads and the settled communities could be founded upon specific political arrangement such as the tributary system, open warfare between the two different social forms became prevalent as a result of a series of structural-material constraints caused by ecological crisis (Matin 2007: 430-432). The intensive geopolitical engagement between the nomadic tribal and the settled agrarian polities had given rise to two contradictory and mutually propelling processes, namely the 'nomadization of agriculture' and the 'sedentarization of nomads' which had made state-formation in the aftermath of nomadic conquest a complex process. In 'sedentarization of nomads', the centralizing landownership of patrimonial state was contradictory to the parcellized private property regime prevalent in sedentary agricultural economies. Concerning the endurance and prevalence of tribal societies, the premodern Chinese history revolved around the central theme of how the militarily triumphant nomadic polities attempted to utilize the economically and culturally advanced elements of the sedentary society to sustain their state-held military machinery and corresponding social relations. As for 'nomadization of agriculture', settled agrarian societies attempted to borrow the militarily advanced

³⁹ Academician Sh. Natsagdorj's seminal paper 'The Economic Basis of Feudalism in Mongolia' (1967) has documented the various forms of property relations coexisting under the state-monopoly in the nomadic tribes. On a more generalized level, however, it could be summed up that the way the complex relationships of property was maintained was in nature 'bureaucratic' and 'centralized'. 'Rent' is paid to 'the supreme owner of the land, the state, in the person of the emperor' in the form of 'one-on-hand' which is functionally equivalent to public service to the state and tributary tax (Natsagdorj 1967: 281).

elements of nomadic tribes to protect their own existence. Let us see how the ‘medieval’ Chinese history (Eberhard 1965: 22)⁴⁰ unfolded in such a matrix.

Growing in parallel with its nomadic neighbours, the Chinese agrarian society took its root in the loess regions of the continent, originating in both the northern Yellow River Valley and the southern Yangzi Delta. Wet marshes, heavy rainfall and relatively more favourable conditions for agricultural production made these regions ripe for irrigated rice-growing economy. Because of the relative advantage in soil fertility and richer supply of agricultural surpluses, agrarian communities concentrated on the loess lands of the continent have long been ‘the primary focus of Chinese history’ (Lattimore 1951: 27-33). Output of agricultural production in those regions was largely determined by climatic and ecological changes, whose uncertainty impelled the ancient Chinese agrarian communities to introduce significant technological innovation. Archaeological evidences have demonstrated that Chinese metallurgy had reached a high level of development in the pre-imperial era. The technique of copper minting was invented in the Great Bronze Age and reached the height in the Shang Dynasty (B.C. 1000). Hydraulic projects in all scales were constructed in the Yellow River Valley under a state-supervised corvée labour system. Private ownership and unrestrained exchanges of lands existed widely (Fairbank and Goldman 2006: 29-45). On this basis, the cultural and political identity of Middle Kingdom (*Zhongguo*) was first conceived in the formation of China’s earliest polity as a geographical characterization of the loess heartland of irrigated agriculture, and the Zhou (Chou) Dynasty was the first carrier of this identity. The Zhou Dynasty has in a large sense resembled European feudalism founded upon unstable political coalitions between Dukes and Lords in northern and central plains similar in form to feudal fief under the mandate of the Imperial Overlord (*Tianzi*). However, the Zhou Dynasty and its feudal mode of society have eventually collapsed under the intensive onslaughts of Rong and Di nomadic tribes from the northern frontier. The collapse of the Zhou Dynasty immediately resulted in intra-systemic conflicts between warlords and aristocrats who were in the meantime proprietors of agricultural lands. The Spring

⁴⁰ The term ‘Medieval China’ is used by Wolfram Eberhard to refer to China’s history of feudalism originating in 400 BC (Eberhard 1965: 22-27). It needs to be noted that Eberhard defines feudalism broadly as a form of ‘society of basically agrarian character with two clearly separated social classes: a ruling and a ruled class’ (ibid: 27).

and Autumn Era and the Warring State Era that took place after the collapse of Zhou were a time that China's political scene was populated by aristocratic warlords who engaged in 'political accumulation' through which their economic surpluses could only be extracted via political domination and conquest over their counterparts. The aristocrats in this course were identified along the lines of blood and ancestral lineages. It was against this backdrop that the earliest Confucian culture emerged, which taught people that individual practices of benevolence (*ren*) and justice (*yi*) would suffice to accommodate the 'will of heaven' (*tianyi*) defined in accordance to the ritual customs of family/clan-based kingdoms (Wang 2004: 163). During the time, activities from which Confucius' understanding of benevolence and justice was derived were mostly ceremonies and rites held by Dukes and Kings in the Warring State period, which have all been documented in *Analects* as the generic texts of Confucianism (Schwartz 1985: 58). Through these activities and their implications, Confucius taught that political legitimacy could be achieved through the sound coordination between one's personal moral practice and the practice of ancestral ritual (*li*) and music education (*yue*), thus Confucianism did not need any external, objective reference to indicate its moral validity at its founding stage. The early physiognomy of Confucianism mirrored the aristocratic families' role as the key agency in China's pre-imperial social life. The families' presiding of politics, as Benjamin Schwartz has precisely noted, drew a sharp contrast between the western view of justice expressed by Plato and Aristotle and Confucianism, which believes that political order could be derived from, and justified on the basis of the hierarchical order of family; and the derivation that distinguishes the Chinese cultural tradition with the western one is traceable in Confucius' acknowledgement of the 'economic role of the family' which predetermined the socio-political structure of *Chunqiu* and *Zhanguo* politics and the rationale behind their political accumulation (Schwartz 1985: 69-70).

The Warring State competition, which closely represented the feudal form of political accumulation in Europe has by the end diverged from the European experience dramatically. The reason was that in each of the warring states, a tendency of centralization and bureaucraticization of social and economic power unfolded in tandem with the power of lineage-based aristocracies. The most critical factor that supervened into the intra-systemic competitions among warlords and aristocracies was the enduring impact of the nomadic tribes radiating from the northern frontier. The

nature of war-readiness of nomadic tribes stood as the enduring ‘external whip of necessity’ hanging over the head of the sedentary agrarian societies in the loess plain. However, both forms of society were in the meantime bequeathing each other with ‘privileges of backwardness’ in different aspects. For the nomadic society that was backward in terms of economic productivity and politico-cultural maturity, the agrarian society was always an attraction of landed resources and cultural heritages (Lattimore 1962: 415-416). For the agrarian society with advanced agricultural production and much richer cultural legacies, the nomadic society was where knowledge of military organization and war techniques were obtained. Through this interaction, the early Chinese state-formation has produced rich socio-political legacies that in Mark Elvin’s terms were essential to the sustainability of a sizable empire (Elvin 1973). In military terms, pre-imperial aristocratic warlords benefited a lot by borrowing martial cultures, drilling techniques and use of weapons from nomadic tribes. With the techniques of cavalry, crossbow and archery taken directly from the nomadic societies, the war machinery of the warring polities became more efficient and formidable (Elvin 1973: 42-48). In politico-cultural terms, the nomadic pressure forced a bureaucratic dimension into existence in the state structure of pre-imperial polities; whereas hydraulic projects emphasized by Wittfogel was just one minor reason for the rise of paramount state-power. The state-dominated corvée labour system was widely applied in recruiting soldiers to fight both nomads and other warring states. The centralizing tendency in the states in contact with the nomadic society amplified social unevenness on the North-South plane of the Chinese territory.

3.3.2 The North-South Unevenness: South China as an economic attraction to warring societies

Agricultural production in northern and southern parts of China differed greatly for their respective ecological and socioeconomic conditions. Such difference across regions generated an additional plane of social unevenness operating in combination with the nomad-sedentary geopolitical composition. North China is covered with dry wheat-millet area where growing season is shorter due to long winter and limited rainfall, whereas in the south, the ‘moist rice-growing areas’ are normally double-cropped and even tripe-cropped (Fairbank and Goldman 1998: 5). Because of the relatively more favourable climate and natural setting, social groups in the south were

more likely to have richer agricultural surpluses at disposal. This situation had, as a result, turned into a higher degree of division of labour and commercialization in southern urban areas. Landed aristocrats were one of the most predominant social and political forces that ran into sharp contradiction with the state-power from time to time. Rich landlords in the south expanded their possession of estates not only by buying more lands, but more importantly by rendering free peasants 'bondaged to the soil' under the system of private services which were in conflict with the state-held official service (Elvin 1973: 71). Northern societies, facing harsh geopolitical exigencies from the nomadic frontier and the relatively lower agricultural productivity, were always more developed in military organizations and warring techniques largely due to their enduring technical and institutional exchanges with frontier nomads. The north-south unevenness thus became the structural condition that compelled northern polities to incorporate the southern societies to their projects of political unification by force.

Interactions between the nomadic and sedentary societies on the northern frontier sharpened the North-South contrast by creating different political forms. An overview of the dynastic history immediately tells us that most united polities took their roots in the north where ancient polities were dominated by a strong military class of 'power broker' with leverage in the state. Though in overall, the formation of aristocratic power in both the north and the south incurred tensions between the landed class and the state-bureaucracy due to enduring military threat from external societies, the extent to which the state-bureaucracy could be enforced was by all means greater in the north, where there were not many 'landlords' (Miyakawa 1955). On the contrary, imposing state-bureaucracy and methods of centralized administrative control on the southern communities was a difficult task for northern empires for the greater influence of local landed aristocrats whose power was achieved on the basis of higher degree of centralized agricultural production (Ebrey 1978: 26).

Whereas the higher agricultural productivity and better-developed commercial centres have long been a source of revenue for the northern martial polities (see Abu-Lughod 1989: 156), the difficulty in transplanting state-bureaucracy to the south had rendered the coexistence and equilibrium between the personalized state-power and the aristocratic families unstable. Conflicts could easily occur between the southward imperial expansion and southern landlords' effort to restore economic and social

autonomy. Patterns of the North-South interaction were diverse. In some occasions, there could simply be open warfare between northern colonizers and southern defenders. In other cases, southern landed aristocracies could strategically decide to ally with or rally to the northern invaders, seeking to have their interests vested in the state-bureaucracy. On the early stages of the imperial history, there had also been from time to time independent kingdoms in geographical isolation (Ebrey 1978), whereas after the Song Dynasty, intensified taxation over the southern agrarian society resulted in mushrooming sectarian societies and rural militarization underlying the imperial decline in Qing (Kuhn 1980: 10). In a long-term perspective, the North-South contrast was increasingly deepened because of higher agricultural productivity and more prosperous commercial activities in the south which endured as an attraction to northern imperial powers. Therefore the incompatibility between the northern imperial political system and southern aristocratic families sowed the seed of centrifugal decline in state-authority alongside the extraordinary expansion of China's imperial state; however it also means that from time to time there could also be a reciprocal relationship between the northern and southern social forces underlying many centralized empires in their heydays.

3.4 Combination: the dialectics of nation-state and empire

3.4.1 Qin-Han: early empires established upon the equilibrium between landed aristocracies and state-bureaucracy

Now I will turn to the historical conjunctures of 'combination' in which the aforementioned social forms have generated spirally ascending development. The first unified empire in Chinese history was the Qin (Chin) Dynasty, which was not much predicated on common cultural awareness but military domination. The Qin Empire originated in a kingdom in the Warring State era (476-221 B.C.) situated at the contemporary Shaanxi province next to the Inner Asian frontier. Strictly speaking, the Qin state was not at the heartland of loess region where agricultural economy was the most prosperous. The main secret of Qin's success was traceable to its close contact with frontier nomads through which Qin's military capacity and organization had been substantially developed. In the early years of Qin, the intensive attack from the Rong barbarians made Qin's state-structure increasingly centralized especially in military terms. It is noticeable that the Qin state has conveyed a much stronger 'non-

Chinese characters'. The culture of the Qin society was dominated by imperial militarism which repudiated 'traditional mores, proper relationships and virtuous conduct' (Bodde 1986: 31-32). The Qin state stood as a formidable force that had swept across northern China by the second century B.C. much because of its deviation from Confucian principles and successful repression of aristocratic families. With the noticeable insertion of nomadic elements to its state-structure, the Qin state had carried out a series of reform to liquate the aristocratic landed class first within its own domain. In 350 B.C, Shang Yang, the Qin chancellor launched the agrarian reform that removed the traditional 'longitudinal and horizontal paths (*qian* and *mo*)' held by the noble landlords to separate cultivated fields, making land plots in flexible size and exchangeable on the market. This reform had not only attracted a larger number of landless peasants from other states to join the Qin Empire, but also further reduced the impact of landlords. Shang Yang's agrarian reform made the landlords less capable of tying the peasants to the land by rent, whereas enabling the state a broader basis of tax by freeing the peasants from the landlords' feudal mode of control (ibid: 35).

The Qin Empire (B.C. 221) was by all standards a brutally coercive system. Though the Qin Empire represented a radical effort made by the nomad-inspired northern warlords to unify the country, it has never succeeded in uprooting the stronghold of the aristocratic families and the stateless military 'power brokers' who could cooperate with any aristocrats. The most serious criticism of Qin's reign was about its ruthless extermination of China's cultural heritage especially the family-centred agrarian tradition. The corvee labour system was extended by far, taxes over agricultural production was high and the eradication of Confucius doctrines were violent. The Qin chancellor Li Si ordered the burning of Confucian classics because the family values it proclaimed ran counter to the imperial need of power-centralization (Lewis 2007: 18). Qin was put to the end by a contingent revolt headed by corvee labours, and after Qin's collapse a number of armed aristocratic families resurfaced to dominate the political scene for a short period of time.

The second unified empire in Chinese history, the Han Empire (202 B.C.-220 A.C.) emerged by assimilating the aristocratic families through either direct conquest or exchange of noble privileges for domination. The Han Empire continued Qin's expansion of state-bureaucracy and military centralization largely because of the need

to resist ensuing military threat from a greater nomadic military threat from the Hunic tribes, also known as *Xiongnu* on the Inner Asian frontier. *Xiongnu* underwent a process of militarization and unification of nomadic tribes, turning into a military-bureaucratic empire thirsty for 'external revenues to counterbalance the militarization of the society and the growing size of their courts' (Di Cosmo 2005: 188-190). The Han Empire's reaction to the geopolitical exigencies from the nomadic tribes had in a way demonstrated the interplay and coexistence between lineage-based families and state-bureaucracy. In the early stage, the Han Empire was adopting the policy of *he qin*, namely the inter-dynastic marriage with *Xiongnu* to lock the nomad into the Han's state-structure, forming a 'bipolar world order' on the frontier which was still in a large sense predicated on the dominance of the ruling *Liu* family. Because the inter-dynastic marriage could not successfully withhold the nomadic invasion, the Han emperors began to pursue more active military engagement with the nomadic frontier (Di Cosmo 2005: 215). In doing so, the Han emperors, as well as his *Liu* family began to beware of the necessity to bureaucratize the state and military forces in order to expand and regularize their size and capacity. When the role of the *Liu* family was weakened and undermined by the role of state-bureaucracy, the tension between the state and other aristocracies had arisen again. During the reign of Emperor Wudi, the Han Empire implemented a series of policies to exercise patrimonial power over the landed aristocrats via the state-bureaucracy (Lewis 2007: 63); and it is also recorded that the Han emperors relied more heavily upon bureaucratic officials in decision-making and the throne was checked by the officials substantially (Bielenstein 1980: 143-145). The Confucian ideology deserted in *Qin* was re-adopted by the Han emperors for blending family values and universal-imperial values into a unified imperial ideology. Han's reinterpretation of Confucius had highlighted the objective dimension to the notion of political legitimacy in Confucius' thought. To realize *Ren* and *Yi* (benevolence and justice), the practice of familial rites and music was inadequate. One also needs to 'convert the divinity of rituals and music to the scientific cognition of objective natural phenomena and the underlying supreme law of nature' (Wang 2004: 162-163, my translation from Chinese). The revival and development of Confucianism in Han consisted of a series of efforts to 'objectify' Confucianism in order to make it a set of universal heuristic and normative principles that could operate without observance of subjective familial rules. After a period of intellectual contention, Dong Zhongshu and his 'New Text School' had risen to the

status of orthodoxy with a theory of ‘*Yin-Yang Wuxing (Shade-Sunshine and Five Phases)*’ which was thought to have constituted the dialectic of universal motions. Dong Zhongshu’s *Chunqiu Fanlu (The Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals)* was honoured as the most authoritative companion to Confucius’s thoughts which subjected all moral principles to ‘a universal system that explained how all things worked and provided a blueprint for the best actions of the individuals and the state’, and ‘following this blueprint would lead to balance, harmony and success’ (Rainey 2010: 134-137)⁴¹.

Hereby it can be seen that the nomadic form of militarizing society has dramatically contributed to the emergence of the earliest unified empires in northern China by imbuing centralizing military organizations and warring techniques to northern agrarian polities, which then inevitably called forth the establishment and expansion of centralizing state-bureaucracy. The configuration of nomadic and agrarian elements in the Chinese polity determined its evolution, like the Qin-Han empire-formation, which was still built on a unstable power-equilibrium between the aristocratic families and the state-bureaucracy. Because of the overstretched domain of the two empires, their effort to expand centralizing control would inevitably run into conflict with the interests of local and regional landed aristocracies which were militarized on their own power base. As far as the social basis of both empires are concerned, though they relied heavily on bureaucratic administration, they were both polities borne out of and constrained by lineage-based militarist blocs. Thus the process of power consolidation involved not only bureaucratizing state-power, but also interweaving and coordinating family values in the expanding state-machinery. Whereas the failure of doing this has caused the collapse of Qin, the Han’s enlarged boundary and prolonged political stability was largely due to the balance between the two social forms. Now let me move to examine the Tang-Song transition as the advent of China’s *kinsei* caused by new amalgamation of social formations which tipped the balance of power away from the landed aristocracies towards the centralized state-bureaucracy. I will then show that the irreversible subordination of landed aristocracies to the state-bureaucracy was a qualitative change as an emergent

⁴¹ Wang Hui has detailed the transformation of Confucianism in the Han period to an ideology legitimizing the universal empire, see in his *Xiandai zhongguo sixiang de xingqi (The Rise of Modern Chinese Thoughts)*, vol. 1, pp. 160-175.

property of the interaction between nomadic and sedentary as well as military and commercial social forms.

3.4.2 The Tang-Song transition: the Chinese ‘kinsei’ and the temporary resemblance of modern nation-state

The historical event that the state-bureaucracy began to overpower landed aristocracies has been the most notable ‘qualitative change’ in premodern China which can even be treated as the marker of China’s entry to the modern time. The Tang-Song transition (A. D. 618-1279) is traceable to the socio-political amalgam underlying the Tang state. On the north-south plane of unevenness, it is recognizable that in the Tang Dynasty, the state had secured its revenues by establishing strong control over the Yangzi Delta where agricultural products and human resources were bountiful. To secure the state’s monopoly over economic surpluses, the Tang Dynasty had been for a long time trying to enforce the ‘equal land allocation system’ (*juntianzhi*) which took its root in the Tang Dynasty’s predecessor, the nomadic state of Northern Wei. By allocating lands evenly to individual peasants, the imperial state of Tang aimed at creating a tributary system that monopolized economic surpluses free of impact from landed nobles. The equal allocation of land had reduced the size of landed conglomerates held by a handful of great families, subsuming individual peasants and their households to the state-held system of taxation and labour service. One could easily detect similarities between the Tang land allocation and Mao Zedong’s Land Reform concerning not only the egalitarianism of both movements, but also that ‘the tenure granted under the (Tang) system was limited to the lifetime of the holder, and granted *only the right of use* (my emphasis)’ (Twitchett 1979: 25). Thus the Tang landed system marked the beginning of Chinese peasants’ structural dependence on the state for disaster-relief when ‘the *chun-tien* (*tuntian*) system was taken very seriously as the legal basis for all tenure of land, and every household’s landed possessions were registered in accordance with its legal entitlement’ (ibid). To deepen the state-bureaucracy’s penetration of society, the examination system was extended to the national scale based upon which a larger bureaucratic administration began to take shape. The nine-ranking system (*jiupin*) manipulated by the landed nobles had been replaced by the state-held examination which allowed agrarian civilians access to extraction and accumulation of economic surpluses via the state-bureaucracy. What the ‘equal land allocation system’ demonstrated was the state’s incentive to ‘maintain a large and well-off peasant class as a reservoir for (military) recruits’ which would in

turn strengthen the power of the state facing the nomadic Turks as the most dangerous enemy (Elvin 1972: 54-57).

However, the looming impact of nomad-sedentary interaction and the regional unevenness created by it would generate counter-forces to the operation of the state-monopoly of economy and society on the national scale. United great estates had never ceased to exist beyond the regulatory power of the state-bureaucracy and differentiation began to occur to the class of landed aristocracy. Whereas some landed nobles were high-ranking officials whose landed property was granted and protected by the imperial bureaucracy, some other landed nobles were still great aristocratic clans whose 'sphere of influence' remained intact from the expansion of state-power. This part of landed aristocracy, possessing private military forces, had eventually put the state-ordered tributary system to the end after the An Lushan rebellion (A. D. 755-763). An Lushan, as a militarist with nomadic ancestry, had almost uprooted the equal-land-allocation system via his military upheaval. When the devastating conflict had depopulated and pauperized the northern countryside, the peasants could not depend on the declining imperial state but the landed aristocracies who outcompeted the state in power after the An Lushan rebellion. Therefore, centralization of lands took place again in late Tang when the impoverished peasants began to voluntarily subordinate themselves to the landed aristocracies for protection. Servile-tenancy and feudal rent collection re-emerged after the collapse of Tang (Twitchett 1979: 26). In the period of political fragmentation after the Tang Dynasty, what populated China's social and political life were again family-centred warlords with large estates and servile labours dependent on their protection (Eberhard 1965). It was from these warlords engaging in political accumulation that the Song Dynasty had emerged. However this time, the emergence of Song was by no means a *replica* of former empires who were in constant tensions with the landed aristocracies that attempted to centralize their social and military power, it was, for the first time in history, a nation-state built upon rational control over the society by professional bureaucrats (Naito 1992; Banaji 2010). Let us take a glance at how this historically unprecedented social structure arose from the uneven and combined development in the politico-military struggles during the post-Tang era.

Sharper contrast among societies was always prone to generate contradiction-cum-transformation. The Tang-Song transition could be dated back to the sharpened

unevenness of economic development within and between southern and northern regions in China. Revolutionary development in technology and skills had occurred to agricultural production in both the north and the south since late Tang period. Most critically, the agricultural growth in the southern 'Ten Kingdoms' had given rise to new commercial and monetary institutions which had later become conducive to the remaking of universal state-bureaucracy. In the interregnum time of southern ten kingdoms between the Tang and the Song, southern regions were all engaging in different types of agricultural production with an ample supply of labour migrating from the war-torn north. The agricultural economy had not only increased in productivity, but also the degree of specialization along regional lines (Elvin 1973:146; Clark 2009: 171-178). The sharpened regional unevenness in agricultural production caused by specialization prompted southern regions and kingdoms to engage in inter/intra-regional trade in an unprecedented scale. Thus for the southern kingdoms, their economies began to develop with 'an unparalleled dependence upon trade', and such dependence coincided with the increasing volume of 'overseas commerce' (Marks 2007; Clark 2009: 177). The significance of trade within and beyond China had redirected the centre of economic life to the southern cities along the coast and inland waterways such as the Grand Canal where trade revenues had become the major source of taxes levied by the state (Clark 2009: 177). Facing such demand, a revolution in the monetary system took place through which taxes in cash had been introduced to replace taxes in kind (Elvin 1973: 146). The precocious development of iron and coal industries in the Song Dynasty had pushed the expansion of Chinese metallic industries to the level of England in the early phase of Industrial Revolution; thus metal cash needed for trade underwent a dramatic increase in supply due to the development of iron and copper minting (Hartwell 1962: 154-156). Also with the invention of printing technology, the Chinese government was able to sustain a 'monetary economy' on the basis of a mixed use of 'bills, tallies and tickets' without being constrained by the periodic decline in coinage. More importantly, because taxes could be levied in cash rather than only in kind and labour, a wider range of levy beyond land-tax began to appear, introducing 'household levy' and 'poll tax' which were not leviable in Tang (Elvin 1973: 148). Therefore the development in agricultural specialization and monetary innovation had paved the way to the commercial miracle in southern China as the economic basis of the rise of the bureaucratic nation-state (Curtin 1984: 109).

However, another historical force co-determining the Tang-Song transition was the blockage of northern trade route by the frontier nomads which impelled the founders of Song to turn southward. In the tenth century, the northern Liao state had already become a frontier empire in considerable size by annexing a series of nomadic tribes. The Tangut tribes, who later became the Xi Xia state in the Ordos Desert had been encroaching the Song territory since late tenth century. In mid-eleventh century the Xi Xia had expanded their territory to the entire frontier in the northwest from Ningxia, Gansu to Tibet, and the Song Dynasty had been 'cut off from the land route across Turkestan to Western Asia and Europe', which meant the closure of China's traditional trade route to the West operative in Tang (Lau and Huang 2009: 252-253). The nomadic encroachment of the north and the burgeoning commercial development in the south had together driven the Song Dynasty to become a commercial state, thus on economic grounds, the capital of Song was moved from Chang'an to Kaifeng, which was closer to the 'affluent south' (ibid: 222).

Because of the increasing significance of southern commercial economy to the Song emperors, the state bureaucracy, as the only agent that could effectively levy taxes effectively from commercial activities on national scale, gained more momentum than the aristocratic families did. In the meantime, the seizure of northern territories by nomad-tribal polities had impelled the founder of the Song Dynasty to reduce the size of the Chinese polity from a cosmopolitan empire to a limited state with stable source of revenues. With the economic centre of the state transferred to the south, the Song state needed a robust bureaucratic machinery to extract enough economic surpluses from the southern commerce. The founder of the Song, Emperor Taizu had succeeded in bureaucratizing the society by demilitarizing the war-machine of large aristocratic families and the influential militarists within the Song government. Having seized the throne via a *coup d'état*, Taizu had managed to subordinate regional-local military nobles through a series of political exchanges and manoeuvrings, after which military officials had been given comfortable official posts in the state-bureaucracy, and the military power had been centralized to the control of the emperor himself (Wang 1963: 191-194; Lau and Huang 2009: 216-217; McCord 1993: 17). More fundamentally, the rise of commercial economy in the south and the increasing commercial revenues enabled the Song state to sustain a large civil administration which had outcompeted the military sector. The state and the emperors' monopoly

over the military power was not realized by ‘a small group of extremely powerful lineages’, but a ‘new class of professional bureaucrats’ recruited from the open and rational official examination (Banaji 2010: 27-28).

Therefore it is fair to say that ever since the Song Dynasty, the state-bureaucracy began to rise above other class relations of the society by obtaining increasing socio-political autonomy, which was a major result of the commercial and monetary development in the southern economy. This autonomy had remade the imperial bureaucrats a rentier class in economic life which enabled them to extract wealth and profits through the bureaucratic system without participating production directly. It was only until then that the bureaucracy populated by professional scholar-officers had become an independent state-class. The Song state was in a larger sense a resemblance of modern nation-state in Europe that the governmental power and state-society relationship had been rationalized to keep the state as the sole agency capable of exercising legitimate violence over limited territorial scale in Max Weber’s sense. And on the basis of rational and professional state-bureaucracy, the identity of Chinese-ness had arisen in the form of nationalism because a milieu in which ‘the existence of the (Weberian) state is already very much taken for granted’, and the existence of ‘politically centralized units, and of a moral-political climate in which such centralized units are taken for granted’ (Gellner 1983: 4) was present in Song’s time. Therefore, the Song Dynasty has presented the fundamental ‘wholesale transformation’ from which China’s modern history (kinsei) unfolded with the temporary occurrence of a nation-state (Naito 1992: 10; Miyazaki 1992: 153), and after which China’s development had twisted into a course of ‘dynamic recurrence’ leading to the final breakdown (Anderson 1974: 540). The accumulative development on the plane of the nomad-sedentary unevenness gave a critical push that turned the Chinese state from a nation-state to an empire.

3.5 Development: the rise of a bureaucratic empire and the configuration of political agency of the peasantry

3.5.1 The Mongolian interlude: class society liquated

The rise of the Mongolian Empire was indeed the most significant world-historical event that reshaped the ‘social climate’ of the entire Eurasia. As for China, the penetration of the Mongolian political economy was crucial in the sense that the

Mongol overlord's harsh taxation over the tribal states on the Central Asian frontier had driven them to declare wars against the Song Dynasty for extra revenues (Abu-Lughod 1989: 154-157). More significantly, after the Mongolian Empire had inaugurated the Yuan Dynasty in China, the manorial economy of Song was dismantled and China was turned towards a 'status society'. In such a society, distribution of surplus was fully dominated by the state-bureaucracy not only for extracting revenues from the agrarian society to sustain foreign conquests, but also to subject the Chinese agrarian social groups, especially the southern landed aristocrats to the military-hierarchical order of the Mongolian nomadic tribe (ibid; see also Yates 2006: 217-218).

The concept of status society means that the ownership of land and redistribution of surplus were determined not by the social relations developed organically in production, but a hierarchy of political status mediated by the state-bureaucracy (Moulder 1978). To Trotsky, it was the 'incompetence' of feudalism that rendered a backward society 'formless'. In China's case, the formlessness of society originated in the tribal status-system superimposed by the Mongolian invaders. It is equally important that the structure of the state-bureaucracy was not a Mongolian invention but what the Mongol Empire (the Yuan Dynasty) inherited from the Song legacy. Under the Mongolian rule, the newly created state-bureaucracy demonstrated two characteristics. First, it was not a system open to all civilians; thus rural scholars who wanted to change their life by passing the exam in the Song Dynasty were prevented from leaving the countryside. Second, it was a highly coercive system that enabled the state boundless power in extracting surpluses from all sectors of the society by tax-farming. Landed property had been reclaimed and reshuffled by the state to reward the tribal-military notables in the form of appanages. Peasants' duties first paid to appanages in the form of taxes were then remitted to the government for a second round of equal redistribution among the appanages (Rossabi 1994: 448). Through this process, the agricultural production dominated by manors in Song had been 'pastoralized' with the power of the landlords dramatically reduced (Anderson 1979: 265).

Therefore, whereas the Song Dynasty had created a powerful state-bureaucracy operated by professional officials that was alienated from direct economic production, the Mongolian Yuan Dynasty had rendered the power of the state-bureaucratic class

insurmountable over all other social forces of the society via military conquest. Since the Tang-Song transition, no social force in China could outcompete the state in power because most of the threatening social forces had been dissolved by the military prowess of the Mongol Empire. The process of dissolution started with Yuan's inheritance of the institutional remnants created and left by the Song Dynasty, and was accelerated and reinforced by topping the Song legacy up with tribal-military elements. The Yuan Empire faltered for its ruthless colonization of Chinese institutions and culture with nomadic characteristics; and the bitter lesson of the Yuan Empire as a historical baggage suggested to the subsequent rulers that a more sophisticated balance was needed to sustain an empire based upon effective coordination between nomadic and sedentary social forms.

3.5.2 The debt of cosmopolitanism of the Qing Dynasty

After the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 A.C.) had been exhausted by continuous intra-factional struggles in the court, another strand of northern nomadic tribesmen, the Manchu had overrun the whole country and established the most ethnically sophisticated empire in Chinese history in 1644. Historians have argued from a comparative perspective that 'the Qing dynasty was not simply the last of the great dynasties of China; it was a multiethnic empire utilizing a diversity of governing institutions and routines' (Ho 1967; Miller 2000: 25). The Qing Empire has presented a great transformation replacing the Han-centred nation-state founded by Song with a multi-ethnic empire headed by Manchu, which was built upon the equilibrium of power among the northern nomads and the Han Chinese. In the meantime, the Qing Empire was the height of the enduring co-constitution between nomads and agrarian communities finally crystallized in the state's bureaucratic control of the society which had become predominant since the Song Dynasty. Now let us see how the logic of Uneven and Combined Development underlay this transformation and helped shed lights on the decline of imperial order based upon the understanding of the amalgam of nomadism, sedentariness and bureaucracy.

First of all, the rise of the Manchu power was a development traceable to the enduring interaction of nomadic war-oriented economy and agricultural production on the northern frontier. The Manchu was originally a nomadic society in the northeastern forest who was the descendent of Jianzhou Jurchen living in units of hunter-gather bands. Economically, the Manchu tribes were in close contact with settled villages of

higher degree of agricultural specialization. Through continuous trade and commercial relationships, part of the northeastern agricultural communities were either overtaken by Manchu tribes by force, or melted into semi-nomadic and semi-sedentary communities under specific political arrangement. Part of the Manchu society had given up their hunter-gatherer production and tribal lifestyle due to the enhanced sophistication of production acquired from economic connections with the adjacent agrarian society. Through 'sedentarization' had the Manchu not only adopted techniques and skills of agricultural production which helped them escape the periodic decline of pastoral fertility, but more importantly the bureaucratic institutions that eventually helped them tam the various geopolitical pressures arising from either the Chinese bordered garrisons and the remnants of war-prone Mongolian tribes (Lattimore 1951: 83-92; Michael 1965: 15). The bureaucratically manipulated socio-political system created by the Manchu leaders for coordinating and pacifying different geopolitical threats was known as the banner system, which was a 'semi-military and semi-productive/agricultural' institution. Under the banner system, '[n]obles, who were successful in war or who came to submit received new fields, families and serfs in smaller and greater numbers' on hereditary basis, whereas they were all subjected to the great overlord who maintained the unity of the organization for military purposes; most of the enfeoffed nobles had to be rotated in the professional army organized on the basis of the *Eight Banners* (Lattimore 1951: 130-133). The methods used to control the feudal nobles under the banner system was then turned into a bureaucratic administration after the Manchu conquest of China (Michael 1965: 53-55, 60-61).

The functional aspects of the banner system were manifold. Accumulating greater amount of agricultural surpluses was only one thing, and the more important driver of the system was indeed geopolitical. Based upon the bureaucratic allocation of means of production and means of subsistence in accordance with military ranking, the Manchu polity had assimilated a variety of racial and ethnical groups into the banner system during the years of war on the frontier. When the Manchu had grown to the extent that its military strength could support wider stretch of the imperial rule, its rise to power coincided the partial revival of the Mongol military forces adjacent to the Manchu heartland in northeastern China. The remnants of Mongol tribes meant not only a latent geopolitical threat to the Manchu state, but also a chance to upgrade the

Manchu military forces under certain political arrangements that detached the Mongolian militarists from their original tribes (Lattimore 1951: 89-91). In this sense, the Manchu rulers in the early years had made the 'banner system' the institutional home for both nomadic military preparation and ethnical synthesis in the Manchu's interest. The banner system was in some aspects resembling the Mongolian *minghan* that placed agricultural surpluses under the monopoly of patrimonial militarists, but it was more flexible in terms of its ethnical inclusiveness. Not only Mongolian tribes had been organized into banner units, but also Han groups, for example the border guards of the Ming Dynasty (*weishu*) on the frontier had been absorbed by this system as well (Michael 1965: 25-38). Using the banner system the Manchu tribes had increased its military capability very rapidly with a number of frontier military forces subjected to the Manchu overlord.

The Manchu occupation of China *proper* had embarked upon two processes. Firstly the banner system, which revolved around the artificial demarcation between nobles and civilians in military terms, had been forcefully imposed upon the Chinese society and the Han-centred state-bureaucracy. The Chinese institutional and cultural forms were both mobilized to consolidate the social privileges of the Manchu nobles; the bannermen who had contributed to the founding of Qing were given posts reserved for the Manchus in the bureaucratic system in order to undermine their military characteristics and differentiate them from the Han population (Elliot 2001: 133-135). Secondly the Qing emperors, with the lesson taken from the Mongol's ruthless pastoralization of China, had learned to coordinate the Manchu system with the Chinese society and culture without coercive imposition. Whereas the Qing armies had raided the southern landlords for times to dissolve them, and the government had in the meantime expanded the civil examination on provincially equal basis to subordinate landownership to scholarly office-holding (Anderson 1979: 530). However, as far as the banner system was concerned, ethical separatism was still maintained between peoples, which means exclusive economic privileges were still granted to the banner nobles on fixed terms. Both of these conditions required a expanded bureaucratic system that could only be maintained on a wide basis of financial revenues (Elliot 2001: 191-197).

Unlike the Song Dynasty which was a prototypical nation-state with limited ethnical and territorial boundaries, the Qing Dynasty was an ethnically and territorially

unbounded empire due to its specific origins of state-formation. This did not mean that the Qing emperors were ruthlessly expanding their sphere of control by annexing secondary polities, but that the institutional and political structure of the state assumed ethnical openness from the outset which was not necessarily compatible with the notion of fixed territory. As the banner system consisted of not only Manchu nobles but also Mongolian tribes and Han militarists, the complexity of ethnicities presupposed that the Qing emperors could not evade dealing with its relationships with the frontier tribal states and the remnants of Mongolian branches which kept posing geopolitical threats in all forms (Lattimore 1951: 83-89). The militarism of the Manchu and Mongolian societies had produced a series of repercussions after the founding of the Qing Dynasty on the northern frontier, which had resulted in the expansionist military agenda of the Qing emperors (Rowe 2009: 73). By the reign of Qianlong (1735-1796), the northwestern frontier had been settled under a series of political and diplomatic arrangements into an administrative area known as the 'New Dominion' (*Xinjiang*) after the largest tribal empire, the Zunghars had been dismantled by incessant imperial attacks (see Perdue 2005: 209-292 *passim*). The making of these political settlement involved not only politico-military domination but also cultural and economic maneuverings such as state-ordered long-distance migration. All these operations required an all-encompassing, multi-functional bureaucratic system with which methods of long-distance control could be substantiated.

3.5.3 The paradox of centralization and decentralization of the empire: the premodern origins of China's backwardness and the peasant's political agency

So far it has been demonstrated that the unique combination of the heritage of Chinese state-bureaucracy and the Qing Dynasty's cosmopolitan premise strengthened the enduring tendency of the state-bureaucracy overriding local powers. However the other side of the coin was that the more the emperors attempted to extend the centralized bureaucratic control over the wide-ranging terrain of the empire, the more prevalent the concomitant tendency of centrifugal decline in state-authority would appear. The Empire's bureaucratization of social life had in itself conceived the danger of decentralizing the state authority. The structural crisis of the Qing Empire was that on one hand, its ethnical and territorial openness assumed an all-encompassing character of the state-bureaucracy; whereas on the other hand, it was never financially possible to sustain bureaucratic control over all variegated forms

of social and political forces of the time. The complicated structure of the empire had made long-distance control increasingly difficult facing the heterogeneous local political incentives, when regional and local bureaucrats with the imperial mandate to govern were not directly controllable by the central government (Perdue 2005: 548). This absence of state intervention did not only mean local corruption and abuse of power, but more seriously a necessary coordination between the Qing's official standing army, the Manchu bannermen and the Green Standard Army as the 'inner core of garrison forces' and various local military forces with 'personally oriented command structures' of many kinds (Michael 1949: 470-471; McCord 1993: 18-19). In allowing the existence of these regional-local military forces with heterogeneous political and economic incentives, the Qing's centralizing bureaucratization had from the outset sowed the seed of centrifugal dissolution.

The contradictory dual process of centralization and decentralization gave rise to the particular backwardness of premodern China, whereas it also configured a very specific political agency of the Chinese peasant associated to the strength of the state. The specific condition of backwardness rested in the Chinese peasant's vulnerability. Though the imperial state could render the landed class dependent upon its bureaucratic system as what Barrington Moore describes, it could not resolve the social problems caused by intensifying tensions between the booming population and the limited productivity of lands in total. In colonizing frontier dominions, the Qing government had ordered a huge number of Han people to migrate into those frontier areas, and because most of China's local landlords who used to provide impoverished peasants with asylum by bonding them to the soil had already been disempowered by the time, the livelihood of those 'political migrants' had to be accounted for by the central government itself. As a result, the Qing state had turned into a specific 'developmental agrarian state' whose legitimacy, for most of the landless population, was premised upon its ability to maintain a granary system for rescuing the starving peasants (Perdue 2005: 549-561)⁴². As Peter Perdue has argued, the Qing state had long been involved in 'encouraging the fullest possible exploitation of landed resources, including foodstuffs and minerals'. The 'Mandate of Heaven' was determined by whether 'the state regulation and cooperation with merchants was

⁴² For details of the state-held granary system, see PE. Will and RB. Wong ed. *Nourishing the People: The State Civilian Granary System in China*, 1991.

directed toward the common goal of improving people's welfare while strengthening the resource of the state' (ibid: 541).

The specific condition of backwardness has on the other hand configured the Chinese peasant's political agency. Once the state failed to sustain an effective granary system or to improve agricultural input during the time of famine or natural disasters, it was unavoidable that impoverished peasants turned to regional military organizations or even bandits for living, which would in turn exacerbate the decline in the state's authority. However, if autonomous peasant revolts could ripple onto the systemic level, it always aspired to 'bolstering the state-authority' for provision of welfare and improvement of agricultural output. Egalitarianism and restoration of central government have thus been viewed as interdependent on each other by the Chinese peasant (see Lin 2006: 60). The Taiping Rebellion, which is viewed as the forerunner of Mao's revolution exemplifies such a mixture of political incentives. The Taiping Rebellion (1851) marked its difference from traditional military conquest by introducing the Christian ideology known as 'God-worshipping'. The universalist claim of Christianity was reinterpreted by its peasant leaders as a salvationist commission of renewing the 'Mandate of Heaven' which the corrupt Qing Dynasty no longer possessed. More significantly, the Taiping leaders believed that the 'Mandate of Heaven' which was tied to the state's ability of delivering welfare and promoting agricultural egalitarianism needed to be substantiated via a more potent bureaucratic system. The entire Taiping Kingdom was divided into a number of family-based units controlled by a sergeant who oversaw the civil and military activities of these units. The sergeant was then subject to a rigorously designed 'pyramidal hierarchy of officers' which supervised all the regional units under the imperial hierarchy (Kuhn 1980: 190). Though the Taiping movement did not entail any incentives of developmentalism and modernization which was central to the subsequent revolutionary moves, it has nonetheless established a key principle to which the subsequent revolutionaries adhered: social justice could only be delivered by a strong centralized state with firm control of civil and military activities (ibid). The failure of the Taiping Rebellion can also be partly attributed to its inability of reviving

agricultural productivity with a reinvented state-bureaucracy⁴³. Though such a principle bears numerous historical variances from the Self-strengthening Movement to Maoism, the centrality of state in maintaining social justice has never been denied throughout the modern history.

3.6 Conclusion

China's 'condition of backwardness', as the historical and logical starting point of China's modern revolutionary development, is conventionally theorized by various students of Chinese history as a situation in which China's economic and social development could only operate under a super-imposed, oversized state-bureaucracy which has caused the 'unfit' between socio-political relations and production forces (Isaac 1938: 2-5). However, such an 'unfit' was never a condition predetermined or self-constituted by any internal property of the Chinese society; it was instead the property of the major 'qualitative transformation' in history as a consequence of the prolonged interaction between the nomadic and the sedentary forms of society. Only by mapping the evolutionary trajectory of China's pre-capitalist *longue durée* can one understand the deep-seated crisis of imperial China, and the corresponding configuring of the peasant's political agency as the origin of modern peasant revolution.

By examining the nomad-sedentary interaction, Uneven and Combined Development can re-periodize China's premodern history in line with the thesis of 'Tang-Song transition' upheld by the Kyoto School, which argues that the predominance of state-bureaucracy instated in Song was the marker of China's entry to early modernity (*Kinsei* or *Jinshi*) (Miyakawa 1955; Naito 1992: 10; Miyazaki 1992: 153; also Anderson 1979: 540; Banaji 2010: 28, 34). Such a reconstructed historiography of pre-capitalist China will enable a redefinition of the historically specific problematique of China's backwardness, which can be understood as series of crises caused by a over-expanding state-bureaucracy superimposed upon a agrarian society of small-scale production. Having dismantled the local landed aristocracies, the state-administration operated by

⁴³ It is recorded that agricultural output dropped by 6% during the two decades of Taiping Kingdom, see Xu Dixin and Wu Chengming, 1993, *Zhongguo Zibenzhuyi Fazhanshi* (*The History of Capitalist Development in China*), vol. 3, pp. 275.

professional bureaucrats in Song was over-expanded and over-appropriated by imperial state-builders for extracting economic surpluses for military purposes, and to sustain a huge 'status society' emerging from frontier geopolitics. With the state-bureaucracy rendered the most powerful social force since the early modern era, the central question for the Chinese development became how to establish an effective structure of state-authority over a culturally and developmentally heterogeneous territorial space by which sufficient social service and agricultural growth could be provided to the vulnerable peasant communities. On this basis, the specific political agency of the Chinese peasant was historically conceived: 'bolstering state-authority' was perceived by the Chinese peasant as the key *modus operandi* to promote egalitarianism and economic development in order to renew the universal 'Mandate of Heaven'. Such political agency of the Chinese peasant conceived in the uneven and combined development of premodern history will foreground the analysis of China's encounter with the universalizing force of western modernity and enable a international conception of modern revolution transcending the extant dichotomy of Sino-centric and Eurocentric narratives.

Chapter 4 The Origins of China's 'Revolution of Backwardness' and the Paradoxical Marriage between Communism and Nationalism as the General Context of Modern Revolution

4.1 Introduction: Sino-centrism, Euro-centrism and 'Revolution of Backwardness'

How did China's imperial crisis give rise to the specific context of China's modern revolution, and why was the premodern political agency of the peasant translated into its modern form of peasant socialism? For this question, the Xinhai Revolution (1911) needs to be interpreted as a critical formative moment of China's modern revolution. In a military *coup d'état*, the Qing Empire was overthrown by a broad revolutionary alliance formed among regional militarists, overseas students and liberal-democratic revolutionaries; and the revolutionaries had created a constitutional republic (Republic of China) which was extremely unstable. The liberal-democratic regime founded in 1911 had soon descended into political fragmentation dominated by warlord politics, whereas liberal democracy became merely nominal. The bitter legacies of the 1911 Revolution, *inter alia* the unfulfilled promise of national liberation and unification urged more radical political resolutions to the Chinese nation's 'condition of backwardness' in the aftermath of the dynastic history. Social and political upheavals incurred by the Xinhai Revolution had created a power vacuum for more progressive forces to mushroom; and they had also taught the Chinese elites a bitter lesson about the failure of industrialization and political reform of the nineteenth century, and set for the revolutionaries new parameters within which early socialist thoughts were conceived. What is theoretically significant is that the 1911 Revolution has presented a typical case of liberal-democratic revolution fusing with traditional agrarian socioeconomic structure (Matin 2012). To understand the specific origins and patterns of the Chinese Revolution, this chapter will reconceptualize the development of the nineteenth century and the 1911 Revolution as the consequence of a prolonged 'Revolution of Backwardness' in which the incentives and possibilities of peasant-socialist revolution was conceived (Knei-Paz 1978; Matin 2006, 2012).

Notably, causes of the collapse of Qing and the 1911 Revolution is under-theorized because of the extant dichotomy between Sino-centrism and Eurocentrism which both tend to view China's entry to modernity as a singular process. They have

reduced the rationale of the Chinese Revolution to either ‘sustaining China’s premodern pattern of development’ or ‘adapting to the West’. Such a binary has prevented them from viewing the whole constellation of national and international contradictions that the 1911 Revolution was to address. The Eurocentric approach understands China’s modern transformation as a process of ‘impact-response’ dynamics. For this approach, the Chinese society is treated as a passive adaptor to the norms and pressures of the western society. The West is viewed as the only universalizing force of global social transformation, and China’s entire modern revolution is treated as an enterprise of the Chinese elites attempting to recreate the Chinese society in western images (Fairbank and Teng 1954; Gong 1998). Whereas the Eurocentric approach could by no means perceive the peasantry as a relevant agent of modern transformation, other scholars have come to pursue a Sino-centric approach that traces the particular consequences of 1911 to China’s own past. They argue that the profound agrarian structure of the Chinese society was too impervious to sustain genuine modernization. As a result, the Chinese elites’ effort to modernize the society would irrevocably compromise to the traditional political and social structures, producing ‘domination’ rather than ‘liberation’ (Esherick 1995: 48). By arguing so, these authors have not only interpreted the 1911 Revolution, but also the entire modern revolution as a continuation of China’s changeless past characterized by the agrarian structure. Thus Sinocentric accounts could not understand the particular agenda of China’s modern revolution, neither could they understand the specific role the peasant would play in the process (Moore 1966; Levenson 1968; Wolf 1969; Fairbank 1994). This chapter aims to demonstrate with Uneven and Combined Development (U&CD) that the explanation of the meaning of the Chinese Revolution can only be sought in a protracted historical process by which the Chinese elite-class strove to appropriate external social elements to resolve China’s own crisis of survival in the context of global capitalism. By doing so, the binary between Sino-centrism and Eurocentrism could be transcended.

By re-theorizing the 1911 Revolution as a combined development emerging from the interaction between premodern Chinese social forms and global capitalism, this chapter will further lay bare the relationship between the emerging discourse of ‘national salvation’ in the twentieth century and the general crisis of national survival in the nineteenth century caused by China’s encounter with global capitalism. The

1911 Revolution as a result of China's encounter with the West in the long nineteenth century will be reinterpreted as a critical formative moment of China's modern revolution which has generated the 'modular character' (Anderson 2006: 4) of modern Chinese identity. Such identity urgently demanded a revolutionary project as a combination of the idea of social equality and practical actions of national salvation which underlay the specific Chinese version of communism and nationalism. The meaning of the modular character of the Chinese Revolution will further shed lights on the emergence of China's peasant socialism as the central question of the thesis. The involvement of peasantry in Mao's revolutionary mobilization emerged as both a social formation under the circumstances created by nineteenth century's socio-political struggles and a critical negation of the legacies of the 1911 Revolution.

Therefore, this chapter will argue that the uneven and combined quality of the aforementioned historical conjunctures determines that China's early industrialization led to intensifying social contradictions and political upheaval which called for speedy resolution consisting of intertwined revolutionary perspectives of both nationalism and socialism/communism. Such a resolution of China's backwardness was first proposed by Sun Yat-sen in his 'Three People Principles'; and in integrating socialism to a wider project of national salvation, the incentive of socialist revolution arose without any mature capitalist social relations and working-class formation as the basic condition of Mao's communism based upon peasant mobilization (Lin 2006; D'Mello 2009). This chapter will be divided into the following sections. The first part examines the particular global context which compelled the Chinese elites to pursue a 'Revolution of Backwardness'. It will show that the unevenness between the Chinese empire sinking in its structural crisis and the 'geopolitically conveyed imperialist exploitation' existed as the world-historical origins of China's modern transformation; it will also show that what matters was not the abstract 'logic of capital', but the historically specific strategies of different imperialist powers determined by the timing of their interaction with the Chinese society. The second part will then turn to the 'combined development' of China's Revolution of Backwardness, which will be reinterpreted as a process of exacerbation of social inequality and deepening of geopolitical crisis. The last part of the empirical study will examine the end-products of China's long nineteenth century, which includes both the causes and consequences of the 1911 Revolution and the modular ideology (Sun Yat-sen's *Three peoples'*

Principles) the revolution has generated. It will argue that the 1911 Revolution emerged from the fragmentation of political authority which was intractably accelerated by the late imperial reforms; and Sun Yat-sen's thoughts, as a representation of China's particular national identity of modern revolution, have presented a peculiar fusion of nationalism and communism. The chapter concludes by recapping the debate on Sino-centrism and Euro-centrism and its implications for the general understanding of modern Chinese revolution.

4.2 Unevenness and the 'condition of backwardness': a disintegrating empire facing competing imperialisms

4.2.1 The structural crisis of the Qing Empire

The first plane of unevenness that entered the process of combined development of modern Chinese nationhood and the revolutionary ideology of 1911 was the unevenness among various internal social and cultural units conceived within the cosmopolitan Qing Dynasty (more on this in Chapter 3). The cosmopolitanism and heterogeneity of regional political structures have characterized the Qing polity, framing completely different political agenda for the emperors who governed an 'ever-larger population settled across greater stretches of territory' (Ho 1967; Wong 1997: 88). As an empire borne out of both frontier warfare and continuous interactions between agrarian and tribal societies, Qing was established as a peculiar imperial structure which had been making uninterrupted attempts to deploy state-bureaucracy to incorporate various tribal and pastoral societies on the frontier in order to pacify their war-prone character (Elliot 2001). This tendency made the Qing Empire fiscally thirsty, driving it to explore financial resources and control of agricultural and commercial surpluses in wider geographical areas. Thus ever since the founding of the Qing Dynasty, a centralizing tendency of state-formation was underway as a process of the state attempting to extend the reach of its bureaucratic administration deeper into the society. With owners of large estates demilitarized or rendered dependent upon the state-bureaucracy, the Qing Dynasty was resting upon the support of a discrete landed class known as 'the gentry', who secured their landownership by holding posts in government with themselves detached from direct agricultural production (Moore 1966; Brenner and Isett 2002: 614-617).

The financially driven centralizing tendency of the Qing Dynasty was further propelled by the dynamics of nomadic warfare and tribal state-formation on the northern frontier (Fletcher 1978; Perdue 2005). The socio-cultural cosmopolitanism of the Qing Empire, predicated upon its institutional structure known as the banner system, presupposed that the Qing emperors could not easily stop militarizing the northern frontier as a way of managing the interwoven racial and ethnical relationships upon which the legitimacy and state-ideology of the Empire was built, lest the Mongolian tribal empires would have waged wars against the imperial order if they were granted no place in the noble-ranking system. During the reign of Kangxi (1661-1722), the largest bordered empire, Zunghar had been dismantled and placed under the administration of 'New Dominion' as part of the state-bureaucratic system after a number of adventurous military expeditions launched by the Qing emperor (Perdue 2005: 209-292; Rowe 2009: 71). This tendency of military and administrative overstretch characterized the Qing Dynasty as an unprecedented era in Chinese history. The Manchu rule stood as 'the largest consolidated empire in Chinese history' sustained on the basis of feasible 'long-range policies of control and complex administrative and military apparatus' (Ho 1967: 189).

The Qing court held a number of 'long-range policies of control' and administrative skills at its disposal, whereas those administrative channels never guaranteed smooth operation and coordination of the empire. Financial difficulties had become a major challenge to the emperors not only because a large state-bureaucracy was required to control the newly conquered frontier communities, but also an enormous noble-ranking system was established under the state-bureaucracy for pacifying new ethnic groups incorporated to the empire by war. The geopolitically induced financial thirst thus brought up the issue of how to maximize the empire's revenues. To extract as much surplus as needed, the empire was in need of a even larger bureaucratic system over agricultural economy and trans-regional commerce. As a result, rents had been for the first time in history fixed politically and peasants were prohibited from joining large landlords to escape official charges (Huang 1990; Brenner and Isett 2002). To control the surplus of commercial activities, the Qing state had continued the Ming court's policy of maritime restriction (*haijin*) in order to undermine the power of private maritime merchants and centralize trade revenues (Arrighi 2005: 323). International trade had been restricted to a small commercial enclave at Canton

(contemporary Guangzhou) where the imperial bureaucrats of commerce, known as the *Hoppo* were appointed by the government to manipulate foreign trade; the *Cohong* licensed by the *Hoppo* was the only legal partner with which foreign businessmen could trade (Wakeman 1978). This mode of surplus extraction by the state-bureaucracy known as the tributary system was dressed in the discourse of ‘All under the Heaven’ (*tianxia*) as a dominant principle of the Qing’s diplomatic practice. The non-Chinese peoples, broadly perceived as ‘barbarians’ on the periphery of the imperial order was kept off the heartland of the empire and quarantined from Chinese civilians as to sustain the imperial supremacy predicated upon a hierarchy of ethnicities (Qian 2011; Zhao 2006).

The other side of the centralizing process of state-formation was an inevitable tendency of centrifugal decline plaguing the empire when the Qing rulers began to extend the reach of state-bureaucracy. The most notable aspect of the centrifugal decline was the tendency of local militarization documented in Philip Kuhn’s seminal account that identifies the temporal boundary of China’s traditional state (1980). Local militarization was originally a by-product of the expansion of banner system under which the Manchu nobles, known as the bannermen who enjoyed their fixed privileges according to hereditary military rankings without undertaking any duty in the army (Elliot 2001: 175). The Qing court allowed local-regional notables to maintain their informal private militias where imperial military forces were absent or could not be effectively deployed (McCord 1993: 18-21). The cosmopolitan character of the Qing Empire precluded the uneven growth of local militias which finally went out of the court’s control. The shortage of centrally commanded military forces impelled the Qing government to cooperate with local ethnical groups to balance against troublemaking populations such as forces of sectarian societies and bandits radiating from the overpopulated lands. Those local ethnical groups, however, had no bureaucratically defined position in the banner system, thus with no incentive to cooperate with the court, they had later joined rebellious forces as one of the major strategies of coping with agrarian crisis and internal trade disputes (e.g. the Miao rebellions on the southwest) (Perdue 2009: 265). The 1796 White Lotus Rebellion heralded a century of local military revolts, which had set the Qing court in a constantly paradoxical situation compelling it to choose between

officializing/empowering local military forces and letting them override the central authority.

All these contradictions emerging from the complex structure of the Qing Empire were together a testimony to Wang Hui's observation, that though the Qing Dynasty was officially an empire, it was nevertheless a hybrid system that entailed the structures of both unending empire and territorial nation-state⁴⁴. To Wang Hui, the structure of the Qing Empire was highly paradoxical in the sense that centralized state-authority and dispersion of local power-centres were struggling to outcompete each other. Whereas the imperial court strove to present itself as a consistent cultural and civilizational entity embodying a universalist spirit, this attempt contradicted the endogenous heterogeneity of the Chinese polity which was an inherent character of any unit of 'civilization' (Wang 2004: 27). The boundless and non-territorial structure of empire was from the outset contrasting to the very political institutions proved conducive to capitalist development in Europe (Wang 2004: 33), especially in the sense that the absence of centralized management of military forces based upon parcellized territories prevented the mutual propelling between capitalism and the art of war in China (McNeil 1982: 125; Tilly 1985: 169, 1990: 68). This thus became the logical starting point for the modern reformists and revolutionaries to denounce the imperial system for paralyzing the state's effective control of the military forces (e.g. Schwartz 1964: 6-8; Wang 2004: 837-840). However, this particular quest for modernity needed to be triggered by more specific conjunctures, which in China's case, was the penetration of variegated imperialisms.

4.2.2 Imperialisms: early and late partitioners of China

It is important to note that scholars like Philip Kuhn who focus on the internal crisis and tensions between different social forms within the imperial order have not finished telling the story of the Qing's decline and demise as a world-historical phenomenon because they have not theorized the world-historical context in which the imperial decline was accelerated and recreated into a new configuration of social forces. What does it mean by *world history* and how can we possibly place China's late

⁴⁴ As the previous chapter has shown, the collective memory of nation-state is the legacy of state-formation in the Song Dynasty marked by the Kyoto School as China's early modernity.

imperial transformation in due context? This is a question about how to theorize capitalist expansion and its character of global heterogeneity beyond the 'logic of capital'; and this problem is to be explained by the inbuilt conjunctural method of Uneven and Combined Development.

In general, it is obvious that the whole nineteenth century was characterized by the epoch when capitalism began to establish itself as a world system (Wallerstein 1974: 300). 'A world economy whose pace was set by its developed or developing capitalist core was extremely likely to turn into a world in which the 'advanced' dominated the backward', and capitalism as a comprehensive system of social relations was turned into various 'new types of empire' coupled with endless colonial wars as a global process (Hobsbawm 1987: 56-57). But the general context of globalized capitalism needs to be broken down into a set of more historically nuanced conceptual devices only with which can we make sense of the interaction between variegated forms of early and late developing societies. With the inbuilt conjunctural method of U&CD, I argue that the collective consequence of China's engagement with different forms of imperialism at different historical moments does matter in accounting for the end-product of China's revolutionary movement; also it is notable that interactions and co-constitutions among imperialisms themselves have constituted an lateral field of causality that shaped the changing world-historical context in which China's transformation had unfolded. Finally, China's involvement in the expansion of world capitalism would in return be 'inserted' back to the totality of capitalist geopolitical calculation and spatio-temporally differing developmental trajectories of imperialism (Trotsky 1980:), giving both spaces and pressures to specific agencies that led to the complication of capitalist development as a world-historical syndrome.

The first western power that came to develop 'sphere of influence' in China was Britain whose geopolitical interests were defined by the specific 'free-trade hegemony' (Arrighi 1994: 48) as well as Britain's relative *early* entry to the Chinese market. Britain as the leading country of the Industrial Revolution needed overseas marketplace to deal with her problem of overproduction at home. It was obvious in the nineteenth century that 'the early British industrial economy relied for its expansion chiefly on international trade' and Britain's domestic market was 'originally too small to maintain an industrial and trading apparatus of the size actually developed'. This was not only because that Britain did not have a population sizable enough to consume

her overgrown industrial products, but also the fact that the British working class was too poor to purchase these products manufactured in large quantities (Hobsbawm 1968: 113-114). Statistics have also shown that Britain's relative early start in industrializing national economy had granted her the advantage to expand into an 'international vacuum' where competitors in trade were absent. Late-developers from continental Europe trading foodstuffs for Britain's manufactured products had also come to render the British economy excessively dependent on foreign trade (ibid).

As Eric Hobsbawm has recorded (1968), there was a time when both industrializing countries and underdeveloped countries were dependent upon Britain's central role in international trade (1846-1873). Catching-up imperialist powers had however come to shake Britain's advantageous status in international trade especially from the Great Depression of 1870s onwards, since output of manufactured goods in these countries increased, turning those emerging industrial economies towards economic protectionism; Britain's industrial manufacturers were thus prompted to gradually relinquish their predominant role in world market by pursuing alternative modes of capital accumulation (Hobsbawm 1968: 116). From 1870s onwards, the tendency of industrial expansion across western countries had emerged to drive Britain towards exporting capital-intensive goods such as machinery, railway system and financial services demanded by late-developing countries where early industrialization was underway. When industrialization began to take place in other countries across Europe, Britain had already developed a 'world-wide networks of dependence' in which the British Empire was able to reproduce its interests by maintaining a 'global balance of power' among states on the basis of *haute finance* and liberal ideology proclaiming the marriage between free trade and universal wealth-this transformation enabled the British imperialism to be re-inaugurated without overusing coercion (Polanyi 1957: 14; Arrighi 1994: 56). Britain was then able to sustain her pre-existing interests in trade and finance in the stance of 'splendid isolation' rather than any form of direct intervention. Thus what determined Britain's geopolitical calculation about China was not only the nature of the so-called 'free trade imperialism' (Gallagher and Robinson 1953) but also Britain's relatively early entry to the Chinese market.

China's two neighbouring powers also deserve attention as they were struggling to change from archaic empires into *late-coming* imperialists while China was undergoing the bitter settlement of the Opium War. The economy of the Tsarist Russia by then

was still dominated by agricultural commerce without nationwide industrial development; commercial centres rather than industries were still the major source of revenue for the militarized Tsarist government. Thus ‘the distribution of the peasant industries over various districts created a demand for trade mediation on a larger scale’ (Trotsky 1980: 4). The Tsar’s effort to expand its trading space on China’s northern frontier was initiated from the seventeenth century when the Qing court was seeking to pacify the war turbulence from the Mongolian tribes. The Tsar had reached three territorial agreements with the Qing government in which the boundaries between the two empires had been roughly carved out as part of the Qing’s strategy to withstand other tribal societies. Through these agreements, the Russian merchants had been given equal access to trade and commercial activities on the frontier. The major problem, however, was that Russia’s trading privileges on the frontier were subject to the tributary system dominated by the Manchu jurisdiction according to which Beijing could suspend the trade relationship from time to time when even mild disorder such as opium smuggling and silver outflow occurred on the border; and the open area for trade specified and regulated by the three treaties was still too limited to accommodate the Russian trade. Russia was also seriously concerned with the possibility that Britain’s access to southern treaty ports would ‘prejudice’ the Sino-Russian trade on the frontier. Thus Russian officials had made all efforts to extend Russia’s trade zone beyond Kiakhta (Fletcher 1978a: 317-320). Since late eighteenth century, the Tsarist government and its commercial officials had been using all possible diplomatic channels to probe for the opening of trade in much wider frontier territories, *inter alia* Xinjiang province as well as the north-eastern Manchuria where Russia was obsessed with the navigational right of the Amur River. The Opium War and the Nanking Treaty gave Russia the chance to request trading privileges equivalent to that of Britain by shaking the foundation of the Qing’s monopoly of trade (Fletcher 1978a: 334; Scott 2008: 47). Xinjiang was forced open in the Kujia Treaty in 1851, and the entire northern frontier from Manchuria to Xinjiang was forced open to Russia in the 1860 Peking Treaty⁴⁵.

Russia’s vector of imperialist expansion was thus established on the northern frontier, and Russia had begun to enjoy exclusive privileges as the most-favoured-nation in

⁴⁵ In return, Russia offered military assistance to the Qing government in the war against the Taiping Rebellion, see Fletcher 1978: 348.

north-eastern Manchuria under extraterritorial jurisdiction (Fletcher 1978: 347-348). With wide-ranging territorial leaseholds in northern China, Russia's sphere of influence, however, underwent dramatic challenge from Japan as a rising great imperialist power in the region. Being much smaller and poorer than China and India, Japan was burdened by less colonial heritage so that it was left with a freehand to build up a new army and navy driven by the state-led industrialization after the Meiji Restoration (Norman 1940: 46; Moulder 1977: 93; Anievas and Allinson 2010: 484). However Japan's industrial development was internally uneven and contradictory as it had produced 'a highly concentrated urban capitalist sector, contrasting sharply with conditions in the countryside that many Marxists came to see as vestiges of feudalism' (Hoston 1986: 9). Thus Japan's capitalist development had from the outset haunted by endless 'agrarian crisis intertwined with industrial class struggle', to which 'an aggressively expansionist foreign policy in search of much needed raw materials and secure markets' for surplus capital was posited by the state-bureaucratic class as the only solution (Anievas and Allinson 2010: 485). Thus even though Manchuria was seized by Russia as an early comer, Japan's 'combined development as a geopolitical feedback loop' would inexorably encounter Russia's *status quo* power for the bountiful forest, mining and landed resources in the area.

4.3 Combination: industrialization, local militarization and national disintegration

4.3.1 From the Taiping Rebellion to the Summer Palace on fire: the Self-strengthening Movement as industrialization by local militarists

Britain's quest for China's opening up to free trade was enduring since late eighteenth century when the British merchants attempted to break into the Chinese market from Macao with the British warships landed nearby (Waley-Cohen 1999: 129-130). The early British adventure made to open the Chinese market had been rejected by the Qing government on crude ritualistic grounds, but conflicts between Britain's soaring demand for trade and China's restrictive control over trade and market were to take place sooner or later; 'China was one (unexploited area) which haunted the imagination of salesmen-what if every one of those 300 millions bought only one box of tin-tacks?' (Hobsbawm 1989: 66). Since mid eighteenth century, the British East Indian Company was shipping silver to China for tea which pushed up the silver price and placed great pressure on the Company to avert the trade deficit. Britain also needed to redirect Indian cotton exports away from Europe to China in order to find

a 'market outlet' for the Indian cotton industry. This had then become the so-called 'India-China-Britain triangular trade' of Britain's invention (Wallerstein 1989: 167-168). Thus it was always a problem for British merchants that China was not buying enough products manufactured by British industries (Wakeman 1978; Wong 1998: 333). The only problem was that China was able to produce cotton at home and did not need to purchase Indian cotton in large quantity; Opium was thus the only commercial leverage that the British merchants could deploy to open up the Chinese market as to reverse the enormous trade deficit with China. However, the ensuing opium trade was perceived by the Chinese officials as 'barbarians trembling in owe' because of the great social disorder the products would cause to civilians in the southern provinces. The Chinese local officers' effort to ban opium consumption would inevitably run counter to Britain's Palmerstonian foreign policy which proclaimed that 'an Englishman, no matter where, no matter what the circumstances, could expect the protection of his own government from arbitrary foreign prosecution' (Wakeman 1978: 188). China's campaign against opium was seized by the British navy as the excuse to launch attacks on China's coastal ports, forcing the Chinese government to open up 'treaty ports' where British merchants enjoyed free trade under the political protection of extraterritoriality.

Conventionally, people argue that the opening of treaty ports and the introduction of extraterritoriality marked the beginning of China's concession of sovereignty to foreign power which was the very problematic impact that provoked China's response and efforts of modernization. However the historical condition of backwardness would only become alarming when substantial social processes emanated from it came to threaten the very existence of a traditional society. The very threat to China's imperial order was only felt when the traditional elites from both local and central levels witnessed their power of control over commercial relations undermined and the ritualistic imperial order of 'Chinese-ness-barbarianism distinction' disturbed. Ensuing civilian resistance against foreign takeovers began to take place in Canton, making the province 'almost lost to bandit gangs'. The Qing court had soon found its interests in reaching agreement with the Englishmen in opening trade and having foreign gunboats to check local resistance. This simply created the Manchu court's image as the 'treacherous protection of foreign missionaries' and even worse, 'a foreign ruling house appeasing the barbarians to save its own skin at the expense of the Chinese

people' (Wakeman 1978: 203). Thus anti-Manchuism was planted as part of the origins of China's modern revolutionary transformation of the nineteenth century. It is obvious that Sun Yat-sen's construction of Chinese nationalism, namely the *minzu* principle was first characterized by anti-Manchu-ism, which in Liang Qichao's words was a 'narrow nationalism' that only aspired to transform the tributary empire into a nation-state based upon the common identity of *Han* people (Wells 2001: 2, 9; Wang 2004: 614).

It is a fair saying that foreign takeovers of coastal cities were not paid enough attention to by the Qing court until enlarged scale of revolts from the underworld of sectarian societies began to spread across the southern provinces, which had finally escalated into the widely spanning Taiping Rebellion. Rural vagabonds who moved from the overpopulated countryside to the cities to work as transporters before the Opium War were suddenly driven home because of the suddenly imposed restriction of transportation in inland waterways; China's internal trade routes of water channels were controlled by British naval forces after the Nanking Treaty. Others working as brokers and artisans in the Canton commercial system were also forced to leave as the new centre of international trade was shifted to Shanghai for Britain's convenience. All these arrangements of the Nanking Treaty had in turn intensified local conflicts by generating reversed waves of migration back to the countryside, and those returning vagabonds could never be fed by the local agrarian economy with declining productivity. Thus a decade after the opening of treaty ports, violent conflicts broke out between returning vagabonds, rural outlaws and the local militias (*tuanlian*) in Guangxi province. These waves of local conflicts had merged into a nationwide military campaign known as the Taiping Rebellion which had rapidly eaten up half of the territories of the Qing Empire. The reason that the Taiping Rebellion could expand to such an unprecedented scale was largely because that the traditional Manchu armies were too poorly organized under the banner system to withstand such an explosive insurrection (Kuhn 1986: 281); and the message delivered by the rebellion was obvious that the imperial military forces on all levels were incompetent of defending China's vast localities. The Manchu banner army was full of non-military nobles who had been enjoying military prestige without ever being drilled in the army. To pacify the rebellion, the Qing government could have done nothing but to turn to the local militias for assistance. Thus private armies built upon personal

networks of regional and provincial notables were brought to the fore by the Qing court for pacifying the ensuing Taiping Rebellion as well as other continuous peasant revolts such as the Nien Rebellion (1851-1868).

Local militias had quite a few characters favourable to the court's task of re-establishing regional stability. Most importantly, those regional militias were financially independent due to their particular source of income secured via the '*lijin*' system. China's regional trade had been continuously haunted by the dramatically growing bandit gangs and sectarian societies since late eighteenth century; and the central authority was apparently not able to protect merchants from disturbance of the outlaws. The only possible way for the merchants to protect their activities on the trans-regional trade routes was to pay a certain amount of *lijin* ('gift money') to heads of local militias and regional-local notables for their military assistance. Thus unlike the imperial armies such as the bannermen and the Green Standards which were constantly suffering fiscal difficulties, soldiers in private militias fared relatively well based upon their interdependence with China's internal commercial networks and trade relations, which had then turned into the militias' firmer allegiance to the regional notables.

The second important character that made those militias conducive to the emperors was the fact that the militarized regional notables, despite their financial independence, were still in need of the state-bureaucracy to accumulate their political as well as economic capital in larger scale. Though these regional notables held their own armies which the central authority was not capable of interfering, very few of those armies were large enough to overtake the whole country. In the practice of traditional 'political accumulation' (Brenner 1982), the state's official control of commercial and agricultural revenues was an important source of power with which these regional militarists could outcompete each other in seeking larger scale of momentum and access to wider territorial spheres beyond their own localities; having stronger political leverage in the state-bureaucracy could also give these militarists more room in mediating foreign issues as to shore up their financial capability by building connections to foreign capitals. Moreover, these militarists, such as Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang, had long personal history of being educated and immersed in traditional cultural context, which made them aspire to restore the integrity of China's imperial order rather than replacing it with any alternative

political-cultural orthodoxy. Getting involved in the state-bureaucracy and cooperating with the Manchu court was to broaden their possibility of realizing such political aspiration. Thus a coordinated and interdependent relationship seemed to have emerged between the state and the regional notables especially after Zeng Guofan, the head of '*Xiangjun* (The Hunanese Army)' had assisted the Manchu court in pacifying the Taiping Rebellion. However it was evident that the interdependence was skewing towards the regional militarists' favour.

At almost the same time, another incident that had caused the Manchu elites to perceive the West more substantially as a threat was the burning down of the Summer Palace as Britain and France's ultimatum demanding further opening of marketplace in China. The Second Opium War, waged to force the Qing government to revise the Nanking Treaty, was demonstrating not only Britain's unsatisfied demand for trade, but also other emerging imperialists' effort to bandwagon the treaty ports system. France and the US sought to extend their extraterritorial rights via the settlement; and Russia, in mediating the war, was also seeking wider access to trade and commerce in northern China. The Qing government's reluctant compliance with those requests had caused the powers' collective and rampant response. The Summer Palace, known as *Yuanming Yuan* was left 'a dreary waste of ruined nothingness' by the Anglo-French soldiers 'seized with a temporary insanity' (Scott 2008: 44). This splendid royal site built in the image of the Qianlong Emperor's fantasy of tripping to Jiangnan was not only a repository of great landscaping and architects of the glory of Chinese civilization, but also a combination of finest arts collected from all nations. Such a fairyland of enchantment was no doubt the emperors' favourite that symbolized China's 'national prowess' and grace of the imperial order. With such a palace at the heartland of the empire systematically ruined, the Manchu court was thus forced not only to respond to the foreign demand for trade, but also possible reforming projects that could save the empire from further humiliation.

Thus China's first wave of systematic attempt to modernize the country was ushered in after these two destructive incidents that had almost come to the verge of debasing the Manchu rule; and the Manchu nobles, especially those on the regional-local level had become the key agency of the first wave of modernization. Since 1860s Chinese elites from both central authorities and regional military organizations became actively engaged in transplanting western technology to the country in order to catch

up with advanced foreign powers without substantially altering the imperial political system. International conditions became more alarming to the early modernizers after the Taiping Rebellion and the Summer Palace Incident that had fundamentally weakened the foundation of the imperial policy of keeping barbarians at distance. Also, through the Taiping Rebellion, Manchu nobles had found their interests in allying with the regional militarists or even giving them posts in the state-system in order to sustain the empire nominally. Li Hongzhang, a provincial notable who had close contacts with foreign experts and merchants, pioneered in launching projects of shipyards, arsenals and munitions in a few coastal provinces before other imperial officials with similar backgrounds followed suit. With the assistance of the British custom official Robert Hart in regulating coastal trade, part of the custom revenues that used to be swallowed by corrupt officials was redeemed to form the primitive capitals for the movement to start off (Kuo and Liu 1978: 513). Thus the Self-strengthening was able to take flight in a historical combination of conjunctural factors including the political augmentation of regional militarists, deepened penetration of western capitalist relations and the rise of the discourse of 'learning from the West'. The atrocity of the Summer Palace prompted the Qing court to accommodate western requests with the belief that by accepting the arrangement of the treaty port system as well as western powers' request for revising the Nanking Treaty, China's own strength could be built up by preserving peace and borrowing technology with the West (Kuo and Liu 1978: 492).

The combined development of Self-strengthening Movement has generated a specific conjuncture for China's 'Revolution of Backwardness'. This conjuncture entailed a very specific set of class relations in which the bourgeois class played a passive role in industrialization under the dual pressures from foreign capitals and the newly emerging 'bureaucratic merchants'. To use the term 'bourgeoisie' might not be adequate to indicate the contradictory nature of the formation of China's urban merchant-class, which was actually a peculiar mixture of social forms developed in very specific context. However this segment of the urban society was really the first social group in China to drive the country to partially adapt to western commercial practices impinged by foreign economic presence. The Chinese merchant-class originated from the compradors who acted as brokers between China's vast local economy and the foreign enterprises. The compradors had a paradoxical identity due

to its double dependency on both foreign powers and imperial bureaucracy. Their capital was originally produced by receiving salaries and charging all kinds of fees from foreign companies in treaty ports. Foreign merchants had hired a number of Chinese brokers to assist them in trading with local producers and suppliers, which enabled these brokers, who used to be hongists or their recruited purveyors a certain degree of monopoly of foreign trade among Chinese merchants (Chan 1980: 419; Wu and Xu 1990: 168). As the Self-strengthening Movement proceeded, this peculiar urban merchant-class, the compradors were recruited to provide the Self-strengtheners with essential funds and connections with foreign capitals. When the Self-strengtheners began to realize that trade deficit and silver outflow was 'draining people's wealth', the government had shifted its focus from building military industries to 'promoting commercial affairs' with the mercantilist hope that locally manufactured goods could reverse the trade imbalance with the West and maximize wealth and power of the state (Chan 1980: 417). Thus from 1870s onwards, provincial governments began to mobilize private capitals and individual merchants to get involved in the 'Wealth and Power Movement' (*fuqiang*) launched to invigorate the commercial sector and relieve the government's financial pressures. Non-military industries such as coal mining, navigation and cotton cloth were promoted by regional notables who had recently seized posts in the central government such as Li Hongzhang. Lacking substantial institutional frameworks for manipulating privately owned commerce and industries, Self-strengtheners such as Li Hongzhang could do nothing but to use their personal influence to protect private shareholders from bureaucratic squeezing on all levels, and this was the initial basis of trust between China's emerging merchant community and some of the imperial officials in a few regions (Chan 1980: 424).

Far from creating a unified bourgeois class strong enough to alter traditional social relations, the Self-strengthening Movement had led to an extremely tension-prone stratification of class relations among the Chinese merchants. Self-strengtheners such as Prince Kung and Wenxiang in the court had very quickly lost their momentum because of their defeat in endless factional struggles against conservative Manchu nobles who felt threatened of their power and influence by the movement and its advocates. Provincial and regional notables had thus become more active in promoting Self-strengthening not only because that they were more capable of doing

it but also that they actively sought to maximize their power through accumulating industrial capitals. Because the Self-strengthening Movement was launched for the specific geopolitical rationale that economic growth should be channelled towards military empowerment, bureaucrats from all provinces were given justice to place industries under their official sponsorship in the name of 'imperial mandate'. This was not only a temporal expression of the gentry-scholars' 'ingrained notion of state-prerogatives' of 'government supervision and merchant management' (*guandu shangban*), but also a consequence of western capitalist powers' effort made to seek proxies in China by rendering China's most influential state-officials dependent upon their economic presence. 'Just as merchants purchased official titles, so officials and gentry swelled the merchant ranks' (Chan 1980: 419-421). The rising class of 'gentry-merchant' (*shenshang*) was a hybrid social group who was engaged in commercial activities daily but could easily fend off market pressures with their power in the bureaucracy. 'In time, 'Self-strengthening' became less a rallying cry for genuine efforts at innovation than a shibboleth that served to justify expenditures and vested bureaucratic interests' (Kuo and Liu 1978: 491). The worsening practices of bureaucratic merchants had dramatically reduced the private merchants' living space because bureaucratic entrepreneurs such as Sheng Xuanhuai were always ready to sacrifice the interests of private shareholders to reclaim official loans in a failing company's remaining assets (Chan 1980: 434-435); bureaucratic merchants who had a foot in both business and diplomatic affairs could also easily sell enterprises to foreign capitals when they underwent financial problems, leaving local private investors stripped of their shares. In Hunan and Hubei, where agricultural decline had driven private capitals to flow to the newly emerging industrial sector in the cities, bureaucratic capitals' complicity in imperialist expansion had stirred up waves of Right Recovery Movement in both provinces (Esherick 1992: 69-72).

For all the above reasons, the emerging urban merchant-class as the descendent of both the compradors and the state-bureaucrats was of insurmountable weakness ever since the very beginning, which was then to hinder China's capitalist social formation as industrialization proceeded. As Karl Marx has argued, a society's shifting away from pre-capitalist epoch could produce two contrasting results. In some cases, 'the producer becomes merchant and capitalist, in contrast to the natural agricultural economy and the guild-bound handicrafts of the medieval urban industries'-this

scenario, according to Marx, promised the ‘really revolutionizing path’. In some other cases however, ‘the merchant established direct sway over production. However much this serves historically as a stepping-stone...cannot by itself contribute to the overthrow of the old mode of production’ (Marx 1977). China’s case was certainly the latter one in which traditional landed ownership in village communities and state-apparatus were deployed to exert direct control over producers of not only commodities but also money capitals, making their conditions worse than before. This combination of social relations maintained Chinese merchants’ structural dependency on foreign capitals, but it had debased China’s nation-wide bourgeois class-formation because of the contradictory and exploitative relationship between the bureaucratic capitalists and other forms of private capitals.

The combined development of the Self-strengthening Movement had produced not only a weakened bourgeois class and different agency of industrialization, but also a new condition of national crisis. The more severe problem caused by the Self-strengthening Movement was that an act aiming at strengthening the state’s rump material capacity had finally resulted in a much worse situation of geopolitical failure and military meltdown. This situation has demonstrated the spiral-ascending development of modernization in which combined social formation would from time to time throw a society even further backward in either socio-historical or political-realist sense. Though no solid bourgeois class was formed, urban and rural proletariats were mushrooming as a result of agrarian crisis inflicted by modern commerce and enterprises. Former peasants became ‘displaced persons’ (*yumin*) not only because the rural resources had been exhausted by wars, silver outflow and tax-farming, but also that the traditional imperial networks of control and welfare such as *pao-jia* (local police) and the imperial granary could not sustain by a vulnerable central government like late Qing (Bastid-Bruguere 1980: 586-587; Kuhn 2002: 80).

Apart from the exacerbated pauperization of traditional communities, the further weakening of state-authority was even more fatal to the imperial regime. This was first caused by intensifying conflicts between the Self-strengtheners and the Manchu conservatists who felt threatened of their traditional prestige. Modern industrial projects and new-styled school set up in cities had recruited a great number of students who would have joined the state-bureaucracy via the official examination; thus debates on whether ‘learning from the West’ was promoted at the expense of

traditional cultural and political framework had been reheated for many times among the elites. The other source of intra-governmental conflicts came from the competition for political capital among regional notables who were all Self-strengtheners themselves. Most industrial and commercial programmes introduced from the 'bottom-up' level lacked strategic central planning. When it came to military organization and war preparation, it became frustrating that no collective military mobilization could be orchestrated on the national level, and weapons produced in discrete munitions and arsenals were too different in size and shape to be used by a single army (Wang 1978: 131). This contradiction was then more intensively manifested in the 1895 Sino-Japanese War, which came to challenge the theoretical legitimacy of the Self-strengthening Movement.

4.3.2 1895: the Middle Kingdom dying in bitterness and the bankruptcy of Self-Strengthening

The Self-strengthening Movement had for the first time gone under examination through the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 attesting to the degree of enhancement in state-capacity. Consequently, the war had not only extravagated China's frustrating situation of 'being backward' but also come to question the theoretical legitimacy of the Self-strengthening Movement which aspired to modernizing the state without making cultural and political self-repudiation. The debate on whether or not it was effective to carry out technological 'catching-up' movements within the traditional imperial order seemed to be brought to closure when the Japanese navy defeated the Beiyang fleet with a landslide. This geopolitical crisis had led to a new era of western powers struggling to seize more 'spheres of influence' against each other. As for the Sino-Japanese War, there was no major quantitative gap between both sides in military capacity; '[i]n terms of military strategy and the quality of weapons, China actually fared rather well' (Fung 1996: 1029); the very factor that had paralyzed the Beiyang fleet lay not only in the situation of regional militarization and the extravagated competitions among elites, but also geopolitical calculations of western powers made at the expense of China's interests. Li Hongzhang, with only his private Anhui Army under command and other regional fleets staying 'neutral' to Japan's aggression, was dreaming of winning western sympathies in order to 'force Japan into peace settlement' (Hsu 1980: 106). His diplomatic mediation had however ended up

futile due to major western powers, especially Britain's stance of non-involvement. 'London had not anticipated this (Japan's) rapid turn of events and was caught without a suitable policy'. Japan's military encroachment in Korea and Manchuria did not pose immediate threat to Britain's commercial interests in China compelling enough to cause Britain active reaction. Britain's 'mild innocuous proposal' calling for both Chinese and Japanese armies' withdrawal from Korea was soon rejected by Japan shortly before the open encounter at sea broke out between the two East Asian countries in August, 1895 (ibid). With only one ship lost, the Japanese navy caused China a loss of four ships, not to mention the huge casualties on land. And the settlement of the war was devastating to China because of the humiliating performance of the Chinese fleet. Japan was seeking a systematic exploitation of China to relieve all tensions between its domestic constituencies formed in its process of industrialization. Territorial cessions (the Liaodong peninsula, Shandong, Jiangsu and Manchuria etc.) were urged by Japan's various political forces for natural resources, capital-export and migration; and quality ice-free ports in Manchuria (Port Arthur/Dalian) were also demanded by the victor. Japan was also seeking to take the victory as a chance to find vectors for her future military expansion-Taiwan was thus requested 'as a base for operations in South Asia'. Like what all other imperialist powers attempted to do, the Japanese treasury requested a huge indemnity of 200 million taels in order to 'make the war pay for itself'. Thus, Li Hongzhang, with limited regionally-based power to command armies but full responsibility to negotiate the peace settlement on behalf of the state, was forced to sign the Treaty of Shimonoseki packaging all the unaffordable terms including 'indemnity, the cession of territory, and commercial and navigational privileges' (Hsu 1980: 107).

The knock-on effects of the Japan-dominated peace settlement were dramatic as Japan's rapid takeover of vast territories, the Manchurian heartland *inter alia*, had stirred up great anxieties among western powers, especially imperialist governments like Russia which had secured their navigational and commercial privileges in the same regions with treaties signed much earlier. Japan's victory was also a demonstration of China's political fragmentation and military disorganization being deepened in imperialists' favour. Japan's ambition for greater power-status, and her desire for more overseas territories and resources caused by developmental pressures at home had urged the West to be more concerned with their existing 'spheres of

influence' in China. Geopolitical competition in Continental Europe had also by then become a lateral field of causality supervening on China's national crisis-Redistributing 'spheres of influence' among the powers had become a supplementary means to sustain the European balance of power between the newly formed politico-military blocks. Shortly after the 1895 crisis, western powers had started a new round of 'partitioning China' as they had mostly entered the stage of 'New Imperialism' (Hobsbawm 1987). This round of imperialist expansion mediated by strategies of geopolitical balancing and dressed in the diplomatic rhetoric of protecting China's sovereignty and Korea's independence was taken by Li Hongzhang, who was then still in charge of China's foreign affairs a critical opportunity to minimize Japan's influence in China.

Russia was the first player who recognized the significance of containing Japan's penetration of China. Russia's Count Witte was obsessed with the idea that Russia's footing in Liaodong should be preserved in every possible way including declaring Vladivostok a war zone. Russia took the interventionist position for the concern that Japan's takeover of the Liaodong peninsula would lay barriers to Russia's pre-existing project of trans-Siberian railway system. Under Russia's military intervention joined by France and Germany (the Triple Intervention), Japan was finally forced to return the Liaodong peninsula to China in late 1895; and shortly afterwards, China and Russia had entered a secret alliance based upon Li Hongzhang's geopolitical calculation of balancing against Japan by granting Russia's the privilege of railway construction in Liaodong. With both Japan and Russia as two rising imperialists expanding their shares of interest in China, other advanced imperialisms had finally come to a new round of 'scrambling for concession' in China seeking to either secure their pre-existing extraterritorial privileges or expand those in new forms (Hsu 1980: 112-113). In 1897, Germany forced China to cede Shandong to her as a naval base, which was accepted by the Russian Tsar as a strategic cession made to redirect Germany's power concentration away from Europe; in return, Russia took Port Arthur and Dalian, and push her monopoly over Manchuria railways further under the general framework of the Sino-Russian Alliance. These struggles in the north had in turn given Britain a free hand to further secure her privilege of trade in the Yangzi area and Hong Kong; and France was also left with the chance to lease the Guangdong-Guangxi area adjacent to the French Indochina. The United States, with

no pre-existing leaseholds as entries to the partitioning of China, had to propose the 'Open Door Policy' for access to future concessions in China. The Open Door Policy, stipulating each imperialist power's 'sphere of influence', rejected the act of monopolizing commercial interests in one's own sphere of influence using political and military forces. This policy had later become a principle applauded and shared by western powers who with much larger pre-existing interests in China became increasingly unwilling to get involved in military operations outside Europe, but it was in the meantime opposed by Japan who had almost lost out her interests obtained in the Shimonoseki Treaty after the process of 'scrambling for concessions' among great powers (Hsu 1980: 111-115).

The Triple Intervention and the 'scrambling for concessions' had further consolidated Russia's interests of railway construction in China. The Qing government's alliance with Russia had settled a series of railway projects either cosponsored between the two governments or ceded to Russian capitals. Some of these railways were presumed to run through Britain's traditional spheres of influence such as the Yangzi valley. Russia's further empowerment gained by allying with the Qing government had thus come to threaten Britain's longstanding diplomatic tradition of 'splendid isolation', especially when Britain realized that lacking substantial allies was causing her enormous loss on the peripheries of the empire in events such as the Boer War (Hsu 1980: 131). Japan, whose leases in Manchuria was recently minimized by Russia's military interventions and other great powers' diplomatic manoeuvrings, was recognized by Britain as a new reliable ally in the Far East. Thus in 1902, an alliance between the two powers came to materialize in a treaty that stipulated mutual safeguarding of interests once either party was threatened. Protected by the new framework of geopolitical alignment, Japan was given a free hand to reclaim her demanded interests in Manchuria. In 1905, a war between Japan and Russia broke out which had by the end wiped out Russia's domination in Manchuria; Japan's control over the Southern Manchurian Railway was then reinstated, which, unlike the devastating naval war in 1895, was an event that saved China from Russia's further encroachment of the territories in the Manchurian heartland. 'Had Russia been victorious, she would most likely have annexed Manchuria and perhaps Mongolia, provoking other powers to demand territorial compensation', but with Russia's defeat,

the Tsar's focus was shifted to the Balkans 'where she collided with Austria-Hungary and Germany, setting the stage for World War I' (Hsu 1980: 141).

The above international geopolitical conjuncture had prevented China from being colonized by any single imperialist power, but the fact that China had undergone so many rounds of imperialist partitioning had discredited the Self-strengtheners' promise to enhance the military capabilities and to reach diplomatic resolution. The Self-strengthening Movement was tested a failure by Japan's military conquest as a result of the movement's unfulfilled promise of strengthening the empire in military terms. Li Hongzhang, as the key leader of the movement in provinces had very quickly lost his momentum among both the Chinese public and the Manchu nobles in the court, being accused for selling the country to Japan in negotiating the Shimonoseki Treaty. With the idea of Self-strengthening debased, new forms of social transformation as to which China's particular perception of modernity was constructed would then be called upon by elites with more social power and influence obtained from the demise of the Self-strengthening Movement.

4.3.3 The Constitutional Reform: from technological to political reform

Japan's rise as a world-class power was not only attesting to the failure of the Self-strengthening Movement but also suggestive of a possible approach as to which eastern societies could embrace capitalist modernity in its own way. The immediate reason for which Japan had become China's role model after the 1895 naval war and the 1905 Russo-Japanese War was of course Japan's great military success in these great power encounters. The deeper reason that legitimized the Japanese model was Japan's historical and cultural resemblances with China as a country developing against the backdrop of traditional agrarian society. Japan's post-war settlement in 1905 allowed the Qing court to reclaim sovereignty (at least nominally) of Manchuria, which enabled a relatively more cooperative and amicable relationship between the two governments, under which Chinese student groups and governmental officials were sent to Japan by the Qing court to investigate and study Japanese politics and reforms (Jansen 1980: 348; Harrell 1992).

However, the discourse of 'learning from Japan' produced two sharply contrasting views of social transformation. On one hand, political reform, which was regarded

necessary, was envisaged by the Manchu elites as a opportunity to transcend backwardness without overthrowing the Qing throne. Japan's Meiji Restoration, as a 'passive revolution' that had absorbed the revolutionary class into the monarchical structure without incurring major social upheavals, was accepted as the possible path that China's further socio-political reforming should follow (Norman 1940: 47; Allinson and Anievas 2010). The logic of 'passive revolution' was compatible with the universalist worldview of Neo-Confucianism which was widely accepted by the court and traditionalist scholars such as Kang Youwei. The intellectual tide of Neo-Confucianism emerging in 1890s argued that Chinese learning belonged to the category of 'dao' or 'ti' (substance) whereas western learning was given the value of 'qi' or 'yong' (functionality) (Chang 1980: 282-283). Under this framework, Kang Youwei proposed to convert the universalist empire of Qing (substance) directly into a modern nation-state (functionality). During this process, the traditional imperial power was expected to play a even stronger role in addressing the possible social upheavals (revolution) inflicted by the pre-existing internal contradictions of the cosmopolitan empire (Wang 2004: 821-825).

On the other hand, Japan's success produced enough revolutionary discourses that would reject the Self-strengthening model which underestimated the significance of political reform. It needs to be noted that the debate on 'ti' and 'yong' emerged ever since the Opium War, whereas the only ambiguity of the debate was whether western political institutions were only functionality that could be easily assimilated by the imperial order. Chinese intellectuals became more aware of 'the victory of constitutionalism and the defeat of monarchism' in reflecting upon the rise and fall of Japan and China (Hsu 1980: 141). The study-in-Japan project sponsored by the Manchu court produced more centrifugal forces headed by 'disaffected youth', among which *Tongmenghui* (Alliance Society, founded in Tokyo 1905) was an exemplar which has then become the Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) party (Harrell 1992: 7, 88).

However, the more fatal reason that caused the Qing Empire to swallow the bitter fruit of the Constitutional Monarchy was that the diverse local and regional authorities coeval with the imperial court could not be effectively incorporated into the framework of modern nation-state. The Japanese model was posited by the Qing court as of two constitutive elements. One was the centrality of military forces presiding the course of the reform, and the other was the mechanism of constitutional

monarchy capable of coordinating between different constituencies with seats in the legislation and the central government. Both were directly grafted onto China's reforming attempt via two programmes. One was the making of the New Army and the other was the experiment of parliamentary democracy. However both reforming programmes were undertaken under the circumstances of regional militarization and declining central authority which had given the Qing reformists no conditions equivalent to the Japanese state-led modernization. The Qing government's attempt of parliamentary democracy was undertaken within many regional-political enclaves (Provincial Assemblies) where local elites had replaced the pre-existing court-appointed governors-general to dominate provincial affairs, whereas on the central level, the National Assembly had no power to interfere decisions made through chaotic local-regional struggling. The National Assembly's inability to coordinate between regional powers was however perceived by the public as the Manchu court's reluctance to push the reform forward. This problem was also shown in the Qing's unsuccessful reform designated to centralize financial resources which was rejected by the regional elites. To overcome this problem, the Qing government could do nothing but to turn to the regional elites again for financial support for the New Army programme which was supposed to serve to strengthen the power of central government. The regional-provincial bureaucratic capitalists, in looking for financial sources to fund the New Army programme, would either sell the state-sponsored enterprises to foreign capitals, or pushing for new rounds of tax-farming in the rural communities.

The New Army, being financially dependent on the regional powers, was perceived by the Manchu court as the modernized and strengthened force that was to replace the bannermen and the Green Standards which were supposed to be loyal to the court. Thus the Manchu elites felt necessary to reclaim military commandership over the New Army which was not funded by them. Yuan Shikai, the head of the Beiyang clique who had built up his personal networks among northern militarists through the New Army programme, was promoted to Beijing by the Manchu nobles in 1908 in order to keep him off his New Army forces in Zhili. However this political manoeuvring made by the young and over-ambitious Manchu princes could not deny the New Army's financial dependence on their regional sponsors; those who were disempowered during the reform had soon reclaimed their control over regional

armies, however with their trust in the Manchu court abandoned (Ichiko 1980: 385-386). The Manchu court's attempt to penetrate the New Army had caused much wider turbulence rippling across provinces. For most of the time the New Army in many provinces was ordered to defend 'foreign lives and property' against revolutionary riots despite the troops were originally inaugurated to 'defend the country from imperialism' (Esherick 1992: 138). Soldiers, who did not fare quite well in the troops had accepted revolutionary ideas; and a spark of riot in the Wuhan army had quickly turned into enduring waves of military attacks on the Manchu's local officials who had little military forces at disposal. This riot had very quickly been upgraded by the alliance between urban private capitalists, progressive intellectuals, overseas students and rural vagabonds in the cities; and because the Manchu forces were so disunited along regional lines, many of the southern provinces with developing industrial centres were soon set in chaos. In the meantime, northern provinces remained stable as most of those areas were garrisoned by foreign troops and some of the strongest regional militarists were still in control of those provinces. A civil war had very quickly broke out between armies from northern and southern provinces. Yuan Shikai, who saw much greater interests in joining the revolutionary camp, had easily reached a peace settlement with the southern revolutionaries who acknowledged Yuan's substantial control of the new republic in return for Yuan's agreement to overthrow the Manchu throne. Therefore, the consequence of the 1911 Revolution as a peculiar historical combination was manifested in the paradoxical structure of a nominal democratic republic. The revolutionaries, who had sung the high note of the revolution, had transplanted a idealistically designed democratic state apparatus to the regional militarists' substantial military control. No mature urban bourgeois class was in place to perpetuate the practice of constitutional democracy which was originally an expression of the disposition of social power in a fully developed capitalist society (Wood 1981; Rosenberg 1994).

4.4 Development of the general context of China's modern revolution: Sun Yat-sen's 'modular character' of modern China and the contradictory marriage between communism and nationalism

Though the 1911 Revolution was largely empty in the sense that it has created no substantial social groundings for the liberal-democratic 'superstructure', Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary and nationalist thoughts deserve to be viewed as a 'modular' ideological

framework for the entire Chinese Revolution. The contradictory character of Sun Yat-sen's thoughts could be treated as a result of the combined development of the bitter reforming and revolutionary process of the nineteenth century. Sun Yat-sen's idea of the 'Three People Principles' (*Minzu, Minzhu, Minsheng*) was certainly aiming at combining solutions to social injustice and national crisis into one unified revolutionary process. Social justice was taken as a *prima facie* goal of the revolution as Sun Yat-sen had eye-witnessed the hardships the Chinese proletariats suffered in the nineteenth century (Bastid-Burguiere 1980; Chesneaux, Bastid and Bergere 1976). Like most of the Marxist thinkers, Sun Yat-sen, though he himself was always at a distance with communists, argues that the origins of China's poverty and social injustice lied in the unequal traditional landownership. In the 'principle of livelihood' (*Minsheng*), Sun Yat-sen believed that the state should played a more active role in redistributing rural surpluses, especially concerning that un-manipulated land-transaction accelerated by urban development was producing enormous displaced peasants (Sun in De Bary 2001: 320-330). As Sun has announced, the principle of *Minsheng* is 'a form of communism'; and also, his communism was more a grand design of China's future development (Godley 1987: 120).

However, the sprout of communist thoughts as a social combination in Sun Yat-sen's Three People Principle has also reflected the national crisis faced by the Chinese nation which gave rise to a contradictory understanding of the prior tasks of the Chinese revolution. To recapitulate his emphasis on inequality, Sun Yat-sen argues in a lecture the year before his death (1924) that the problem of inequality was ultimately a problem of underdevelopment and economic vulnerability facing the pressure of imperialisms (Wells 2001: 63-64). 'China was suffering from poverty, not the distribution of wealth' (Godley 1987: 120-121). This understanding of China's primary crisis has undermined the central claim of Marxism/socialism about social justice and equality, and it opens up the Three People Principle as the initial quest for modern nationhood of the Chinese Revolution to the transplantation of capitalism and nationalism which would from time to time contradict the principles of communism. How did Sun Yat-sen resolve tensions among all the different strands of thoughts in his revolutionary proposal? His approach was to subject all these values, including capitalism, nationalism and communism to a stagist notion of revolutionary development. As Sun Yat-sen envisioned, '[t]he state would take the lead in the

creation of an economic infrastructure, to include mining, manufacturing and communications, including transportation'. Private capitals as well as foreign investment, if they were manipulated properly by the state, could also be rendered conducive to the realization of 'the principle of livelihood'. But once the state-led industrial development was prioritized, communism would then become a vision of the future which could only be realized when the first stage of state-led development was accomplished (Godley 1987: 120-122).

The stagist notion underlay not only Sun's understanding of communism, but also his understanding of democracy in China's particular scenario of backwardness.

Obviously, the Three People Principle has proclaimed that democracy as a result of the revolution would be the 'most appropriate political system' (Sun in De Bary 2001: 320-330). However, this system in perspective was also subject to a pre-democratic stage of state-tutelage because the Chinese society under the rule of the Manchu Empire was like a 'sheet of loose sand' (Schoppa 2000: 238). For Sun, the disorganization and vulnerability of the traditional society was a result of the absence of a modern nation-state that is of *limited sovereignty* over a fixed territorial realm (Anderson 2006: 7). The Manchu monarch, who was held as the scapegoat for failing to keep check of the tendency of local militarization and imperialist penetration, was set as the target enemy of the Principle of Nationalism (*Minzu*). However, it was not because that Sun was a Han-centric racist, but that his *Minzu* principle was posited as a thorough rejection of the imperial order which allowed coexistence of multiple forms of political authorities and military forces (Sun in De Bary 2001: 320-322)⁴⁶. Having recognized the 'jungle rule' of modern international relations, Sun Yat-sen emphasized the state's absolute control of the armies and the modern military system, echoing most of the traditionalist scholars such as Yan Fu and Kang Youwei, (Schwartz 1964: 91-97). However, since Sun Yat-sen's idea of modern nation-state emerged against the background that the Constitutional Reform ended in a total failure, the traditionalist Kang Youwei's dialectic of '*ti*' and '*yong*' was completely delegitimized. The framework of imperial order, according to Sun, should be deserted without negotiation. Sun's emphasis on military tutelage of the state as a pre-

⁴⁶ Because anti-Manchuism was only an concrete expression of the negation of imperial order, it did not come up in Sun's initial petition to Li Hongzhang (1894); and also, it diminished after the 1911 Revolution (Wells 2001).

democratic stage had also marginalized the Principle of Democracy which was posited as a constitutive moment of the Chinese Revolution only *in the future*. Like Trotsky criticizes Lenin for emphasizing leadership of the *avant-garde* party which would in turn hinder the formation of working-class identity (Knei-Paz 1978:), Sun Yat-sen's Principle of Nationalism was almost a Chinese version of the idea of *avant-garde* party which precluded the setback of liberal politics in the Nationalist Kuomintang (Fitzgerald 1996: 180).

In sum, what arose from the combined development of local militarization and imperialist penetration of the nineteenth century was a contradictory revolutionary idea endorsing both nationalism and communism. That the contradictory principles of those could coexist in one unified revolutionary project reflected the interwoven social crises China was facing under the condition of backwardness. China, as a traditional empire torn apart by imperialisms, was haunted by problems of both social injustice and political fragmentation. Though Sun Yat-sen has attempted to render nationalism and communism compatible by constructing a stagist roadmap, the effect of his Three People Principle was that both discourses were justified simultaneously and inherited by different social and political forces in the aftermath of the 1911 Revolution. Warlords could easily justify their escalating violence masked by nationalism; and politicians could prioritize military tutelage and suspend democratization *sine die* (e.g. Wakeman 1997; Harrison 2000: 198-199). All these would not only contradict Sun's original promise of democracy, but more importantly impose harsher exploitation over Chinese peasants whose status was not addressed in Sun Yat-sen's thoughts and the 1911 Republic. This problem, as a result of the social combination of nineteenth century's 'Revolution of Backwardness' produced a paradoxical marriage between communism and nationalism underlying the Chinese Revolution; though communism needs to be addressed in tandem with nationalism, Sun Yat-sen's legacies that let urban industrialization and modern military system overshadowed social equality and communism would certainly need to be modified by alternative revolutionary projects-and this was the sociological setting of Mao's revolution.

4.5 Conclusion: bridging the gap between ‘China-made’ and ‘West-made’ historical narratives

The previous sections of this chapter have shown that China’s Revolution of Backwardness originated in the Self-strengthening Movement which aspired to withstanding the geopolitical pressures within the framework of traditional imperial order. However the disillusionment came as a result of the combined development of two prolonged and contradictory forces, namely the penetration of western capitalism and the local-regional militarization. As Harold Isaacs has argued, the seeds of China’s century-long revolts were all to be found in the ‘accumulative results of all agencies of dissolution’ (Isaacs 1938: 5). As for the developmental tendency generated by the above outlined international combination, exploration for reform and revolution of the nineteenth century had left for the Chinese elites a divided merchant class, a formalistic liberal-democratic republic, a fragmented central authority and a large number of unsheltered proletariats. This situation means that any subsequent revolutionary proposal would have to address the problem of social justice, industrialization and national unification simultaneously. Sun Yat-sen’s idea of ‘Three Peoples’ Principles’ reflected China’s situation of national crisis, in which any relevant revolutionary projects were compelled to combine tasks of social equality and national salvation. Also, because the development of the nineteenth century has proved that the merchant class, the Manchu court and regional militarists were all incapable of undertaking China’s ‘Revolution of Backwardness’, the unfulfilled task of the 1911 Revolution was urging the organization of a brand new revolutionary class which would be more youthful, energetic and autonomous-this context would then give rise to the revolutionary peasant class.

By reconceptualizing the historical development of the long nineteenth century and the particular result of it using U&CD, it could first be shown that the cause of China’s modern transformation could not be reduced to either China’s internal problem or the West as an external driver. It was the encounter between China as an empire in centrifugal decline and evolving imperialisms that incentivized the Manchu elites to mobilizing ‘advantages of backwardness’ by transplanting modern elements, including industrial technology and political institutions to the traditional empire. It was also the interaction among the Imperial court, the local-regional militarists and global capitalism that had brought the regional notables to the fore as a key agency of late imperial reform. In terms of the consequence of the revolution, it could neither

qualify as a continuation of traditional socio-political order or a bourgeois revolution perceived by Sinocentric and Eurocentric perspectives; instead it was a combination of liberal-democratic political regime operated by rivaling regional militarists for political accumulation under which the double crises of national disunification and impoverishment of the proletariats (the peasants *inter alia*) had been increasingly worsened. Thus Sun Yat-sen's contradictory blueprint of national revolution crystallized in the 'Three People's Principles' has emerged as a response to the double crises of the combined development of the nineteenth century by marrying communism with nationalism. Therefore, using Uneven and Combined Development and the concept of 'Revolution of Backwardness', a closure could be brought to the debate between Sinocentric and Eurocentric understandings of origins of the Chinese Revolution.

Chapter 5 Revolutionizing the Peasant for National Salvation- Uneven and Combined Development and the Historical Specificities of Maoism

5.1 Introduction: Maoism and the ‘peasant revolution’ as an internationally constituted resolution of China’s crisis of backwardness

This chapter interrogates the emergence of Mao’s communist revolution and its historically specific outlook of ‘peasant socialism’ as a response to China’s deepening crisis of survival under the pressure of global capitalism of the nineteenth century. China’s 1911 republican revolution has only resulted in the collapse of empire rather than a substantial bourgeois society (Lin 2013: 439). Shortly after the event of 1911, the Chinese polity descended into deeper crisis of survival with Japan, as a newly growing imperialist power encroaching its territories on much larger scale. This national crisis induced the May Fourth Movement through which the Chinese Communist Party came to the fore of national revolution. The Soviet Union’s foreign policy and geopolitical calculation, known as ‘forging the link between the class struggle in the West and the national struggle in the East’ (Chen 1983: 514) has pressed the CCP into the revolutionary alliance headed by the Kuomintang (KMT) which was symbiotic with urban bourgeoisie and even traditional local militarists. The CCP has mobilized radical and violent political struggles in both the cities and the countryside under the rubric of the revolutionary alliance. Mao was a believer in violent struggles in the countryside in the 1920s which was characterized by himself as ‘prairie fire started by a single spark’, and the CCP was also active in mobilizing urban worker movements in the meantime until it was cleansed by the KMT violently. Such revolutionary experiences of China has made Mao Zedong desert both the abrupt, radical methods of revolution and the bourgeoisie and the worker as the forces of revolution. This historical experience has determined the uneven and combined character of Maoism and his Yanan Model which has skipped over the stage of bourgeois and worker revolution, reinterpreting both democracy and socialism on the basis of a much protracted politicization of peasants. How can such unique experience be explained?

As the previous chapters have demonstrated, Mao’s revolution and his particular perspective of socialism emerged as both an inheritance and negation of the legacies

of the 1911 Revolution aspiring to both social equality and national salvation. The triumph of Mao's revolution was predicated upon a relatively successful resolution of the two problems of the century-long 'Revolution of Backwardness' by fusing the campaigns of anti-imperialism and the restoration of rural order in a unified peasant revolution. The meaning of Maoism and the *differentia specifica* of the 1949 state is a question of why the peasantry was mobilized and integrated into China's particular project of socialism, and what specific historical role the peasant played in reinterpreting socialism to muster enough force for China's prolonged 'Revolution of Backwardness'. Arguably, the founding of the 1949 People's Republic and the Land Reform could be in a large sense seen as a substantial response to these campaigns despite its contested consequences. For extant explanations, however, the 1949 Revolution has been understood as either China's reaction to western modernity on the grounds of her agrarian tradition, or an emulation of Russian Stalinism. This chapter will show that these explanations are anachronistic due to their deep-seated internalist method. Uneven and Combined Development can overcome this problem by providing a conjunctural analysis of the historical specificities of Mao's revolution. This event will be interpreted as a *substitutionist* response to China's modern crisis emerging from the intersection of the collapse of the imperial state and the universalizing force of capitalism. China's status as a late developing society in relation to both the capitalist West and the revolutionary Russia has determined the nature of Mao's peasant revolution, which should be understood as a form of substitutionist development by mobilizing 'human capability' to defend the polity while modern industrialization could not be attained (D'Mello 2009).

The problem of anachronism has occurred to some existing explanations because they have treated Mao's revolution as a *replica* of China's traditional agrarian order as a reaction to modernity. Due to the strong peasant-based character of the Maoist Revolution, it has always been interpreted as a modern development of China's agrarian tradition which has reproduced the 'core tenets' of the millennium-long civilization (Fairbank 1987; Wolf 1969; Moore 1966). This mode of explanation tends to neglect the socialist dimension of the peasant's agency and deny the role of socialist theories and practice in facilitating peasant organization. The demographic majority of the peasant population makes it easy for students of Chinese history to assume that the backward character of the peasantry has not only predetermined the trajectory of

the Chinese Revolution, but also overshadowed other modern elements the revolution has introduced. These authors argue that the Chinese peasant was as a structural determinant of the repetition of dictatorial governments in Chinese history as a settlement of endless, premodern-styled peasant wars (Moore 1966; Barnett 1967; Wolf 1969). By positing the communist victory as a modern continuation of the millennium-long 'dynastic cycle', one will inevitably lose sight of the sociological characteristics of the Maoist Revolution and the 1949 state-formation which was engendering an epochal break with China's past (Meisner 1999). Notably, Mao was by no means China's Emiliano Zapata whose perspective of 'good society' was 'rooted in traditional Mexican society and limited by its essentially agrarian character' (Knight 2008: 57-58); so the concept of 'peasant revolt/rebellion' cannot illuminate on Mao's effort to overcome problems of the traditional society.

Another understanding of China's peasant revolution tends to overemphasize the impact of the Soviet Union. These authors have marginalized the role of China's peasantry by reducing China's specific experience of socialist revolution and political agency to a process of emulating Russian Stalinism (Esherick 1995: 50). This form of anachronism is grounded by the aforementioned conception of the nature of Chinese peasantry as an embodiment of backwardness, which with its 'deeply ingrained irrationality' could never lead a novel and progressive social transformation. Joseph Stalin has reified this idea into a mechanistic notion about developmental stages which insists that socialism could only emerge in a society where large-scale industrialization has reached an advanced level. Thus all the socialist elements in the Chinese Revolution are regarded as borrowed from the Soviet Union. Theda Skocpol has reinforced this argument using the concepts of geopolitics and world time, which understand the emergence of modern revolution as a 'structurally determined fortuity' in international context (Skocpol 1973: 28-29). However, as chapter 1 has already demonstrated, authors such as Skocpol have treated 'the international' as a field that keeps generating external interferences to China's internally set direction of development. She thus views the penetration of the Soviet communism to China as an process intervening the internal development of the Chinese Revolution with a separate field of determinism (world time). Viewing the Soviet factor as well as all other foreign influences as a realm of 'externalities' has in turn perpetuated the debate on whether the Chinese Revolution is 'China-made' or 'foreign-made' (Escherick 1995:

50-51; see also van der Ven 1991; Chen Yung-fa 1990; Vogel 1987; Bernstein 2010). Also, it is believed by some other authors that Stalinist institutions and ideologies could coexist well with China's traditional elite and folk culture (Keating 1997: 11; Kong 2010: 153). Though the Soviet impact is undeniable, it is nevertheless impossible for these authors to understand Mao's opposition to the Soviet tutelage which emerged in tandem with the acceptance of it. Equating Maoism to Stalinism has generated enormous explanatory difficulties not only for envisaging the possibility of peasant revolution in China, but also for interpreting the specificities of the 1949 state as the legacy of the revolution. Most accounts have treated Maoism as a resemblance of Stalinism as a form of increasing state-held violence and coercion deployed in economic production for creating more 'industrial labours'. Isaac Deutscher's essay on the meaning of the Cultural Revolution was indeed an exemplar of this argument. Deutscher interprets the continuation of Mao's socialist revolution after 1949 as a 'personalistic orgy' inaugurated for 'moral compensation for all disappointments and frustrations' emerging from China's 'unsuccessful industrialization and the collapse of pro-Maoist parties across Asia' (Deutscher 1964: 214). Maoism was treated as a more extreme version of Stalinism, and Mao's Yenan struggle as well as the Cultural Revolution was viewed as the Chinese *Proletkult* in which the intelligentsia was disciplined by the Party's organized violence (ibid: 213)- 'Like Stalinism (and partly under its influence), Maoism allows no open discussion or criticism of its high priest and hierarchy' (Deutscher 1964: 196-197, 204)⁴⁷. But if China's 'socialist' incentives could only stem from Russia, Mao's autonomous development since 1920s and even China's diplomatic split with the Soviet Union and realignment with the US in the 1970s are understood as a deviation from 'socialism' (Schram and d'Encausse 1969; Bernstein 2010). On this score, these authors have also returned to the anachronistic argument that the nature of the Chinese peasant has predetermined the trajectory of the Chinese Revolution. It has ignored a fundamental historical reality that Mao's 1949 Revolution and the subsequent Cultural Revolution

⁴⁷ Similar accounts that views Maoism as a 'personalistic orgy' include Li Zhisui's *The Private Life of Chairman Mao*, 1994; and Jung Chang and Jon Halliday's *Mao: The Unknown Story*, 2005. Lin Chun and Gregor Benton have mounted an anthology of Chang and Halliday's book *Was Mao Really a Monster?* in 2009, criticizing the couple's arbitrary interpretation of historical data. See also Gao Mobo's critiques of both books in *The Battle for China's Past*, 2008, Chapter 4-6.

was never a recession to China's premodern 'cultural values' because these movements has demolished the traditional value-system such as Confucianism (Howe and Walker 1977: pp 176-77; Gurley 1976: chapter 2).

To overcome these two modes of anachronism, the debate on whether the Chinese peasant is inherently progressive or not needs to give way to a world-historical conception of China's revolutionary development. The theory of Uneven and Combined Development could possibly solve the problem of anachronism for it fundamentally rejects the notion that China's modern development is predetermined by any inherent nature of the peasantry as a self-constitutive entity. Instead, in an international perspective, U&CD will show that the political agency of China's peasantry in the modern revolution has emerged from China's constant interaction with both the capitalist West and the Soviet Russia-China's belatedness in modern industrialization played an decisive role in determining the nature of peasant socialism, which should be understood as a way of substitutionism in response to pressures caused by China's backwardness.

Notably, U&CD's inbuilt concept of substitutionism operates as a pivotal explanatory device to the formation of the peasant's political agency in China's particular context of backwardness. Substitutionism in Trotsky's original formulation refers to a typical scenario in a backward society that the weak working class was substituted by a 'narrow political instrument which would take it upon itself to speak in the name of Marxism and in the name of workers themselves' (Knei-Paz 1978: 195). When the Russian worker was politically incompetent to head a revolution, an alternative *avant-garde* party was introduced and harnessed to play the worker's role. Substitutionist development emerged from the Russia worker's political weakness not because it was an 'inherent property' of the Russian society, but it was co-constituted by the engagement between Tsarism and western capitalism. This idea can well be applied to China where the working class was even more vulnerable due to China's belated industrialization and social development (Deutscher 1964: 184-189). As a response to this condition of backwardness, the peasant was brought to the fore by the vanguardist Communist Party as an substitution of the worker in social revolution.

It is clear that substitutionism arose from an enduring, 'epochal' context of developmental backwardness; but the specific patterns, strategies and trajectories of a

substitutionist development was formulated in a concrete geopolitical conjuncture as an emergent property of the unevenness between early and late developing societies. Most significantly, substitutionism also implies that a backward society would not only transplant ‘privileges of backwardness’ from advanced industrial societies, but also mobilize its vernacular, domestic social relations for the same purpose when routes to external resources were blockaded in concrete geopolitical situations. As postcolonial scholars have noted, such social combination of modern and premodern social forms has generating two mutually propelling processes: while there was enduring imperative of mustering enough material capabilities to withstand ‘external whips of necessity’, there was simultaneously a necessity for backward polities to pursue an *alternative* path of development in order to do so. Whereas the drive for ‘Self-strengthening’, which always manifests itself in a nationalist manner, has demonstrated a profound tendency of ‘openness’ to modernity, the quest for alternative development has erected an ‘autonomous’ counterforce struggling to break free from the constraints of modernity (Dirlik 1997; Anderson 1998; Lin 2006, 2012; Wang 2011). These two processes would give rise to a combined development in which premodern social force, such as the Chinese peasant was driven to adopt modern practices such as socialism and industrialization; and the meaning of socialism would thus be radically altered in China’s agrarian context. To theorize the configuration of such substitutionist combined development, a much closer examination of geopolitical transformation on the basis of China’s interaction with other societies is required.

Under this theoretical framework, I will reconceptualize the Maoist Revolution as a critical inheritance of the revolutionary legacy of Sun Yat-sen which aimed to provide a holistic solution to China’s backwardness by combining nationalism with socialism. Historically, the creation of Maoism as a combination of modernity and counter-modernity involved a considerable number of contingencies. Mao’s critical negation of Sun Yat-sen’s approach to modernity emerged only after pre-existing modernist approaches has failed due to China’s much more severe ‘condition of backwardness’. To substantiate this argument, this chapter will be developed in the following sections. First, I will analyze the transformation of the discourse and practice of the idea of ‘national salvation’ and the major modernization projects it elicited in early twentieth century. It will be highlighted that the success of Russian Revolution and China’s

upsurge of modern commercial sector during the First World War has given rise to the nationalistic Communist Party and the Kuomintang's urban-based state-led industrialization under the Soviet tutelage. I will show in particular that China's belatedness of industrial development and its corresponding geopolitical hardship made it difficult for China to replicate political and economic systems from advanced industrial societies-the KMT's attempt to establish a Soviet-styled developmental state had set the rural society in turmoil and left the Chinese nation in deeper geopolitical crisis. On this basis, Maoism arose with its peculiar *modus operandi* including the organizational structure of the CCP as well as its economic production as an substitution for both the bourgeoisie and the Soviet-styled avant-garde party to undertake a democratic revolution, a campaign for national liberation and a socialist revolution. I will also provide an overview of the mutations of Maoism in the post-revolutionary era which has demonstrated a strong continuity of substitutionist development based upon the peasantry.

5.2 Unevenness in the aftermath of the 1911 Revolution: China's late-development and the declining 'condition of backward' after various modernization projects

5.2.1 The 'Golden Opportunity' for the Chinese bourgeoisie and the high tide of emulating capitalist modernity

Modern revolution was conceived in an 'aggregate of contradictory histories' in which elites were prompted to both emulate and negate western lifestyle (Dirlik 1997: 3-4; Anderson 1998: 4-5). The key question here is why a backward society like China has undergone the processes of both emulating and negating foreign models of development. The immediate answer to this question is, the unsuccessful emulation of advanced models would compelled the elites to pursue a substitutionist development by mobilizing alternative resources or allying with different social class. Here I will first examine the failure of China's emulation of both western capitalism and Soviet bolshevism in early twentieth century; and in U&CD's perspective, it will be shown that such a failure can only be understood as a result of China's belatedness in modern industrial development and the intensifying geopolitical pressures arising from that basis.

China's status as a late-developing society never presupposed a stasis of development;

instead, the condition of backwardness has resulted in a more radical compression of two contrasting forms of society during the First World War: this was a rapid upsurge of modern commercial sector in the context of scattered peasant communities dominated by the warlords' premodern political accumulation (see Davidson 2006: 212-213). China's nineteenth century reform and revolution have witnessed an uneasy adoption of democratic republicanism as the 1911 Revolution had brought in nothing but further weakening of state-capacity and wider proletarianization of peasants. The unfulfilled promise of the 1911 Revolution, however, did not rule out the 'golden opportunity' for China's capitalist development due to lax political pressures on the industrial and commercial sector in the First World War. In 1914, when 'the light of Europe went off' and the two military blocs of Europe clashed into a total war driven by the incentive of unlimited geopolitical subsumption and power maximization (Hobsbawm 1989), China's modern sector attained a 'golden opportunity' to expand when the First World War 'diverted the great powers' energies away from China' while generating increased demand for raw materials and foodstuffs on the world market (Bergere 1986: 64)⁴⁸. Under these circumstances, China's industry experienced an annual rate of growth of 13.8% between 1912-1920 (ibid: 70) and an increasing number of coastal cities had been transformed into modern industrial and commercial centres. In the meantime, the temporary absence of state-intervention in economy gave more room to the rapid development of China's modern industrial sectors, though warlord competition set China in a extremely vulnerable political situation and continuous civil wars had severely devastated the countryside. The lax administrative interference to commercial activities coincided with the withdrawal of imperialist industries during the First World War. With rapid flourishing of modern industries, modern banking system began to develop in Shanghai with a sharp increase of 130% from 1913-1920 (ibid: 80-81).

The upsurge of the modern sector gave the Chinese elites the hope and illusion that

⁴⁸ For example, during 1917-1919, England's export of cotton fabrics to China drooped 48%; also the great war had led to the increase of silver market which had in turn increased the buying power of Chinese currency under the silver standard system, making it easier for China to pay off foreign debts. These were all favourable conditions for China's economic recovery (Bergere 1986: 64-66).

China's modernization could have succeeded by emulating western capitalist social relations such as urban industrial and financial sectors. In the 1910s and 1920s, there were few attempts made to question the applicability of western modernity. However, the disillusionment came subsequently because China's 'upsurge of modern sector' operated in an adverse geopolitical context as part of global imperialist competitions. Now I will turn to the specificities of this geopolitical context which has partly reflected China's condition of backwardness and the impossibility of catching up with advanced industrial societies without substitutionism.

5.2.2 Rising powers and contested geopolitical calculations: pressures on backward China's catching-up development

Now let us turn to the question of how China's condition of backwardness was geopolitically manifested in a new round of postwar imperialist competitions; and why China's shortlived 'golden opportunity' of capitalist development has eventuated in a worsening geopolitical situation which preempted the peasant's revolutionary agency. This has to be understood with reference to China's relationships with different forms of advanced industrial societies. First of all, Japan's rise as a late-coming great power in East Asia had already been a destabilizer of the regional *status quo* formed in the 1870s. Such posture of Japan was explicated in the 1895 Sino-Japanese Naval War and the 1905 Russo-Japanese War. Japan's role on the 'East-West plane of unevenness' was analogous to Germany's role on the eve of the First World War, which unsettled the 'established geopolitical configurations' (Rosenberg 2010: 25). The diplomatic settlement of the First World War was certainly a confirmation of Japan's role as a rising regional and global imperialist power. In 1915, the '21 Demands' negotiated between Yuan Shikai and the Japanese government heralded the future scene of East Asian international order, that a Japan-centered age of imperialist expansion was underway. Japan made her way to great-power status by replacing Russia as the dominant power in East Asia after seizing control of the Southern Manchurian Railway in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War, and Japan had finally become a power of world class by taking over the Jiaozhou (Chiaochow) peninsula from Germany according to the peace settlement of the Versailles Treaty. Such status of Japan was then further reinforced by the Washington Treaty that had enabled Japan's dominance at sea in the East Asian region on the basis of a tripartite agreement with the US and Britain. Though Japan had agreed to reduce her warship

capacity to a lower ratio, the treaty had nonetheless ruled out the possibility of future arm racing in East Asia with the US and Britain having agreed not to build naval fortifications in the region (Gordon 2003: 175). Thus Japan had been given a freehand to establish her military hegemony over East Asia with her stronghold in China as stipulated in the settlement of the First World War.

Japan's rise to world-class power needs to be viewed closely with the historical withdrawal of advanced western powers from partitioning China. When Germany had been excluded from geopolitical competition in the region and sunk in deep crisis due to the highly punitive Treaty of Versailles, Britain had also entered an age when direct involvement in colonizing China became increasingly unaffordable. Britain's last footholds of interest in China and the Far East were further limited to the private financial and banking sectors in Shanghai and Hong Kong which were more reliant upon the principle of *laissez-faire*. When the First World War broke out, the British government had soon terminated the Reorganization Loan given to Yuan Shikai in order to reduce political commitment to China's domestic struggles. Imperialist powers like Britain had already gone through the stage of colonial expansion with their overseas colonies spreading around the globe. This was certainly not the case of Japan. The historical withdrawal of western powers from China had provided Japan a chance to narrow her gap with advanced imperialisms by pushing its militarily sponsored capitalist interests much further in China, especially Manchuria. As a combination of 'capitalism and feudalistic relics', Japan was not able to develop sufficient purchasing power on the domestic level for her capitalist industrialization which was developed more 'in width' than 'in depth'; thus Japan was congenitally short of sizable market for the highly concentrated capitalist development (Norman 1940; Halliday 1975: 100-102). Also, as Japan's industrialization further proceeded, its demand for raw materials became more pressing. It is recorded that by 1920s the number of Japanese expatriates living in China had reached 134 000, and China was Japan's most important destination of investment and textile exportation (Gordon 2003: 176). For Japan's status as a late-developing imperialist power and cultural inferiority, she was unable to compete with western imperialists 'on equal terms' on the global scale from the outset (Halliday 1975; Suzuki 2004). Thus the enormous size of the Chinese territory was viewed by the Japanese imperialist as their very own hinterland for relieving domestic crises caused by profit-drop. For the same reason,

Japan would by no means tolerate any attempts to make China politically strong or to place China under any political force stronger than Japan-A politically unsettled China with an underdeveloped industrial economy was extremely conducive to Japan's developmentally constituted geopolitical strategy, which was to enact a core-periphery structure in East Asia having annexed Taiwan and Korea as Japan's formal colonies (Cumings 1981: 4-8).

This geopolitical calculation of Japan also precluded Japan's invasion to China since the Mukden (Shenyang) Incident of 1931. For the unwise decision to return to the gold standard at prewar parity in the 1920s, Japan suffered severe domestic economic backlash since the 1929 Great Slump, largely because the mainstay of postwar Japanese economic relations were based on the functioning of the US economy. The reverberation of the economic crisis in the US had resulted in the rise of the military dictatorship who began to dominate the Japanese government after the assassination of the liberal-internationalist prime minister. Japan, like Germany was reacting to the global capitalist order in a fascist way by 'launching an assault first on many of the West's private markets, and subsequently sources of vital raw materials' (Halliday 1975: 122). With the growth of internationalism on the global scale, Japan, who was in deepened crisis as the knock-on effects of the Great Depression was reacting to the liberal international order in a more radical way by the 'bold action to bring China under decisive Japanese control' (ibid).

Another rising power that destabilized and altered the preexisting international order of East Asia was the post-revolutionary Soviet Russia, which to China was also an advanced industrial society. The Soviet Russia's geopolitical strategy and foreign policy were always characterized by a mixture of revolutionary prospect(s) and *realpolitik*. The peculiar nature of the Russian state as well as the Soviet revolution had made the Soviet foreign policy a contradictory one. That is to say, no matter how much 'socialist' the Russian revolution actually was, it was in the first instance a revolution against imperialism which aimed to transcend Russia's geopolitical and developmental backwardness. After the founding of the Soviet state in the late years of the First World War, the Soviet Russia had managed to free itself from the endgame of the First World War by signing the Brest-Litowsk Treaty with Germany which was severely punished and isolated by the Versailles peace settlement. This diplomatic

realignment indicated that the immediate task posed to the Soviet leaders was to safeguard the newly founded regime at home. Shortly after probing *realpolitik* against the imperialist obstruction which had summoned multi-national troops to the Russian soil, setbacks of ‘world revolution’ in Poland and Germany had legitimized Stalin’s line of ‘building socialism in one country’ as a strong appeal for *realpolitik*, which was also deployed to purge out Leon Trotsky who was against the alliance between the CCP and the KMT in the intra-party struggles (Borkenau 1962: 306; Trotsky’s Preface in Isaacs 1938).

China, as a late-developing society not only in terms of industrialization, but also the degree of working class formation, provided Stalin a typical case to justify his prospect of ‘Socialism in One Country’. Theoretically, Stalin’s foreign policy practices was predicated upon a stagist assumption that China needed to go through the phase of bourgeois revolution before she could meaningfully embrace a socialist/proletarian upheaval (Deutscher 1964: 184). Stalin suggested that China’s peasant and worker were both too weak to take a central role in the revolution. More significantly, this line of theoretical assumption could be easily adapted to the practical geopolitical calculation that a unified China under the Russian tutelage was contributory to consolidating Russia’s new regime, despite social composition of the Chinese leadership. Thus in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution had it emerged a North-South plane of unevenness between Russia as the early revolutionary state and China as a late one, which was to supervene on China’s course of late development by binding China’s communist elites with other political forces (e.g. the KMT) conducive to Soviet Russia’s geopolitical calculation. The North-South plane of unevenness between Russia and China had given rise to a dual approach in Soviet Russia’s foreign policy practices which was a peculiar mixture of *realpolitik* and spirits of world revolution. The Soviet geopolitical interests driven by tensions on the North-South plane had sowed the seed of the subsequent CCP-KMT conflict. However, it is arguable that the Soviet influence had set for the Chinese Revolution both a significant model of modernity and considerable obstacles to emulate the model which has in turn compelled the Chinese elites to reflect on different paths of modernity throughout the revolution. That the Soviet Russia acted as both ‘foe and tutor’ was not a separate case; it was almost a common pattern of China’s reception of modernities. But before reflecting upon limits and incompatibility of foreign models,

what the Chinese revolutionaries first confronted was the question of appreciating modernity against the premodern relics untouched by the 1911 Revolution.

It was a consistent theme in the Soviet Russia's 'Socialism in One Country' that a strong, unified China was desired on her southern border in order to balance against the pressure from western powers; and this theme bore some variances in varying geopolitical conditions. When it came to the closure of the Second World War, the most pressing task for the Soviet Union became to remedy the war-torn economy and maintain its 'sphere of influence' acquired in the wartime. As the wartime condominium between the Soviet Union and the West had collapsed by 1947 when the US inaugurated the Marshall Plan to transmit European states to the US hegemony, Moscow felt threatened that the Soviet control of Eastern Europe would be 'rolled back'; thus Stalin was prompted to enforce the programme of 'Socialism in One Country', which was predicated upon 'a centrally planned, autarkic economy subordinated to a fixed ideology' at the global level (van der Pijl 1993: 250). Moscow had then forced Poland, Romania and Hungary to join the Communist alliance by establishing the Cominform as the new institutional headquarter of the Soviet bloc. In 1949 the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was set up among member states of the Soviet bloc, which was a mechanism through which the Soviet Union exchanged engineering and technology to the member states for cheap energy and natural resources. The regional economic cooperation of the Soviet bloc was then placed under the central bureaucratic planning of the CPSU. However Stalin's effort to expand the system of 'Socialism in One Country' ran into a series of difficulties in its early years when it was alarmed by increasing hostility from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia from 1948 onwards (Ulam 1968: 379; Hopf 2006: 662). Moscow found it difficult and costly to purge out the pro-West elites in the Soviet bloc and to curb the ambition of some nationalist leaders such as Yugoslavia's Tito. Alarmed by the continuous resistance from Eastern Europe, Stalin began to direct the expanding system of 'Socialism in One Country' towards China, where the CCP was badly in need of heavy industries, technology and political recognition for sustaining the newly built republic. However, the North-South unevenness presupposed the problem that China's emulation and transplantation of the Soviet model of political economy would not only be assisted by the Soviet Russia, but also be subject to the geopolitical calculation of her-the Soviet model would thus refracted

through prisms of such geopolitical calculation on China's development.

In sum, the First World War had provided the peripheral China a freehand to reap the profits of sprouting modern economic sectors; the 'upsurge of modern sector', though it was short-lived and unsustainable, gave the Chinese elites the faith that China had the equal chance to embrace modernism. 'The international' constituted by interrelationships with Russia as the revolutionary *avant-garde* and Japan as the saboteur of China's modern industrial development then resulted in a peculiar combination in which the first unified nation-state in the post-dynastic time was conceived. Now let us turn to a more significant question about the origins of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

5.3 Combination: the interwoven themes of nationalism and socialism in the making of the Chinese Communist Party

5.3.1 The May Fourth Movement and the nationalist origins of the Communist Party

When the aforementioned two historical processes, China's upsurge in urban bourgeoisie and the political penetration of Japan and the Soviet Russia, intersected in the first decade of the republican era, the Chinese society was on the verge of a new wave of political transformation energized, accelerated and mediated by wide-spreading nationalist movements across the country. From the hiatus of the First World War had the Communist Party arisen under not only the banner of socialism but also that of national independence and radical political actions (Dirlik 1989, Mitter 2004). The term 'national salvation' was coined in the May Fourth Movement (1919) as the most inclusive and widely endorsed idea for all political forces of the day to legitimize their projects. The May Fourth Movement was a nationwide protest against the Beiyang government based upon a wide alliance between students, workers, merchants and intellectuals. The trigger of the Movement, however, arose from the East-West plane of unevenness due to Japan's unceasing quest for overseas domination. In the Versailles Conference (1919), Germany's extraterritoriality in Shandong was transferred to Japan despite China's strong opposition. Since 1915, Japan's request for Shandong raised in the 21 Demands had already aroused nationwide waves of anti-Japanese commercial boycotting. Because China made its particular contribution to the Allies in the First World War by sending 96,000

Chinese labourers to the Western Front, the expectation of reclaiming China's rights and sovereignty in Shandong was extremely high across the country before of the Versailles Treaty was signed (Mitter 2004: 5). Needless to say, the failure of the government's diplomacy revived the anti-Japanese campaign on a more broader, nationwide scale.

The May Fourth Movement was initiated by a group of 3,000 students attempting to break into the house of the foreign minister Cao Rulin, and had very quickly rippled into the urban intelligentsia. A group of progressive intellectuals began to promote the idea of 'New Cultural Movement', which was targeted at the non-progressive, anti-Enlightenment elements of the traditional values that were thought to have prevented China from transcending the condition of backwardness. 'Democracy' and 'Science', which were identified as the two cornerstones of western modernity, were introduced by intellectuals at Peking University, the institutional home of the New Cultural Movement. Chen Duxiu, one of the key advocates of the Movement argued that Confucius was an ideology for the feudal age, which only taught people to submit rather than to embrace lifestyles in 'civilized society'; and Lu Xun, the leading Chinese radical novelist, claimed exaggeratedly in his renowned work *Kuangren Riji* (*Diary of A Mad Man*) that what lay between every line of those fine Confucian principles such as 'benevolence, righteousness and morality' were only the simple but brutish cry of 'Eat people!' ⁴⁹. These arbitrary and partial interpretations of traditional culture appeared to have proposed a reflection on the traditional way of life thought to be short of the essential impetus for Enlightenment. However, the New Cultural Movement, which first focused on the cultural aspects, was soon overpowered by the more radical political agenda of 'national salvation'. As the Movement proceeded, the search for 'Democracy and Science' was played down by the emerging 'central patriotic ground' in the cities, which proposed that 'a rejuvenated, unified China would have the means to cope with the three great problems of warlordism, an exploitative landlord system described as 'feudal' in nature, and foreign imperialism' (Spence 1990: 313). After the appeal for 'New Culture' in the Chinese intelligentsia

⁴⁹ See Chen Duxiu, "The Way of Confucius and Modern Life" in De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Vol 2: From 1600 through the twentieth century*, pp. 353-356.

had given way to the more powerful and all-encompassing discourse of national salvation, the May Fourth Movement was able to grow into a nationalist movement that had involved almost all strata of the Chinese society. Students blamed the Beiyang government for allying with the imperialists and selling out the interests of the Chinese nation; Merchants and urban entrepreneurs imputed their lack of profit to the warlords' exploitative policy, their lack of political representation and the influx of Japanese goods. In this situation, the intellectuals' denunciation of Confucianism was more likely to draw people's attention to the dubious and deceitful relationship between the warlords and the imperialisms, especially given that Yuan Shikai had glorified Confucius as the ideological orthodoxy of his 'Empire of China'. As a result, the May Fourth Movement, which entailed a strong incentive to modernize Chinese culture, had ultimately become a movement of 'actions of thorough and uncompromising opposition to imperialism and warlordism' (Chen 1970: 74).

Thus it becomes more obvious that the May Fourth Movement, which manifested itself as the 'New Cultural Movement' in reflecting upon the non-progressive elements of China's traditional values, was the most powerful catalyst to the burgeoning nationalist movements after the First World War. The characteristics of the renovated 'nationalism' can be found in the social combination of the movement. Rana Mitter is correct to argue that the Movement had succeeded in creating a new 'atmosphere' of Salvationism with the fetishism of westernization; '[a] 'nation', a political form based on the idea of equal citizenship, was a foreign concept, yet it quickly became clear that it was a potentially useful one', and also 'thinkers...understood that nation-states were a product of western modernity' that needed to be adopted by China for the reason of 'national salvation' (Mitter 2004: 118). Political discourses and ideological upsurges involved in the Movement were mostly advocating revolutionary radicalism rather than any forms of reformism compared to the relatively conservative aura of the Constitutional Reform in late nineteenth century. In 1890s, it was Japan's successful restoration that persuaded the Qing government to seek the balance between traditional values and modernization in the Japanese mirror; however, after the First World War, it was also Japan's aggressive demand for China's territory and sovereignty that had discredited Japan as China's mentor and role model. Also Japan's changing role had vetoed the legitimacy of China's traditional values (especially Confucianism) in facilitating national restoration and reunification,

opening a century of political radicalism that tended to replace the old world completely with western thoughts such as Social Darwinism, Pragmatism and Marxism. Most of China's progressive intellectuals involved in this movement were compelled to disvalue China's traditional way of life completely.

However, it is notable that most of the western ideas ventilated in the movement were reinterpreted narrowly as ideas for 'surviving competitions' subject to an emerging project of substitutionism conceived by the elites⁵⁰. The May Fourth Movement has uncompromisingly highlighted the significance of practical political action towards national unification. The communist thoughts of social revolution were first introduced and openly addressed under this circumstance. Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu, both faculty members of Peking University were the earliest intellectuals to publish on communism. Both of them believed in radical political actions for subverting the old order. As the main advocates of the May Fourth and the New Culture Movement, Li and Chen were both consciously highlighting the radical dimensions in Marxist ideas as a guidance of political action. Though Li Dazhao and Chen Duxiu were both 'marginal intellectuals removed from the mainstream of their intellectual community' (Narkiewicz 1981: 148; Dirlik 1989: 95), it is obvious that 'they apprehended Marxism as an ideology of action before they had a firm grasp of its theoretical basis' (Dirlik 1989: 98). As Arif Dirlik has precisely argued, 'while the Marxist social revolutionary idea, and Marxist concepts of social analysis, emerged quickly in 1919 as fundamental components of the language of radicalism in China, it is wrong to deduce from that there existed at this time an ideological commitment to or theoretical grasp of Marxism that pointed the way to a strategy of revolution that Chinese radicals could call their own' (ibid).

⁵⁰ It is noteworthy that though advocates of this wave of 'learning from the West' movement did have internal differences from one another, for example whilst Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, the earliest Marxists were actively involved in mass demonstration, Fu Sinian, another major advocate of the New Cultural Movement was negative towards students' onslaught on foreign embassies. However, voices like Fu had been largely marginalised in the Movement, carrying very little weight in constructing any revolutionary ideology because of the atmospheric predominance of nationalist radicalism. For details of the Movement and disputes among its advocates, see Vera Schwarcz, 1986, *The Chinese Enlightenment*, University of California Press

Therefore, the May Fourth Movement recreated a nationalist conjuncture in which the formerly suppressed social forces, such as the workers and the bourgeoisie were energized at the same moment under the unchallenged legitimacy of ‘national salvation’ (*Jiuguo*). Under this rubric, all western social and revolutionary thoughts being experimented in the cities, communism *inter alia* could be easily channeled towards the radical, anti-traditional end, which gained considerable momentum by proposing an ultra-westernizing revolutionary agenda. ‘China had to learn from foreigners’ was the renewed and reinforced social consensus. After the Japanese model was ruled out, it only depended on whom the new mentor would be. More importantly, if the notion of nationhood in the 1911 Revolution was predicated vaguely upon the potency of anti-Manchuism, the intellectuals of the May Fourth Movement has lifted the idea of ‘nation’ to a more scientific level: the legitimacy of the discourse of ‘modernization as westernization’ seemed un-negotiable; and westernizing, which to the largest audience meant building a ‘centralized, as opposed to federal, vision of China’ that would wipe out the corrupting and ‘people-eating’ phantom of the old culture (Mitter 2004: 119) then became the very social and intellectual *zeitgeist*. Under the revolutionary hegemony which emphasizes both radical political practice and westernization, it can be understood why the newly founded CCP could join the political alliance headed by the KMT despite their different social visions.

It is important to note that the historical significance of the May Fourth Movement is that it has reinforced the revolutionary identity created in the nineteenth century that social transformation needs to be integrated to a broader picture of nationalist movement. The Beiyang Government’s weak position in the postwar negotiations strengthened the image that the warlord class was no better than the imperialists in oppressing the Chinese people. Mao has stated in his much later text, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party* that ‘[t]he two (imperialism and feudalism) collude with each other in oppressing the Chinese people’, whereas ‘imperialism is the

foremost and most ferocious enemy' for it was onerous (Mao 1939)⁵¹. Mao referred to the warlords as a form of 'feudalism' not in the sense of European feudalism, but that traditional local militias, such as the warlords were tearing the state-structure apart and encroaching national integrity, which then gave imperialism a space to oppress the people. This notion implies that Chinese communists has from the outset posited the nature of China's revolution as a combination tasks of national salvation and social transformation, with anti-imperialist campaign occupying the centre of revolutionary ideologies. Dirlik's observation of early communism shows that Mao and his predecessors were much more assured of the imperative of national salvation and its required political actions than of the form and nature to which the traditional society would be transformed. A question thus arises-why the stage of bourgeois as well as worker's revolution have both eclipsed with Mao and the CCP coming to identify the peasant as the agency of socialist revolution as the above 1939 text has stated?

5.3.2 The KMT's Nationalist Era as a premature modernization and the exacerbation of social and geopolitical crisis

The May Fourth Movement reconstructed the Communist Party as an *avant-garde* party which prioritized political action over Marxist theories. Russia was also set as China's new role model as a major result of the movement (Spence 1990: 305-310)⁵². However, Russian's revolutionary model would refract through prisms of geopolitical context emerging from China's developmental belatedness in relation to Russia. As an advanced revolutionary and industrial society, the Soviet Russia exercised a dual policy towards China in order to promote world revolution and to sustain a unified and stable China on the eastern border simultaneously. The Soviet Union decided to place the newly founded Chinese Communist Party under the leadership of a

⁵¹ See Mao Tsetung, *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party*, https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_23.htm, last access, 28, Feb, 2014

⁵² Notably, the Soviet foreign affairs commissar Karakhan announced to relinquish Russia's rights in Manchuria. This diplomatic act 'marked contrast to the behavior of the other Western powers and Japan that the Soviet Union appeared as China's truest friend' (Spence 1990: 307). On this basis Li Dazhao had further justified grafting Russian Marxism onto China's national salvation.

militarily and organizationally centralized Nationalist Party, despite the latter had retained its enduring connections with regional militarists, landlords and urban bourgeoisie; thus the KMT took the initiative to construct the first unified modern state under the Soviet tutelage.

Under the leadership of the KMT, the communists undertook the task to launch anti-warlord movements in both rural and urban areas, which was advised by the Comintern's policy that peasant revolts should be organized as part of wider national liberation struggles in oriental countries (Wilbur 1983: 15-18). The Communist Party had also succeeded in mobilizing urban labour protests in major cities as a continuation of working class activism sparked in the May Fourth Movement. Especially in 1925, the labour protest in the Shanghai International Settlement was extended to a nationwide movement known as the 'May Thirtieth Movement', which had then attracted large funding from overseas Chinese and the Soviet Russia. Such movements were further echoed by rebellions against foreign privileges in widely dispersed concessions across the country (ibid). With the hostility between workers on strike and foreign settlements, working class movements were effectively internalized to the broader theme of national salvation.

It is undeniable that labour movements 'created a nation-wide social consciousness which is essential toward the building of a new and vigorous republic' (Isaacs 1938: 63). Thus Canton and the Guangdong province, where the earliest foreign economic presence and the wide-ranging sectarian societies originated, had very quickly become the base of revolutionary forces not only because it was relatively untouched by northern warlords, but also mass movements were most heated in the region. Students and youngsters flocked to Guangdong for progressive and revolutionary prospects, and the Soviet Russia began to pour funds into the area in order to bolster the KMT's military and organizational capacity. The Soviet military adviser Borodin had very soon identified Chiang Kaishek, who was scion of a Zhejiang merchant family with close personal connections with underworld societies in Jiangnan, as his 'dark haired darling' (Isaacs 1938: 67). The Whampoa Military Academy built under the Soviet tutelage was of great importance to both revolutionary parties. Most immediately, it was certainly the 'privilege of backwardness' that armed the Chinese revolutionary force to a much more advanced level. This advancement was not only attained

technologically, but also organizationally and socio-politically. The alliance of the KMT and the CCP parties, which had been identified as the *avant-garde* of the nation, were restructured in the image of the Soviet organizations of party-state. The Political Training Department (hereafter PTD) was implanted in the National Revolutionary Army to indoctrinate the general revolutionary ideology. The PTD was in charge of political and cultural education of soldiers which was nonexistent in other concurrent regional military forces. As the role of political propaganda became increasingly crucial in the army, the revolutionary party had succeeded in politicizing the military force by infiltrating it with the idea of national salvation (Wilbur 1983: 34). Mao Zedong, the subsequent CCP leader had become Chief of the Nationalist Propaganda Bureau. Though Mao's task in the propaganda section of the KMT was as short-lived as the CCP's involvement, he has played a significant role in creating a 'revolutionary part' of the Nationalist Army by instilling the idea of allying with workers and proletariats. Mao's seizure of the propaganda machine of the government had indeed accelerated the ongoing revolts and struggles in urban workplaces headed by the CCP. Thus in realizing the first national unification after the imperial collapse, the two predominant political forces, the CCP and the KMT were further and more clearly identified with respective social classes (Fitzgerald 1996: 214-260). As the national-revolutionary conjuncture unfolded, its early stage was by all means highly progressive accelerated by the Soviet Union's dual policies not only because it has tottered the pre-existing warlord regime, but more importantly it brought up the question of the 'Communist Party entering the national-revolutionary organizations' (Trotsky 1976: 124). With the *avant-garde* national army being modernly drilled and, more critically, organized under the solid political leadership of the revolutionary party, the national unification movement had very quickly swept across the country, displacing warlordist militias which were still built upon personal allegiance and clanship. China's revolution was also pushed forward with the CCP's increasing organizational capacity mustered by cooperating with the KMT in mobilizing mass movements during the Northern Expedition (Fitzgerald 1996: 261). Certainly on the early stage of China's political unification, the CCP was still too weak to stand as a contradictory force to the military prowess of the KMT because the CCP did not have any military capacity at its disposal on this stage. Nevertheless, the CCP's propaganda strategies and negative lessons learned from the revolutionary alliance, were all developed in the history of the rise of KMT under circumstances of

geopolitical contestations among the Soviet Russia, Japan and the West.

A world-historical riddle following the huge success of the national unification campaign was indeed the breakdown of the revolutionary alliance between the CCP and the KMT which started from the bloody crackdown on the communist section of the KMT party and armies in April, 1927. Explanation to this event is not to be found in the character of either party but a wider picture of international conjuncture. The rise of the KMT and China's national unification had 'exploded' the balance of power in the region between Japan and the western powers built upon the Washington settlement (Halliday 1975: 117). Chiang Kaishek's hostility towards labours and the communists was not just because of his dependence on foreign capitals and the comprador class, but more importantly the particular version of modernization he was actively pursuing as a resolution of the condition of backwardness.

The KMT's relationship with the capitalist section of Chinese society was indeed a contradictory one. It was firstly symbiotic, but after all predicated upon an asymmetric interdependence between the two. The symbiosis between the Chinese capitalists (especially the merchant class in Shanghai) and the KMT was first created with the KMT promising to industrialize the country. Upon winning the anti-warlord struggle, the KMT party had taken control of the newly emerging urban industrial metropolises, which gave Chiang Kaishek the impression that the rise of a centralized developmental state was underway in the early years of the Nanjing government . Chiang, as a faithful student and follower of Sun Yat-sen who proposed state-led industrialization for China, felt the historical opportunity to build an economy of 'nationalized heavy industrialized and transportations' pictured in Sun Yat-sen's prospective *The International Development of China*⁵³. Immediately after the unification, Nanjing was redesigned as 'Paris of the East' under rigorous central planning. The Nationalist government had soon set up a series of bureaucratic bodies such as the National Reconstruction Commission to reorganize the national economy (Kirby 2000: 141).

With Chiang Kaishek's industrialization project accelerated by a set of Soviet-styled

⁵³ Sun first took this idea from Lenin's New Economic Policy. See Godley 1987: 109-125.

bureaucracy, China's development was still lagging behind the advanced West; however, Chiang's 'technocratic confidence and cooperation with advanced industrial nations' (Kirby 2000: 138) was too early and premature for the rest of Chinese society which was still populated by small-scale agricultural production. The consequence of this combined development is disastrous in the sense that China's rural order and geopolitical situation were both worsened by Chiang Kaishek's industrial development. The utmost difficulty faced by Chiang Kaishek and his government was the lack of financial and technological resources for setting up additional industrial projects in the promised scale. The KMT's immediate strategy to broaden its financial basis was to exploit the Shanghai capitalist community as much as possible by altering the fact that private capitals in major cities were 'comparatively free from legislative and administrative control' before 1927 due to the collapse of the Beiyang government of Yuan Shikai (Cobles 1986: 261). In uniting with the Shanghai capitalists the KMT was first prompted to play down the spreading worker activism heated up during the Northern Expedition. The Communist Party and its members, which under the Soviet tutelage were absorbed to the KMT's organization for mobilizing workers, were all purged out due to the need to weaken the labour class in bolstering the KMT's 'developmental state' (Kirby 2000: 137). 'The policy of the government is to have labour working in harmony with the revolutionary army and the government' (Isaacs 1938:). In conceiving the relatively autonomous 'developmental state', the KMT was prompted to wipe out the existing self-conscious labour movements from both the revolutionary alliance but also the entire society. Like a typical developmental state, 'internal security legislation and agencies, secret police and party organisations has been standard practice in bolstering the state and controlling civil society' (Leftwich 1995: 415); the KMT had thus set up a number of secret organizations to permeate the society. All these fascist practices were dressed in Chiang Kaishek's reinterpretation of the traditional cultural values, Confucianism *inter alia* as a set of spiritual doctrines that 'moves people's minds to common public purpose', central to which was the absolute domination of the military section of the state over social and political life (Eastman 1990; Wakeman 1997: 431). Thus by the 1930s, Chiang Kaishek and his KMT had managed to impose a military control over the labour class as well as the capital-possessing merchant class. This development had laid a partial foundation for a modern developmental state as the politico-institutional basis for Chiang Kaishek's project of industrialization.

Chiang Kaishek's symbiotic relationship with the Shanghai capitalist circle was reinforced by China's late-developing status during the Great Depression of the 1930s. China, due to her peripheral status in the global capitalist economy, did not suffer much from the Great Depression (Iriye 1986: 494). Since the monetary system was still the silver standard which stayed intact of the financial crisis, when silver outflow began to soar since 1932 due to the rise in silver price on the American market, the Chinese rural economy began to further deteriorate as a result of decline in export. Shanghai financiers and bankers then decided to look for new opportunity for investment. The KMT's financial ministry thus began to issue domestic bonds to raise funds for anti-communist campaigns. Endless wars at home were a major guarantor of the price of domestic bonds, which had then become a new interest for Shanghai bankers. The average price of domestic bonds had thus risen by 40 percent from 1932 to 1934 (Cobles 1986: 165-168). In floating domestic bonds the KMT had rendered the Shanghai capitalist circle increasingly dependent on the state, whilst it was also in the KMT's utmost interest to secure Shanghai as the only sustainable source of revenue. This interdependence became the sociological origins of the KMT's non-resistance policy to the Japanese invasion after the Mukden Incident (1931). The KMT did not want its connections to the Shanghai merchants and financiers be jeopardized by a head to head confrontation with Japan. The KMT had thus signed the Ho-Umezu Agreement with Japan in 1935 to accept the terms of military withdrawal and keeping resistance quiet in northern China, hoping to keep the Japanese forces off the Shanghai heartland before the KMT could manage to receive support from the West. In a time when the postwar economic internationalism was descending to regionalism and protectionism, London and Washington were both unwilling to intervene Japan's bold action of aggression (Iriye 1986: 504-506). The consequence of the KMT's inactive response to the Japanese invasion was proved to be lethal in the long run. The most immediate result of the KMT's Japanese policy was that it had driven progressive, patriotic elites from of all kinds in both cities and villages to the CCP's bordered area.

The non-resistance policy of the KMT had severely damaged its legitimacy especially when the Japanese force began to overtake the coastal cities including Shanghai after 1937 despite the Ho-Umezu Agreement. However, what directly led to the

augmentation of the peasant's political agency was the worsening of the living condition of proletariats and the collapse of rural order as a result of the KMT's industrialization which was too early for China. In building the nationalist government, Chiang's source of revenues were far from enough to sustain a modern military force capable of dominating the entire territory. Competing warlords would accept the nationalist creed of the revolution for its strong symbolic power without conceding their personalistic control of armies to the central government (Harrison 2000: 173-206). More crucial was that Chiang's highly costly modern industrial projects and military expenditures demanded much larger financial sources which the urban commercial circles could not fully provide, thus the Nanjing Government's relationship with the peasant became increasingly conflictual and exploitative. The KMT's ruthless land tax and military conscription 'exacted a heavy toll of the farmers and deeply affected peasant attitudes toward government authority' (Eastman 1984: 49). The key problem here is that the KMT had no direct connections to the peasant communities, thus it would have to rely on a complex alliance between various warlords and local gentry for tax-exaction which would in turn encourage local tax-farming. This led to a polarization of wealth in the countryside, generating some more prosperous large landlords. What was more disastrous was 'a sharp upward spurt in farm prices' which resulted in wide-spreading panic in the countryside⁵⁴. Moreover, Chiang Kaishek's military incapability would also intensify rural crisis. In withdrawing to western China after Japan's overtake of Nanjing, Chiang Kaishek's armies disrupted many local communities by exploding the dikes in the Yellow River, which flooded more local peasants than Japanese armies (Spence 1990: 449).

Therefore, China's first national unification accelerated by the Soviet Union's foreign policy and the KMT's political and military prowess has not resulted in any bourgeois society or mature developmental state; it has led to deepened geopolitical and national crisis due to the state's inability to resist Japanese invasion. This simply means that China's experience of modern revolution as a combined development has to break down 'the succession of events' from bourgeois-democratic revolution to worker-led socialist revolution because the bourgeoisie were too dependent on the state and the workers were so disempowered in the specific geopolitical circumstances which gave

⁵⁴ As Lloyd Eastman has documented, rice price increased 500 percent in Chongqing in 1940, see Eastman 1984: 46-47.

rise to the KMT's particular industrial policies. This has no doubt reinforced Mao and the CCP's perception of the bourgeoisie and the worker's political weaknesses, compelling them to look for substitution of these classes. The KMT's failure has also shattered its status as the leader of the Chinese Revolution, which, according to Mao, is because '[n]o sooner had the strength of the proletariat and of the peasant and of other petty bourgeois masses brought the revolution of 1927 to victory than the capitalist class, headed by the big bourgeoisie, kicked the masses aside, seized the fruits of the revolution, formed a counter-revolutionary alliance with imperialism and the feudal forces, and strained themselves to the limit in a war of "Communist suppression" for ten years' (Mao 1940)⁵⁵. Such combined development, manifested as a breakdown in 'succession of events' has in turn called forth an alternative leadership for the Chinese Revolution which had to be more capable of mobilizing more revolutionary and youthful class, the peasant *inter alia*; and it was in the geopolitical conjuncture of the Japanese invasion that Mao's strategy to cope with such combined development became more pertinent.

5.4 Development: the making of the Yanan Model of 'Peasant Socialism' as an substitution for western and soviet modernities

5.4.1 The catalyst of the CCP's substitutionism: the asymmetric war against Japan

Now I will turn to the conjunctural explanation of the CCP's peasant revolution, its substitutionist character and its reinterpretation of both democracy and socialism. To be sure, the KMT's destruction of traditional rural society and geopolitical crisis was urging an alternative agent who were more capable of solving China's problem of 'backwardness'. As part of the accumulative development of Chinese Revolution, it was the lessons learned from the tragedy of urban labour movements that have driven the CCP away from its previous trajectory, which compelled the CCP to look for new modes of resistance and identify with alternative social class (Deutscher 1964: 14). However, why was it the peasant and how was a peasant revolution possible? The specific conjuncture of this social formation was that China was fighting an asymmetric war against the Japanese invasion in a backward situation. After the Mukden Incident (1931), Japan was able to maintain a reciprocal relationship with the KMT government until Chiang Kaishek was by accident detained by the northeastern warlord Zhang Xueliang in Xi'an, whose father Zhang Zuolin was

⁵⁵ See *On New Democracy*.

murdered by the Japanese army. As a result of the Xi'an Incident (1936), Chiang was forced to abolish the so-called 'first pacification and then resistance' strategy and accept the CCP's proposal of forming a nationwide anti-Japanese alliance, which is also known as the second KMT-CCP cooperation (Braun 1982: 149; Esherick 1995: 53). The Red Army was reorganized into the National Army and began to receive financial aid from the KMT government. The Shan-Gan-Ning base area, which was founded by the CCP after the Long March, was granted *de jure* status by the Nanjing government. The reunion of the CCP and the KMT as a wartime alliance was indeed a partial one. Though the CCP's army was conscripted in the Nationalist Army, the KMT was certainly not capable of intervening the autonomous operation of the CCP's army. This was the lesson Mao had learned from the demise of the first revolutionary alliance that 'political power grows out of the barrel of a gun' and the military forces should be placed under tight control of the Party (Mao 1965: 219). Notably, before the War of Resistance against Japan, the CCP had already developed a solid organizational structure resembling the Soviet *avant-garde* party and the Nationalist government in the 1920s, which includes the political control of the army and the prototypical party-state. Now the question becomes how the socio-political form of the CCP's state has historically transformed to effectively interweave socialism and nationalism in the peasant communities during the Sino-Japanese War. This is firstly a question of how the CCP has managed to survive by mobilizing a 'asymmetric war' against the Japanese armies in which the peasants played a central role (Kennedy 2008).

Had the CCP not invented some new strategies of resistance and survival, the technologically backward Red Army would have been easily wiped out by the KMT's intensive campaigns in early 1930s. Mao stated on the beginning of the war that the resistance against Japanese would be protracted and enduring. The reason for the protracted-ness is that Japan's strategy in China mainly focused on the coastal cities with the northern and western parts of the country uncontrolled. To Mao, 'the heterogeneity and uneven development of the Chinese economy are rather advantageous in the war of resistance' and 'to sever Shanghai from the rest of China would definitely not be as disastrous to China as would be the severance of New York from the United States'. This was simply because that the vast peasant communities provided the Communists the space and energy to mobilize guerrilla warfare with 'a

high degree of mobility on extensive battlefields' which enabled 'the weak to win against the strong' (Kennedy 2008: 887); and the extensiveness of the CCP armies enabled them to survive the intensive onslaughts of Japan's modern war-machine until the Japanese army fell under an 'international united front against Japanese imperialism' (Mao 1938/1965: 134-136). Thus in Mao's long-term calculation of the protracted struggle with the Japanese imperialism, Chinese peasants in the northern and western parts of the country played an extremely important role. The CCP's Red Army, reinstated as the Eighth Route Army and the New Fourth Army under the KMT were mostly stationed in the mountainous villages where Japan's modern war-machinery could not operate effectively. The economic backwardness of the peasant society enabled the CCP not only the anarchical space to organize protracted resistance (Skocpol 1979: 242), but also the possibility to invent a new form of resistance, the guerrilla warfare as a strategy of survival in an asymmetrical power relations⁵⁶.

The significance of peasant mobilization for China's national liberation needs to be further understood by reference to the asymmetric war against Japan's 'mopping up' attacks in early 1940s. In August 1941 the CCP launched the 'A Hundred Regiments Campaign' on the Japanese forces in five northern provinces. This campaign had damaged the Japanese occupation severely and most crucially caused disruption to the supply of resources and products to the Japanese army (Selden 1995; Watson 2008: 385). The CCP's military advance in the north alerted Japan that her small size of population and limited natural resources could not sustain a protracted war, especially concerning that Japan was dragged into the Pacific War against another country with bountiful material supply (the US) in 1941. All these factors have made the Japanese determined to destroy the CCP's base area in a short time, which appeared to them the reservoir of both human resources and anti-Japanese energy. Thus since 1941 the Japanese army launched a total attack on China's northern countryside known as the 'three-all-policy' (rob all, burn all, kill all) (Selden 1995; Slyke 1986: 671). The outbreak of the Pacific War had compelled Japan to allocate more troops to China's

⁵⁶ For the record of Japan's intensive military operation in northern China and Mao Zedong's military response, see AB. Kennedy, 'Can the Weak Defeat the Strong? Mao's Evolving Approach to Asymmetric Warfare in Yan'an', *The China Quarterly*, vol. 196, 2008.

northern villages, hoping to rapidly subsume China's rural resistance via intensive military operation. Japan's intensive attack using modern weapons since 1941 also provided the KMT a chance to weaken the CCP's power by occasionally raiding the northern base and cutting off the government funds to the CCP. It has been shown that by 1939 the CCP's taxes levied to sustain the large team of bureaucrats in the base area was already on a unbearable level⁵⁷; despite the heavy taxation that could damage the peasant solidarity, the revenues were still not sufficient to sustain the self-defence army. Mao was then compelled to work out solutions that could 'reduce costs and develop self-sufficiency' (Watson 2008: 387). Therefore, it is arguable that the historical conjuncture of 'asymmetric war' against Japan set the basic context for Mao's peasant revolution because the vast peasant communities provided a platform for a 'protracted struggle' to survive Japan's intensive onslaughts with modern weaponry. However, surviving the war cannot be equated to winning the revolution. How was the Chinese peasant mobilized to head a 'socialist revolution' propelled by national liberation, and how was socialism recast in China's specific context? This question needs to be understood by examining the Rectification Movement and the Production Movement, which have substantially transformed the organizational structure of the CCP by critically negating the Soviet party-state structure, and also fundamentally altered the social property relations of the Chinese agrarian society.

5.4.2 Reconstructing the peasant's political agency: the mass line and the meaning of 'people's democracy'

The combined development of the formation of the peasant's political agency was firstly a response to the aforementioned conjunctural crisis faced by the CCP. The Rectification Movement was indeed the political action taken to recreate the peasant in order to survive such crisis. The Rectification Movement had long been mistakenly understood as Mao's effort to strengthen its personal power by purging opponents (cf. Gao 2001; Halliday and Chang 2005). It seems to some authors that Rectification was nothing more than a process for strengthening Mao's patrimonial power through ideological and political manoeuvres. Indeed Mao did use the movement to retaliate

⁵⁷ It is worth mentioning that nearly half of the CCP's revenue came from the landlords and rich peasant (Watson 2008: 346), of which the confiscation was always conflictual and costly. Also it is noteworthy that endless war against the landlords was detrimental to the anti-Japanese United Front whose existence was in Mao's interest.

on his critics (e.g. the Moscow clique), but in deposing opponents Mao certainly needed to identify more ‘friends’ even for the simplest reason of power consolidation; and here came the question of peasant representation (Hobsbawm 1973; Dugget 1975). How could a Leninist Party headed by urban elites be possibly accepted by the local peasants? To address this question, Mao used the Rectification Movement to reflect upon the failure of the 1927 Revolution and to critically inherit the legacies of the May Fourth Movement. The cultural question articulated in the movement was about what form of national culture was conducive to the ‘Revolution of Backwardness’, especially the asymmetrical war against Japan. This was a negation of the ultra-westernizing tradition set forth by the May Fourth Movement which proposed that China should remake its state and culture in the image of ‘foreign’ legacies. ‘How wide-spread could a rationalist enlightenment ever be among the masses’ (Schwarcz 1986: 227). Intellectuals who came to the villages from the cities to escape the ‘white terror’ of the KMT then proposed that China, with her massive rural space should seek to reveal universality from the soil of localism, which was also used to define nationalism. In this climate, Mao published three articles regarding the new form of culture and ‘work method’ the CCP should deploy for mobilizing the peasants. In ‘Reform Our Study’ (1941) and ‘Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing’ (1942), Mao proclaimed to open orthodox Marxist and Leninist theories to the reality of China’s rural society and the practice of the Chinese Revolution; he asserted that the party should learn to use the language of the mass to avoid ‘subjectivism and sectarianism’. Further to this, Mao announced in his ‘Talk at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art’ (1942) that the role of culture in the base-area was to both represent and educate the mass; thus ‘the thoughts and feelings of our writers and artists should be fused with those of the masses of workers, peasants and soldiers’⁵⁸.

By ‘fusing with the masses’, the CCP’s intellectuals, cadres and writers were all encouraged to get involved in the daily life of the peasants and work with their familiar languages. By driving the pre-existing bureaucrats, cadres and intellectuals to the grassroot level of the countryside, the Rectification Movement preluded a decentralizing tendency which enabled the Production Movement. In line with the

⁵⁸ See ‘Reform Our Study’, ‘Oppose Stereotyped Party Writing’ and ‘Talk at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art’ in *Selected Works of Mao Tse-Tung*, vol. 3, 1965.

opposition to bureaucratism and doctrinarism, the Production Movement was from the start against ‘grandiose, empty and unrealistic plans for large-scale investment in heavy industry’ (Watson 2008: 390). The goals of the movement, including ‘excellence and simplicity, unity, efficiency etc.’ were all targeted at reducing centrally controlled economic activities in order to relieve the ‘economic and financial problem’ in the geopolitical situation of intensifying Japanese pressure. Central to all goals of the Production Movement was that the revolutionary cadres, who had been ‘brought down to the earth’ in local military-productive units, were expected to organize guerrilla militias on self-sufficient basis.

The idea of self-sufficiency in Mao’s political economy implies a transformation of social relations property which has later become a particular form of socialism on the basis of the peasantry. In response to intensive blockades and onslaughts, the party-army’s *modus operandi* was to make ‘military and governmental units responsible for producing substantial portions of their own food and supplies’ (Selden 1989: 45, 1995a: 228). This step taken initially to reduce cost suggested that party officials and cadres would not stand off the agrarian society as an autonomous administration; instead, they themselves become part of the agricultural production. Though this development did not rule out the pre-existing unequal power relations between the party and the peasant (Bianco 1986: 305), it has nevertheless brought substantial change to the party’s organization as well as social structure of the countryside—a more organic and cooperative relationship was built between the CCP and the peasants with the revolutionary cadres became part of the production process of the peasant communities, whose subsistence was supplied by agricultural surpluses redistributed *within* local communities; and since the revolutionary cadres laboured within the local peasants’ households on a self-sufficient basis, the traditional method of small-scaled farming stayed unchanged. By ‘going to the village’ and labouring together with the peasant, Mao’s revolutionaries was remade into a new agency of ‘guerrilla leader’ who was capable of ‘performing a variety of military, political, economic, and social tasks’ which was regarded by Mao as an ideal of the ‘red and expert’ (Meisner 1989: 94). Having said that, it needs to be noted at the same time that Mao’s ‘guerrilla leaders’ carried out different economic and military tasks in a technically backward and labour-intensive manner by means of political mobilization and even coercion (Selden

1995a: 231)⁵⁹.

Here comes the dialectical but also inherently contradictory logic of the newly created political agency of ‘peasant guerrilla revolutionary’. It needs to be noted that before the party cadres were dispatched to the local communities to ‘fuse with the mass’, they were educated in a Soviet-styled party which emphasized political leadership over soldiers and revolutionaries, this political education could only operate when the party was strong; also, ‘the legacies of armed revolution and the social-national developmental imperative allowed the state to quickly insulate itself from the people in a process of transforming a revolutionary party into a ruling position’ (Lin 2006: 136). However, the role of party-cadre and the role of peasant was always convertible under the line of ‘fusing with the mass’. Grassroot cadres’ penetration of the local communities has made the peasant’ traditional production of ‘politico-military’ aims of the CCP not only by educating the peasant in nationalist direction, but also transforming a considerable number of traditional peasants into revolutionary cadres (Schurmann 1968: 425-427). By fusing with the mass, the party-cadres have also developed the dual identity as both government officials and peasants, which are both crystallized in the new agency of ‘guerrilla revolutionary’. Through this process, Mao and the CCP have developed a stronghold of power in a peasant society by mobilizing the traditional small-scaled production to meet the ideological and revolutionary ends of the CCP (Anderson 2010: 66). Also, the Production Movement has denied the state’s centralized control of industrial development and the ‘alienation between the state and the masses’ before large-scale industrialization was introduced to China (Schurmann 1968: 109). The major advance here is that the ‘mass line’ has preluded an unprecedented praxis of democratic revolution by reinterpreting the meaning of democracy. The CCP’s idea of ‘people’s democracy’ is ‘understood in a way more faithful to an originally populist project’; thus the top leadership’s scientific design of economic and social policies would be challenged by the identity of the peasant guerrilla revolutionaries not as an force external to the Communist Party, but a force sublated to the internal contradiction of the hybrid structure of Maoism. It is

⁵⁹ Mark Selden has documented an exemplar of the CCP using labour to substitute for advanced technology. General Wang Zhen mobilized people to melt down an old iron bell to make tools, see Selden 1995a: 230.

significant to note that the CCP's 'elitist undertone' propelled by China's 'socio-national developmental imperative' which assumed that the party and the leaders should 'know better in a downward pattern of command' would run into conflict with the populism represented by the guerrilla leaders as both 'red and expert' whose knowledge was acquired largely in via an upward process by fusing with the mass (Lin 2006: 137-138)-this contradictory structure of Maoism presupposed the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). To relieve the tensions between these two forms of power, Mao has reconceptualized the idea of democracy by suggesting that 'the party leaders thereby correctly understand the opinions of the people, and so fashion the required policies in a manner the masses will support and actively implement'. This is known as the two-way traffic of "from the masses, to the masses" which was compared by Mao to the relationship between fish and water (D'Mello 2009; Lin 2006: 138).

It is clear that the peasant's active engagement in both economic production and political mobilization was rendered an inherent dimension of Mao's conception of 'people's democracy' as a significant substitution for the weak bourgeoisie and worker in the cities. China's particular mode of substitutionism stemming from peasant mobilization was however aimed at transforming the politics of a much wider 'macrocosm' (Hobsbawm 1973). As Trotsky has envisioned, 'there are substantial grounds for expressing the hope that, through a correct policy it will be possible to unite the workers' movement, and the urban movement in general, with the peasant war' (Trotsky 1976: 580). Unlike Marx's vision that the 'peasant chorus' could only be formed in a wider socialist revolution (Marx 2000; Shanin 1983: 14-17), Mao expected that his Yenan practice, especially the specific conception of democracy attained via the 'mass line' could be scaled up to a much wider democratic revolution which would liberate the nation from all forms of preexisting oppression; and 'it was the duty of the communists there to rally the masses in support of such a project, for it would lead to national independence and bourgeois democracy' (D'Mello 2009). Mao could tolerate the existence of many other social forces before the peasant's activism was fully energized, or even suspended the Land Reform to for the support of landlords (see Myers 1986: 751), and he has argued that the concept of 'people' central to the idea of 'people's democracy' was a composition of 'working class, the

peasant, urban petty bourgeoisie and national bourgeoisie'⁶⁰. However, Mao firmly maintained that the revolutionized peasantry should occupy the leadership of the revolutionary alliance. Thus the guerrilla leaders as a transformed peasantry constituted the core of 'people's democracy', whereas in theory, 'the 'people' is more inclusive while signifying where the power should be derived and possessed' (Lin 2006: 137). Though the non-proletariat classes were included in the concept of 'people', they were ruled out of the leadership and would be disciplined in some circumstances, due to Mao's understanding from the Nationalist-revolutionary conjuncture that those classes' weaknesses made them convertible to 'the imperialists' running dog'. For the same reason, Mao has accentuated that 'the method we employ is democratic, the method of persuasion'⁶¹ which presupposes that other non-proletariat classes in the alliance would be transformed, though non-violently.

This line then became the logical starting point of Mao's 'United Front' strategy revolving around the 'proletarian democracy', which was manifested not only during the Yenan period⁶² but also throughout the history of the 1949 People's Republic. Stuart Schram argues correctly that 'Mao...while continuing to talk about proletarian hegemony, had *recruited* (my emphasis), from 1927 onwards, among a much wider range of social categories: rural vagabonds or *elements declasses*, shopkeepers, office workers, minor civil servants, and intellectuals of all descriptions, as well as 'national capitalists', 'patriotic gentry' and others" (Schram 1989: 99). For political elites who accepted the new state, Mao treated them generously, offering them prestigious posts in the government⁶³. For leading capitalists who were willing to stay in Mainland China, Mao and the CCP had also allowed them to maintain their property and

⁶⁰ See Mao Tse-tung, *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*, 1949, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-4/mswv4_65.htm, last access, 3rd March, 2014

⁶¹ *On the People's Democratic Dictatorship*.

⁶² It is noted that in early years of Yenan communism, the regime was able to become stable on the basis of a mixed economy, 'with some public ownership or monopoly, but with a large private sector operating under overall government supervision and price control', and private tenancy was permitted, see Van Slyke 1986: 635.

⁶³ For example, in the first government of the PRC (1949), more than half of the vice presidents of the state were non-communists.

retain preexisting way of life in the name of 'national bourgeoisie' (cf. Meisner 1999: 75; Westad 2003; Cochran 2007: 359). In 1949, a large number of Yen-an-styled revolutionary cadres were also brought into the cities to work with thousands of urban cadres or technocrats left by the KMT (Brown 2008: 42). On the early stage of the Land Reform and the socialist transformation in early 1950s, Mao and the CCP also gave room to the survival of 'national bourgeoisie' and private landownership. As far as industrialization was concerned, it was significant for the CCP to transform the traditional exploitative agrarian regime to collective ownership, which enabled the state to extract more agricultural surpluses. However due to the institutional weakness, the CCP could only let different regions to carry out the reform in different paces according to their respective conditions. By 1951 the power of decision-making in the land reform had been largely transferred to regional administrators. This decentralization generated a 'localist deviation' in some parts of the country where local landed classes, regional cadres and the central government's 'general line' ran into conflict⁶⁴ (Maitan 1969: 31; Teiwes 1987: 82). The endurance of the United Front and its shifting class configuration were indeed both subject to the primary task of national salvation under constant geopolitical pressures. The reason that Mao had a faith in the bourgeois class is that China's peasant revolution was in the first instance a national-salvationist campaign against imperialism, and the bourgeoisie, according to Mao's historical observation, was an oppressed class 'in a colonial and semi-colonial country oppressed by imperialism'. However, the lesson Mao has taken from the nineteenth century and the Nationalist Government's failure is that bourgeoisie alone could not deliver any political incentives capable of altering the 'semi-colonial and semi-feudal society' (Mao 1939, 1940)⁶⁵. The central role of the peasantry in the revolutionary leadership is also determined by the prospect that China's revolution called upon a new social order-a new political order which precluded new social property relations. Thus China's modern revolution entailed two stages: the New Democratic Stage which prepared the Chinese society for subsequent socialist

⁶⁴ The most typical example of this kind is the Land Reform in Guangdong province, see Ezra Vogel 1969, *Canton Under Communism: Programs and Politics in a Provincial Capital 1949-1968*, pp. 41.

⁶⁵ See also Mao Tse-tung, 'The politics of new democracy' in *On New Democracy*, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-2/mswv2_26.htm, last access, 28 Feb, 2014.

transformation by ‘confiscating the property of the imperialists and the big bourgeoisie’ without doing away with capitalism completely (Mao 1940; see also D’Mello 2009), and the Socialist stage which transforms the social property relations in an egalitarian and communal direction resonating Sun Yat-sen’s ‘Minsheng’ (People’s Livelihood) principle. Now it is important to understand the meaning of socialism and how it was predicated upon the peasant-based political leadership in Mao’s vision of revolutionary trajectory.

5.4.3. Transforming rural social property relations: recasting the meaning of socialism

The above analysis has indicated that by reconstructing the peasant’s political agency via the ‘mass line’, the peasant class became more politically and organizationally capable of heading China’s New Democratic Revolution mediated by the discourse and practice of ‘national salvation’. It remains questionable why China’s peasant revolution, by rallying the entire nation, the national bourgeoisie *inter alia* for national liberation needs to be channeled towards a socialist end. What role did the peasant play in constructing China’s specific conception and vision of socialism, and how was socialism recast to serve a much more specific task for the Chinese nation on the basis of the peasant’s political agency? Indeed the answer could be manifold for there are so many different sources from which specific interpretation of socialism could be derived; but in the perspective of Uneven and Combined Development, socialism, preluded and propelled by the stage of New Democratic Revolution would ultimately need to resolve China’s crisis of survival arising from the condition of backwardness as the very fundamental context of China’s modern revolution. As Arif Dirlik has specified, China’s modern revolution has presented ‘a synthesis of two meanings of socialism, both of which have deep roots in the history of Chinese socialism: socialism as an ideology of revolution and socialism as an ideology of modernization’ (Dirlik 1989: 27). This synthesis bears its root in Sun Yat-sen’s problematization of China’s crisis of the nineteenth century—that the intersection between the traditional social relations and the underdevelopment of China’s modern economic sector set the nation in constant geopolitical and social upheavals. It has already been shown that Sun Yat-sen’s stagist prospect of ‘first industrialization (under the state’s strong military tutelage), and then social equality’ has been delegitimized by the KMT’s failure, thus the CCP’s peasant revolution would have to present a critical inheritance

as well as negation of Sun Yat-sen's perspective of national salvation. It would have to inherit Sun's emphasis on both modernization/developmentalism and social equality, whereas it would have to negate the stagist vision viewing socialism as a late stage with mature industrialization. The category of socialism which was reconstructed by Mao as a substitutionist strategy to resolve the problems of both revolution and modernization has thus come to the fore in Mao's political maneuvering under the rubric of nationalism.

How did Mao's particular perspective of socialism differ from classic Marxism, Leninism and Stalinism due to the involvement of the peasantry? It is noted by Isaac Deutscher that 'China's communism descends straight from Bolshevism' and 'Mao stands on Lenin's shoulders' (Deutscher 1964/1984: 182-183). Like Leninism, Maoism also originated from the attempt to organize weak labour with substitution of an *avant-garde* party as a 'narrow political instrument which would take it upon itself to speak in the name of Marxism and in the name of the workers themselves' (Knei-Paz 1978: 195). This substitutionist project has failed not only because of the structural reason that China had a much less developed urban working class, but also the particular timing of historical events as an emergent property of China's interaction with the advanced industrial world: the KMT's project of industrialization and the prototypical developmental state under specific geopolitical pressures ruled out the possibility of any urban revolution headed by the worker, while the KMT's regime was shattered by the Japanese invasion despite its sprouting industrialization. As a result of China's belated development, Mao and the CCP, with enormous 'privileges of backwardness' such as the advanced ideology of socialism as well as the Soviet-styled 'politicized army' assimilated from the Soviet experience, needed to look for alternative political agency for the revolution. Therefore, from U&CD's vantage point, a combined development emerged from China's experience with a form of political organization belonging to advanced industrial polities, namely the communist party-state occupying the leadership of the revolution, whereas such organization was sustained by a different and alternative political agent-the peasant. This combination of two contrasting social forms has given rise to China's configuration of revolutionary agency that was utterly different from the Russian and western experiences of socialist movements; but what further specifies the Chinese case was the subsequent 'spirally ascending' development, namely a radical reshuffling of historical sequences arising

from such a combination of social forms.

The spiral ascendance in Mao's revolution involves a radical negation of the Stalinist model which amplifies the over-determining role of production force. With the newly created 'guerrilla revolutionaries' as a result of the New Democratic Revolution, Mao radically reversed the Soviet model by highlighting the decisive role of 'human capability' in a situation when material conditions were undersupplied. This was understood by the postmodernist scholars an attempt to challenge pre-existing modernities by mobilizing cultural, ideological and other 'super-structural' resources of the society (Gao 1999: 34; Althusser 1976: 81; see also Jameson 1981)⁶⁶, which reached its apogee in the Cultural Revolution. Notably, such a 'mobilization of super-structure' is itself a process of 'skipping over stage' with advanced communal social property relations regime introduced to China's unproductive countryside during the Land Reform and the subsequent Great Leap Forward. It cannot be denied that from the Sino-Japanese war to the early years of the PRC, private landownership as well as urban bourgeoisie were tolerated for maintaining political stability. However, the Land Reform transformed most of the rural communities into units of 'agricultural cooperatives'; and these cooperatives were classified as cooperative organizations on different stages according to respective degrees of collectivization (Teiwes 1987: 87, 111). Mao also introduced the nationalization of private capitals in 1953 with the belief that 'to restrict capitalism was ultimately to resist imperialism' (Maitain 1969: 28)⁶⁷. But how can such large-scale collectivization as an advanced social property relations regime be massively introduced to China where industrial development and economic growth were so limited? The rationale behind this is that different stages of socialist revolution could be reallocated to accelerate the general development of socialism. The advanced phase of socialism where 'distribution is according to the norm 'to each according to her/his needs'' was placed before the primitive phase of 'distribution according to her/his abilities' regardless of China's production force

⁶⁶ For a comprehensive review of the postmodern take on the Cultural Revolution, see, Jian Guo, 1999, 'Resisting Modernity in Contemporary China: The Cultural Revolution and Postmodernism', *Modern China*, vol. 25, no. 3

⁶⁷ Notably Mao's later opponent, Liu Shaoqi was also stressing the significance of 'class struggle' against capitalism in this period, see Teiwes 1987.

(D'Mello 2009; Magdoff 1975: 53-54). Mao believed that by reshuffling these two stages, social inequalities created in the primitive phase of socialist development could be transcended by the advanced social relations of the advanced phase such as agricultural cooperatives and People's Communes.

Here a few significant dissimilarities could be drawn between Stalinism and Maoism especially on the micro-level of production organization. The Stalinist model of socialist production was predicated upon a historical understanding that the growth of production force preceded the progress of social relations, thus specialist 'abilities' that facilitate the growth of production force should be encouraged. Thus it is characterized by its 'exclusive reliance on heavy industry, highly centralized, bureaucratic method of planning' under which the peasantry was only regarded as a 'source of savings' rather than an active role in production⁶⁸. The Soviet model insisted on a highly hierarchical structure in production process, which was encapsulated in the 'one-man management' system. Under this system, authority of decision-making was concentrated on the level of factory administration which was the direct receptor of directives from the central government (Frazier 2004: 17-18)⁶⁹. Hierarchy in workplace presupposed occupational specialization, which had been 'a protracted and agonizing process marked by varied and strenuous efforts to mitigate the social consequences of the division of labour and an enormous reluctance to accept occupational specialization as the way of life in the new society' (Meisner 1989: 91). However, Maoism has completely negated this model by denying the primacy of production force in social progression. By prioritizing 'superstructure' over production force, Mao was placing great emphasis on the factor of 'human capability'⁷⁰ and the

⁶⁸ For Mao's complete critique of the Soviet model, see *A Critique of Soviet Economics by Mao Tsetung*, translated by Moss Roberts, Monthly Review Press, 1977.

⁶⁹ For a detailed analysis of the origins of the Soviet model in China, see Morris Bian, *The Making of the State Enterprise System in Modern China*, 2005, pp. 76-100. Bian's argument has further suggested that the implementation of the Soviet model in China was a combination of the CCP's inheritance of the KMT's legacies and the penetration of Stalinism.

⁷⁰ Mao's admiration of 'human capabilities' is expressed in his famous text 'The Foolish Old Man Who Removes the Mountains' (*yugong yishan*). The classic story of the Foolish Man tells that an old kept digging the mountains in his way, 'unshaken in his conviction'. As a result, '[g]od was moved by this, and he sent down two angels, who carried the mountains away on

agency of educated ‘guerrilla revolutionaries’ would could play multi-tasking role in both political and economic life (D’Mello 2009). This is regarded as the virtue of the People’s Communes which according to Mao ‘combines industry, agriculture, commerce, education and military affairs and facilitates leadership’ (MacFaquhar 1983: 78). To substantiate such a combination of functionalities, the peasant’s political agency which includes the Party’s political education of the mass, the ‘fish and water’ relationship between the state and the peasant communities existed as a necessary condition for the CCP’s ‘swift and complete collectivization’ (Anderson 2010: 66-67).

In sum, how to understand China’s particular peasant socialism and Maoism as a specific revolutionary *modus operandi*? U&CD suggests that they both need to be understood as substitutionist developments emerging from China’s ‘enduring condition of backwardness’ mediated by historically specific geopolitical conjunctures. To survive the Sino-Japanese War, the Communist Party has substituted the bourgeoisie and the worker with the peasant for a democratic revolution for national liberation. The historical necessity of such substitutionist strategy has been addressed in Mao’s texts on the leadership and social-class foundation of the Chinese Revolution, including *The Chinese Revolution and the Chinese Communist Party* (1939), *On New Democracy* (1940) and *On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship* (1949), which, while holding a pessimistic view that China were too backward for bourgeois revolution and worker’s movements (see Deutscher 1964/1984), has more optimistically envisioned the possibility that China could transcend these stages to directly enter a socialist era through the combination of rural restoration and anti-imperialist campaigns. Also, the centrality of peasantry in the revolutionary leadership consolidated on the stage of New Democratic Revolution is posited by Mao as the political condition for transforming the social property relations, with which China could skip the Stalinist stage of ‘distribution according to ability’ to directly entre a more socialist stage of ‘distribution according to need’⁷¹.

their backs’. Drawing upon the story, Mao proclaims that ‘[t]oday, two big mountains lie like a dead weight on the Chinese people. One is imperialism, the other is feudalism. The Chinese Communist Party has long made up its mind to dig them up’, see http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_26.htm, last access 2013-09-08.

⁷¹ See Mao’s *A Critique of the Soviet Economics*.

However, Mao's theory, which pictures a clear substitutionist strategy as a response to China's combined development, has encountered more difficulties and chaos than incremental achievements in the post-1949 era which requires an explanation along the line of Uneven and Combined Development as well. To consolidate the newly established communist regime, Mao and the CCP have further substituted production force and technological specialty with 'human capability'. While the democratic revolution and the socialist transformation were mutually propelling each other, they were both subject to a broader theme of 'Revolution of Backwardness' aimed to fulfill the task of 'national salvation' stemming from the crisis of the nineteenth century. By conceptualizing the peasant revolution as an emergent property of China's relational condition of backwardness, its specificities could be understood progressively; and this explanation can also be applied to the mutations of Maoism in the aftermath of the 1949 Revolution.

5.5 Mutations of Maoism as a continuous substitutionist development in varying geopolitical context: the meaning of the Cultural Revolution

It has been shown that China's democratic and socialist revolution were subject to the broader theme of national salvation arising from the condition of backwardness ever since Sun Yat-sen's Three People's Principles. Whereas the 'Revolution of Backwardness' was a continuous task, specific patterns of 'substitutionist development' as an integral strategy of the 'Revolution of Backwardness' was mediated by varying geopolitical relationships. This logic gives a basis to understanding the mutations of Maoism in the aftermath of the Chinese Revolution as a continuation of China's Revolution of Backwardness in substitutionist manner (1949). To deepen our understanding of Maoism, it is crucial to take a glance at how Mao's democratic and socialist revolutions formulated in the Yenan conjuncture has later culminated into the socio-political upheavals of the Cultural Revolution as the climax of China's socialist revolution (1966-1976).

The geopolitically conveyed capitalist pressures on the newly founded PRC were intensive at the beginning of the Cold War. As the major beneficiary of the Second World War, the US possessed the world's largest amount of industrial capital

accumulated through wartime manufacturing, and the most advanced capitalist mode of manufacturing of 'Fordism'. Driven by the capitalist incentive of building a 'free-enterprise hegemony' (Arrighi 1994: 59), the US was ready to reconstruct an international order of *Pax Americana* on the institutional basis of NATO and the Bretton Wood system (Ikenberry 2001; Gill 2008: 61). In Asia, the US' capital reproduction was predicated more upon direct investment than free trade (Gilpin 1975: 11; Arrighi 1994: 73-74). Japan was made the main destination of American industrial investment and raw materials via the postwar reconstruction and revitalization programme. To maintain Japan's ability to purchase American goods, the US engaged in making Japan an export-led industrial country, whose low-cost goods exported to other Asian countries would generate revenues needed for purchasing advanced American industrial products (Hersh 1993: 18-23). The traditional networks of trade between China and other Asian countries thus became a major challenge to the US' programme of making Japan the leading export-oriented industrial country in the region; and for this reason, the US had imposed an embargo on China (Zhang Shuguang 2001).

The material shortage caused by the embargo and Chiang Kaishek's ambition of 'retaking the mainland' from Taiwan galvanized China's demand of heavy industries for national defense which was not yet attained in the Yenan era. This prompted Mao to substantiate his 'leaning to one side' policy by allying with the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Leading a delegation to Moscow in the name of celebrating Stalin's 70th birthday, Mao playfully proclaimed that he was looking for something both 'fancy and tasty' (Yang 2002). It is documented that when the Chinese revolution was about to triumph before 1949, Mao was already aware of the significance of allying with the Soviet Union regardless of the longstanding distrust between the two parties accumulated through almost all phases of Mao's revolution (Chen 1994: 64; Bernstein 2010). Though Mao claimed purportedly in 1949 that China's foreign policy was to 'lean to one side', he still had to dispel the distrust between the two parties and showcase his benevolence. Thus during Mao's first visit to Moscow, he offered to maintain the territorial concessions in Mongolia, Xinjiang and Manchuria acknowledged in the KMT's 1945 treaty with the Soviet Union. He also promised to allow the Soviet Union to deploy armies in Manchuria (Yang 2002). The lengthy negotiation between the two parties eventuated into a treaty of friendship signed in

February 1950. China was promised by the USSR of financial and technological assistance for economic recovery and industrial construction, which were not as generous as the CCP expected though (Yang 2002: 108; Luthi 2010: 28; Zhang 2010: 353). The Soviet Union also offered to co-sponsor over 160 industrial units with China, with over 12, 000 technological experts dispatched to these units (Kaple 1998: 117; Meisner 1999). More importantly, China was instructed to remould her state apparatus in the image of the Soviet model of state-bureaucracy (Kirby 2006). For the want of more advanced security assurance from the Soviet Union, Mao accepted to join Stalin's Eurasian system of 'Socialism in One Country' despite the incompatibility between the Yenan model and the Soviet model. Subjecting the Yenan model to the Sino-Soviet Alliance for military and industrial assistance was also another form of substitutionism.

The transformation of such substitutionist development was however determined by two historical processes derivable from China's belatedness of industrial development. One is the mounted tensions between the Yenan guerrilla revolutionaries and the abrupt transplantation of the Soviet model. The Soviet-styled bureaucratization in cities had transformed many wartime mass organizations into oppressive structures for disciplining workers, for example the newly established 'All China Trade Unions'. But because the CCP was still lacking rigorous institutions, what had accompanied the process of the so-called 'socialist transformation' were endless mass movements mobilized to remove social obstacles. From 1951 to 1957, the CCP mobilized a chain of movements to tam the old social forces inherited from the KMT. Because these movements were all mobilized without clearly defined scope and range, they had been inevitably enlarged and exaggerated by the end. Thus social cleavages were ushered in not only along pre-existing class divisions, but also newly planted hatreds. The process of bureaucratization of industrial production and nationalization of urban commerce under the Soviet tutelage in early years had dramatically reduced job opportunities in cities, with over 60 percent of the urban graduates as well as over 200 million workers in the industrial sector redundant. In order to release pressure of unemployment in cities, this part of urban surplus labour was then sent to the countryside to join agricultural production since 1954 onwards, which had then become the necessary workforce for the agricultural cooperation movement with dispatched errant cadres during the Anti-rightist Movement (Liu 1998: 5). In the same

year the Chinese government also instituted the system of residential registration (*hukou*) to restrict the rural population from moving into the cities which might then become unemployed labours. In sum, the unfit between China's limited urban industrial development and the advanced Soviet model heated the tension between bureaucrats and the Yenan revolutionary cadres which precipitated the total conflict of the Cultural Revolution.

Another historical process that led to the repudiation of the Soviet model in post-revolutionary time was the changing geopolitical relationship between China and the Soviet Union. As a knot in the system of 'Socialism in One Country', China was burdened with the unequal trade of agricultural products between the two countries (Zhang 2010: 358-360). On the global level, the Cold War rivalry began to cool down since late 1950s after the closure of the Korean War and Stalin's death. The opening years of the Cold War proved to both blocs that a total war between them seemed unlikely, and the economic achievement of the Soviet Union made Nikita Khrushchev confident that the Soviet-styled socialism would overtake capitalism peacefully first in socioeconomic and then in geopolitical terms (Whiting 1986; Hobsbawm 1994: 242). It was against this geopolitical background that Mao decided to accelerate China's autonomous economic development with socio-political legacies at her own disposal (Wang 2012). Mao's geopolitical calculation was certainly concerned with the danger that China's national economy was running the risk of being locked up in the US-USSR 'peaceful coexistence', whereas China's suffering of mounting social crisis at home still could not receive any security assurance from the Soviet Union. A chain of random diplomatic frictions reinforced Mao's faith of 'going it alone'. In 1956 Khrushchev openly denounced Stalin in the 20th Congress of the CPSU. Mao interpreted Khrushchev's discourse of de-Stalinization as an offence to the CCP's policies, especially the speeded agricultural cooperation. In July 1958, Khrushchev was actively promoting a summit with the US on the Middle East crisis without including China in the negotiation, which to Mao was an appeasement to the West at the expense of the brotherly relationship within the communist camp. As a response to the accumulated tensions, Mao rejected Khrushchev's proposal of building the united radio-station and submarines at the expense of China's sovereignty. In response to the Soviet appeasement, Mao mounted a limited bombardment on the Jinmen/Quemoy Island in the Taiwan Strait to test the atmosphere between the two

blocs. The result was no surprising that the Soviet Union alleged Mao not to cause trouble (MacFaquhar 1983: 92-100; Chen 2001: 64).

To overcome the varying geopolitical crisis as a concrete manifestation of China's backwardness, Mao continued to mobilize the legacies of the Yen'an model to substitute for the Soviet assistance which was proved unreliable. The Great Leap Forward Movement can be understood as the first step taken to re-activate the Yen'an guerrilla cadres as the agency of industrialization. Mao launched the Great Leap Forward in 1958 after he had toured around the country and conceived a proposal of transferring a great number of centrally managed industries to the local-provincial level. More significantly Mao announced openly in the same year that China would launch the programme of developing nuclear power with a small number of returning American-trained nuclear physicists, whom were repatriated to China in exchange for the American hostages captured in the Korean War. In the meantime, Mao, by advocating that 'everyone is a soldier' (*quanmin jiebing*), began to empower the commune-level militias as a substitution for China's underdeveloped regular armies (McFaquhar 1983: 100). In industrial production, Nicholas Lardy has correctly noted that 'control of resources allocation within communes was concentrated in the hands of lower-level cadres' (Lardy 1983: 41). It has been recorded that by 1959, there were only 285 kinds of product placed under the control of the central government. Compared to that in 1957, the size of centrally controlled production had been reduced by half during the Great Leap Forward. By the year when the Cultural Revolution (1966) took place, China had only 579 centrally controlled products, whilst the number was 21,655 in the Soviet Union (Granick 1990: 73). Mao commented later on the massive process of localizing state-owned enterprises that he wanted all centrally controlled industries to 'get out of Beijing with their men and their horses (*lianren daima gunchu Beijing qu*)'. What Mao was really nostalgic about was the practice of economic production that allowed everybody, especially grass-root workers and peasants who had no specialist managerial and technological knowledge to dominate. Thus Mao also suggested many times in early 1960s that all cadres, despite their preexisting specialties, should take charge of economic production directly (Gan 2007: 28-29).

The calamitous consequence of the Great Leap Forward had first resulted in a series of factional cleavages within the CCP which is regarded by William Hinton as a

divide between 'proletariats' and 'bourgeoisie' (Hinton 2004: 54; Lieberthal 1987: 293). Liu Shaoqi, Deng Xiaoping and Chen Yun, who were on the one hand sympathetic towards the people's agony, on the other hand proposing a coalition with non-state economic sectors and rational policy leverages, initiated a rectification of the Great Leap Forward in 1961. Private commerce and market economy were partly restored in cities under central bureaucratic planning, and People's Communes in villages were dramatically reduced to the pre-Great Leap Forward level (Lieberthal 1987: 322). Under Liu-Deng's policy, the non-state market-space was partly reopened and the urban bourgeoisie was again tolerated; and the state-power in economic manipulation was partly extracted to the central government. What Liu Shaoqi and Deng Xiaoping practiced was a developmental strategy that resembled Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP) which allowed private enterprises to coexist with the dominance of state-owned enterprises when China's production force was not fully developed to support advanced social organizations such as the People's Commune of the Great Leap Forward (Meisner 1999). However, the tendency of bureaucratization could be more easily associated to the sin of revisionism of the Soviet Union in which the workers' state was hostaged by a 'privileged bureaucratic capitalist class'.

The antidote to the tendency of bureaucratization in Mao's perspective could and should be to revive the 'mass-line'. The institutional home of the 'mass-line' spirit was indeed the People's Liberation Army (PLA), for the Chinese army as a product of the protracted guerrilla warfare was 'less a professional military organization than a highly politicized and egalitarian popular force'. In 1963, Mao's loyal but ambitious follower Marshall Lin Biao launched the campaign of 'learning from the PLA' as a prelude to the Cultural Revolution⁷². The main rationale behind such movement was to strengthen the Party's connections to the society which were jeopardized by Liu-Deng's economic recovery by mobilizing the PLA's basic organizational units-the local militia. Mao and Lin Biao both believed that local militias would enable wider mass participation and reduced central-bureaucratic control by blurring the distinction between social and guerrilla-styled military life. In event of this, 'army

⁷² It could be observed that the period when Lin Biao was rapidly promoted in the Party and the State Council coincided the movement of 'Socialist Education'. The centrality of the PLA in the Cultural Revolution was one of the most important reasons that Lin Biao was designated by Mao as his successor.

veterans and young peasants' had been called back to the centre of China's political stage, whilst the PLA and its mass-mobilizing organization for guerrilla warfare had been set as a model of pristine revolutionary life (Meisner 1999: 277). With Marshal Lin Biao's rise in the Party, the PLA's role was dramatically magnified as a prerequisite of the Cultural Revolution, and the spirit of revolutionary militancy was celebrated across the country with the eight 'revolutionary model operas' (*geming yangbanxi*) performing strong nostalgia for revolutionary romanticism of the Yenan era⁷³. At the same time, Lu Xun, one of the most radical 'bannermen' of the May Fourth Movement who has circumstantially described China's Confucian tradition as 'eating people', was again glorified by Mao and the CCP as the iconic figure of the 'New Culture Movement' (1919) whose spirit would rescue China's character of revolutionism from withering (Mitter 2004: 208). The accumulated revolutionary romanticism in the society first captivated the students in both urban and rural arenas. For this part of the society, the Cultural Revolution did not mean a narrowing of freedom but a much more widened platform for political expression on its opening stage. In urban schools and universities, the Cultural Revolution was adopted as a chance to finally settle disputes and social standoffs among students, cadres and workers. Maurice Meisner has correctly recorded that 'the political divisions that appeared in the student movement in the summer of 1966...were eminently rational expressions of conflicting social interests' (Meisner 1999: 312). Cases have also been documented that under Liu Shaoqi's centralization of economic control, pessimism and cynicism among the students dispatched to the countryside became endemic since 1962 (Liu 1998: 65). Under the scheme of economic recovery, a new number of urban graduates that could not be absorbed by the re-inaugurated urban commercial and industrial sectors were sent back again to the rural area as part of the central planning for releasing urban unemployment. For this group of students, they could not feel as optimistic as their counterparts did in the 1950s. The tragic scene of economic stagnancy across the countryside made them feel increasingly bored by the plain rural life. Many of them viewed the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution as a relief of their suppressed political enthusiasm. Some students published posters against their

⁷³ In making these operas, Mao's wife Jiang Qing, a retired actress had made her way to the politburo.

randomly identified ‘capitalist roaders’ and some even went all the way to Beijing to ask to be ‘baptized’ by the Cultural Revolution (Liu 1998: 66).

However, urban revolutionary romanticism was only a by-product of Mao’s substitutionist effort revolving around the peasantry. The essence of the Cultural Revolution was to relieve the geopolitical pressures on China by re-mobilizing the peasant for a more autonomous developmental path, especially when China witnessed Brezhnev’s military operation in Czechoslovakia and the two countries ran into a border conflict over Zhenbao/Damansky Island in 1969. Under the Soviet pressure, Mao’s substitutionism became more comprehensive and multi-dimensional for it was not only substituting the peasantry for the urban worker in industrialization, but also China’s vast undeveloped territory for the coastal industrial centres on the grounds of national security. First, Mao had inaugurated the massive ‘Third Front’ construction that aimed to transfer defence-related industries to the western provinces of the country in order to lower the risk of primary urban industrial centres being destroyed in war (Naughton 1988: 369-372)⁷⁴. Second, Mao continued to prepare the local militias for a potential guerrilla war against the US and the USSR by allowing them more autonomy and arms (Teiwes and Sun 2007: 75). Third, Mao had set up massive rural industries that had later become the Town and Village Enterprise (TVE) as a crucial institutional foundation of the 1979 economic reform (Yang 1996: 213).

These policies had produced several contested results. The accelerated empowerment of local militias and other forms of mass organization had been causing frictions with the central organization of the Party and the PLA since 1967. At the beginning Mao did not stand in opposition to any of these ‘rebellions’ (*zaofan*) as long as they were targeted at the bureaucracy. However, the expansion of such conflicts had finally shaken the authority of the PLA, which was a bitter fruit for Mao to swallow. In the

⁷⁴ Actually the Third Front Construction started before the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1964. For a detailed review of the construction see Naughton 1988. Notably, there has been little ongoing debate on the issue of the Third Front Construction, Barry Naughton’s paper is critical of the movement on economic grounds, arguing that the industrial projects were too expensive and inefficient. But it is still undeniable that the policy was of great geopolitical significance when the US-USSR ‘super-power condominium against China seemed a very real possibility’, and China’s industrial centres, concentrated on the coastal areas seemed increasingly vulnerable in this conjuncture (Naughton 1988: 369).

summer of 1967 the Cultural Revolution reached its 'high tide' in Wuhan, one of China's most populous industrial cities. Local Red Guard organizations were in strife with the PLA regional commander Chen Zaidao, and over 184, 000 rebels were wounded and murdered in the incident (MacFaquhar and Schoenhals 2006: 214). This incident had then intensified factional struggle within the Party in which some 'ultra-leftists' officials were pushing a movement of 'seizing the small handful from the army' (ibid). When arming the local militias had finally resulted in the confusion about the Party's commandship over the army, the Cultural Revolution was thus running counter to Mao's initial intent. Thus by 1969 Mao had realized that the Cultural Revolution should be halted, and in order to look for an alternative way out of the geopolitical deadlock, Mao began to pursue a rapprochement with the US under the claim that 'the Soviet Union as a 'social-imperialist' country had replaced the US as the 'bastion of reactionary forces in the world'' (Chen 2001: 242). When Lin Biao, Mao's handpicked successor clashed his plane in Mongolia on his exodus to the Soviet Union after a failed *coup d'état* planned by his son, the major counterforce to the Sino-US rapprochement within the Party had disappeared and the way for the US's 'informal recruitment of China into the anti-Soviet alliance' (Hobsbawm 1995: 246) had been well paved by early 1970s.

To halt the so-called 'spontaneous tendencies towards capitalism' in the countryside, Mao implemented the policy that dramatically reduced the percentage of private household plots restored in Liu-Deng's time. By reorganizing the rural communities into brigades and other militarist units, peasants were encouraged to mobilize *human* labour power as much as possible when modern technology was absent. Industrial factories were organized in military units that combined functions of distributing foods, educating the masses and building small-scaled arsenals, factories of fertilizer and hydraulic projects and so on. During the Cultural Revolution, all levels of government from the village to the province had their autonomous financial and industrial system outside the central command. Especially in the villages, each of the rural industrial units contained a full range of functionalities. Like what a Chinese idiom described, "a sparrow may be small but it has all the vital organs" (Gan 2007: 28). In 1969, the leading rural industrialist, Chen Yonggui from Dazhai village in Shanxi was appointed member of the CCP's Central Committee and later promoted to the Politburo. The myth and legend of the expanded rural industrialization was

then romanticized by the propaganda machine to echo the heated atmosphere of populism and revolutionary utopianism in the urban area.

5.6 Conclusion

The Chinese Revolution is of world-historical significance in the sense that it has witnessed the peculiar nexus between peasant activism and socialist transformation. China's revolutionary experience has reversed the conventional understandings of the conditions of socialist transformation by presenting a case of the peasant reconstructed the agency of socialist socio-political formation which is assumed to belong to advanced industrial societies. As Trotsky has noted, 'a peasant is also capable of raising itself to a socialist viewpoint'. Unlike Eric Hobsbawm's assumption that progressive peasant movements could only be ignited against the backdrop of wider nationalist campaigns, China's case has demonstrated that the peasant as the driving force of the revolution would be able to 'unite the worker' movements, and the urban movements in general, with the peasant war' (Trotsky 1976: 579-583) under a proletarian regime conceived in the peasant community. This groundbreaking reversal of the terms of socialist revolution was rooted in China's enduring condition of backwardness under which both the bourgeoisie and the working class were 'kept in an oppressed and amorphous condition' for the intersection of traditional political accumulation and the geopolitical pressures of capitalism (ibid: 582-583). Under this circumstance, the peasant's political agency was brought to the fore by the *avant-garde* Communist Party as an alternative force of modern transformation; and this substitutionism was propelled by varying geopolitical context in which the discourse of 'national salvation' was created and reproduced.

U&CD's conjunctural analysis of the Chinese Revolution has also shown that the peasantry made its way to the centre of China's modern transformation through a single process that has combined democratic revolution, national liberation with the socialist transformation of agrarian social property relations. This combined development arose from the imperative of fighting an asymmetric, guerrilla war against the Japanese army under China's severe condition of backwardness. However, in Mao's dialectical perspective, the condition of backwardness which had generated a 'a disintegrating society, so diseased that it had become incapable of solving the urgent

problems of the nation or the living conditions of the people' (Belden 1970: 3) provided the Communists an ideal platform of guerrilla resistance against the geopolitical pressures of modernity. Apart from the structural possibility, the mobilization of the peasant was also determined by the transformation CCP's agency. The CCP inherited the Soviet model of 'political control over the army' whereas it has negated the tendency of alienation between the state-administration and society of the Soviet model by introducing the 'fusing with the mass' strategy.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: The Limits of Classic Social Theories an Alternative International Theory of Social Development

6.1 Introduction

This chapter recaps the whole thesis by showing how China's specific experience of peasant-based socialist transformation could possibly broaden our understanding of patterns of modern social development. I will emphasize in particular that by theorizing China's revolutionary experience under the framework of Uneven and Combined Development, the longstanding dichotomy of Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism in sinological studies and historiographies of modern China could be resolved by reconstructing China's modern revolution as a internationally generated *combined development*. Concerning that the key problem in extant sinology is that China's modern revolution is viewed as either China-made or West-made (Levenson 1968; Cohen 1984), it is crucial to note that U&CD highlights the co-constitution of both Chinese and western social forms in the communist state-formation. This perspective based upon U&CD's ontology of 'interactive multiplicity' would in turn avoid over-emphasizing any single factor of history, and effectively rule out the problem of anachronism and linear notion of development caused by Sinocentrism and Eurocentrism. This chapter will further show that what underlies the dichotomy of Sino-centrism and Eurocentrism in extant accounts of modern Chinese history is an internalist conception of history, the Marxian mode-of-production analysis *inter alia*, which tends to view social development as a self-constitutive process. U&CD's critique of the mode-of-production analysis exemplifies how an international conception of social development could overcome the problems caused by internalist social theories.

6.2 Peculiarities of the Chinese Revolution: peasant socialism as a combined development

The central finding of the thesis is the peculiar pattern of China's modern revolution that the peasant, which is regarded by traditional Marxist theories as 'rural idiots' and 'potatoes in a sack' (Mitrany 1951), could act as a crucial agent of socialist revolution in a society like China where there was no meaningful bourgeois and working class formation. The particular phenomenon of 'peasant socialism' in China's revolutionary experience has entailed two ground-breaking developments. First, the peasant who has been transformed into a new form of historical subject, namely the 'guerrilla

revolutionary', has undertaken a series tasks that was done by bourgeoisie and workers in pre-existing experiences in other societies. These tasks include anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist struggles in different historical conjunctures. The reason that Chinese peasants could do these tasks is that they have been transformed into a new form of agency which has dramatically differed from not only their premodern form (Wolf 1969), but also other forms of proletarian class in advanced industrial societies. Notably, unlike the Russian experience in which the peasants were *given* a revolutionary programme by the youthful proletariats in urban workplace (Trotsky 1980: 8), the Chinese peasants have conceived their own revolutionary programme more actively in restoring the order of rural society. Though the Communist Party has played a significant role in assisting the restoration of peasant society with some forms of Soviet institutions, it is noteworthy that the Communist cadres were themselves peasants recruited from the vast countryside under the transformed social property relations which has combined military service, political education and agricultural production in one unified historical process (Meisner 1989; Selden 1995). Via this combined development known as 'fusing with the masses', the Chinese peasant has become the active subject of socialist revolution.

Second, it is significant that the peasant's involvement in the Chinese Revolution has determined a unique 'socialist' direction subject to 'national salvation' not only in the New Democratic stage before 1949, but also the stage of socialist construction afterwards. The socialist dimension of the Chinese Revolution is what the Neo-Weberian historical sociologists, Theda Skocpol *inter alia* have failed to theorize. Conventionally, socialism is understood as a nominal concept masking exploitation or political domination over the peasants (Wolf 1969; Duara 1985; Esherick 1995), however, socialism itself means a transcendence of the capitalist social order which is based upon the dispossession of peasants and the self-generation of propertyless wage-labours (Marx 1977; Brenner 1972; Burham 2006), and if the Chinese Revolution has generated any modern socio-political order aspiring to developing the society without taking these steps, it has presented some socialist elements which means more than political domination under a new mask. In the Chinese Revolution, it is noticeable that the peasant has been significantly empowered during the Yanan period with agricultural surpluses redistributed within the local communities. Since the Yanan model has erased the structural alienation between the state administration and

agricultural production via the ‘fusing with the masses’ movement (Schurmann 1968), revolutionary cadres as representatives of the state have become more deeply embedded in rather than super-imposed upon daily rural life; also through this process, the peasant has found a way to join the state-administration by becoming a revolutionary cadre via receiving political and ideological education without detaching himself from producing and redistributing agricultural surpluses. Under such a communal social property regime, no clear demarcation between public and private properties (Li 2008) and no obvious separation between the political and economic activities (Wood 1971) have been initiated in China’s case. Therefore, the state has managed to connect itself to the peasant communities by first becoming the peasant, and then integrating the peasant more organically to the state by changing himself into a revolutionary cadre, a new form of agency known as ‘guerrilla revolutionary’ who is both ideologically renovated in a socialist rather than premodern, vernacular direction, and economically still tied to the practice of local communities. This particular structure of social property relations, and its specific process have also played a significant role in China’s post-revolutionary industrialization. Under the intensive geopolitical pressures from the Soviet Union in the 1960s, Mao Zedong has re-activated the Yen’an model of socialist movement to create a specific set of ‘rural industrial units’ which has redistributed industrial capitals accumulated in the 1950s to the rural-local level on the basis of communal ownership. These ‘rural industrial units’ have then become the Town and Village Enterprises (TVE) as a fundamental institution that have maintained the socialist direction of China’s development in the time of marketization. Throughout this process, it is notable that there has never been a process of radical privatization and dispossession of rural lands; and no equivalents of wage-labour has been produced in China’s history of industrialization. Why the communal ownership of land can be maintained as a consequence of China’s modern revolution? The reason can only be sought in the revolution as a combined development. China’s specific course of Revolution of Backwardness headed by Mao Zedong and his Communist Party has been a process of restoring order of rural society for the purpose for national unification. Horizontally, it is because that the historical tasks of national unification and rural restoration were both undertaken by the peasant proletariats, thus empowering and invigorating the peasant became crucial to the consolidation of state-power; and vertically, it is because that the pre-existing legacies of China’s modern transformation

since the Self-Strengthening Movement has taught Mao and the CCP how weak the power of China's bourgeoisie was, and how catastrophic the previous modernization projects have brought to the Chinese nation by over-exploiting the peasants.

6.3 Closing the Sinological debate on 'China-made' and 'West-made' with an international conception of social development

Here we have come to a deeper question of on what basis China's modern history should be conceptualized. The aforementioned 'combined development' of China's peasant socialism has brought to us a critical problem of what should be identified as the driver of modern Chinese history. On the empirical level, the category of 'combined development' is able to provide us with a picturesque of how different forms of social force have correlated to recreate the peasant into a new agency of socialism; however, this does not rule out the danger that Uneven and Combined Development stays as a descriptive device on a low empirical level. How can we effectively construct a general theory of social transformation with reference to China's particular experience of peasant socialism? Here I will start by showing how U&CD can operate as such a theory with its 'international conception of social development', and how U&CD's critique of China's modern development could bring a closure to the debate in sinology about whether modern Chinese history was China-made or West-made (Levenson 1968; Esherick 1995:48; Cohen 1984, 2003).

Recalling Marx's remarks on the (im)possibilities of socialist revolution in a traditional peasant society, it is apparent that Marx's negative metaphor of 'potatoes in a sack' on the peasant's passivity in history has reinforced the longstanding assumption of the pattern of Chinese history in American Sinology, that China is presented as a 'no-win situation' where 'modernizing change taking place without the West becomes *unthinkable*; equally unthinkable is the possibility that change other than modernizing change can be historically important' (Cohen 1984; see also Cohen 2003: 185-199, my italics). In like manner, Fairbank further argues that the 'core perceptions' of the Chinese civilization changed more slowly despite the Chinese elites were at some points willing to give up traditional tenets (Fairbank 1986: 25-26). This is consistent with Eisenstadt's assumption that for every major civilizational entity (especially an 'axial civilization' like China), there stood some impervious socio-cultural orders at the core that melted the western impact into air (Eisenstadt 2000: 1). Both the 'dynastic

cycle' and the 'impact-response' paradigms are built upon these assumption which have generated two mutually propelling theses of Chinese history. The first thesis is what has been characterized by Joseph Esherick as 'domination after domination' (Esherick 1995: 48-50) assuming that the Chinese peasant, as a highly backward actor of history would not deviate from China's pre-given developmental trajectory which has involved no thinkable 'modernizing change'. In this sense, socialism is only a way that the state 'forced idlers and paupers into productive work' (ibid: 48, Keating 1989: 188-189). The second thesis is that the socialist revolution, if it qualifies as a significant modern change, has gained the momentum of progression only with external assistance (e.g. Theda Skocpol's concept of 'world time'; see Esherick 1995: 51). This thesis has reduced the meaning of 'socialism' to only a simple *replica* of Stalinism under the Soviet tutelage. Similarly, authors thinking in this line would also tend to emphasize the sweeping force of global capitalism after 1979 in transforming China into a neo-liberal state (Harvey 2005).

The ultimate problem of these theses is that they could not properly conceptualize the meaning of socialism in China's particular context of peasant society. Socialism is treated as either a meaningless guise of backward tradition or identical with Stalinism which is no long relevant to contemporary China after the Soviet Union has collapsed. Notably, though understanding traditional China as changeless and history-less has been discredited by recent sinologists, the renewed effort made to excavate China's self-generated history based upon circumstantial reading of Confucianism seems to be equally fruitless for interpreting the peculiar 'socialist' revolution. Joseph Esherick has correctly highlighted the problem by saying '[p]olitically, the CCP has certainly been an autonomous actor at least since 1935. But that political independence is not inconsistent with the notion that Mao and other CCP leaders would find the experience of the Soviet Union highly instructive, even essential, in their own search for a Chinese road to socialism' (1995: 52). With this argument, it now seems to be clearer that a dialectical understanding of China's opening to modernities and its autonomous 'road to socialism' squats at the centre of the aforementioned debate. As Paul Cohen has repeatedly highlighted:

'[t]his ambiguous relationship between "tradition" and "revolution", in which tradition appears not merely as a barrier to revolution but also as a

repository of assets for its facilitation, energizing, and legitimation, has also characterized some interpretations of Mao Zedong himself' (2003: 67)

However, the problem could be even more complicated than a matter of the respective percentage of 'traditional' and 'modern' elements in the configuration of modern China. Most importantly, the un-theorized question is the so-called 'some interpretations of Mao Zedong *himself*'-why Mao has come to intentionally reinterpret a series of modern and traditional categories, socialism *inter alia*? Here, the question has become how to conceptualize the incentive of China's modern revolution; or what was the most significant question defining the CCP's agenda which required solution most urgently?

In previous chapters, I have attempted to situate this question in world history by drawing out the *longue durée* evolution of China's condition of backwardness-it was the nomad-sedentary interaction that had created an increasingly vulnerable peasant under centrifugal state-power (chapter 3). Also, it has been shown that the universalizing force of global capitalism of the nineteenth century had worsened the situation of the peasant by accelerating the decline in state-authority; in this context, China's modern revolution has emerged as a 'Revolution of Backwardness' aiming to resolve the socio-political conflicts (e.g. the Taiping Rebellion) caused by the imperial state's 'loss of heaven's mandate' in protecting the peasant (chapter 4). Notably, China's interaction with other forms of society has also created a toolkit of modernization (privileges of backwardness) for the elites. Specific geopolitical contexts would test the adaptability of these tools and compel the elites to re-determine more suitable strategies of 'Revolution of Backwardness' (chapter 4-5). Specifically, the Communist Party has deciphered China's backwardness by successfully marrying national salvation/survival with restoring rural order by empowering the peasant (chapter 5). In further consolidating the newly founded regime under the geopolitical pressure from the Soviet Russia by industrializing the country, the Chinese Communist Party has further differentiated their particular version of socialism from the Soviet model by reinforcing the social property regime sprouting during the revolutionary period (substitutionism, chapter 5). All these experiences have suggested that China did have significant change before encountering the West as a result of evolution in an international realm of social constitution; more importantly, though the West operated as an important driver of

modern history, the particular consequence of modern transformation is nonetheless co-constituted with China's specific agenda of solving problems of her *longue dureé* development. Because China's reception of modernity was not a matter of emulating the western way of life (e.g. democracy, capitalism) but solving China's own problem of 'backwardness', it is necessary that modernity would be locally modified or even negated in China's particular context. It is Marx's original belief that the texture of modernity is intrinsically heterogeneous, which means the need for 'more than one' narratives of directions of modern development. Perry Anderson has highlighted in his *Origins of Postmodernity* that there has always been a 'conservative reflux' within modernism, namely the 'age of postmodernism' in Arnold Toynbee's terms which was marked by two developments: 'the rise of an industrial working class in the West, and the bid of successive intelligentsias outside the West to master the secrets of modernity and turn them against the West'. On the long list of anti-western modernists were there 'Meiji Japan, Bolshevik Russia, Kemalist Turkey and-just born-Maoist China' (Anderson 1998: 4-5). Though it is recognized that Maosim aspires to established western categories such as 'industrialisation, modernity and socialism' as solutions to China's national crisis (Knight 2008: 60), Maoism is viewed by practitioners of the post-modernist aesthetic programme as an exemplar of a drive to look for alternative approaches to 'modern life' (Dirlik 1997: 3-4; Anderson 1998: 6-12). The peasant is certainly regarded as a 'generator of postmodernity' in this process while Mao has perceived the northern Chinese countryside as the most potential reservoir of energy of anti-imperialist struggles (Dirlik and Zhang 2000: 3).

Therefore, Uneven and Combined Development could close the debate between China-made and West-made conceptions of modern Chinese history by highlighting the interaction between Chinese and western forces in constituting social transformation. The agenda as well as the methods of the Chinese Revolution were both evolving social realities produced by such interaction. The contradiction-cum 'combined development' has epitomized Marx's remark that '[i]n our days everything seems pregnant with its contrary' (Berman 1982: 21) which could not be understood by either the Sinocentric or the Eurocentric historiography. How could U&CD's critique of Sinology and Chinese historiography contribute to wider sociological theories?

6.4 The ‘mode-of-production’ analysis, the problem of ontological singularity and the significance of international conception of social development.

This thesis starts by making a general argument that China’s peasant-based socialist revolution cannot be understood by extant IR and sociological theories for their common problem of ‘anachronism’: a syndrome of ignoring the complexities of ‘time factor’ in constituting social transformation. It is however ironic that historical sociological scholars such as Barrington Moore and Theda Skocpol who proclaim to have revolved around historical specificities have also committed the error of anachronism (Burawoy 1989: 769) due to their under-theorized conception of ‘the international’⁷⁵. It has long been the central task of historical sociology to bring ‘history’ back to the analysis of social development (see Lawson and Hobson 2007), but why does anachronism remains paradoxically in many existing historical-sociological accounts⁷⁶? My answer to the question is that the pathology of ‘ontological singularity’ underlying historical sociology has presupposed a uni-linear notion of social development, and such a notion will inevitably rule out the possibility of envisaging the twists and turns of historical development for treating social development as determined by a series of ‘static, self-constituting, autonomous and reified’ entities (Hobson and Hobden 2002: 7). With the lessons taken from the experience of the Chinese Revolution, I will show that the orthodox ‘mode of production’ analysis is a typical example of viewing social development as determined by a certain structural entity which will inevitably result in anachronistic analysis. Uneven and Combined Development’s major contribution to social theories thus lies in its ‘general abstraction’ predicated upon ontological multiplicity and interactivity, which enables a dynamic understanding of social

⁷⁵ Barrington Moore's emphasis of world history can be found in the epilogue of his *Social Origins*: social revolutions were 'much more clearly successive historical stages', and 'as such, they displayed a limited determinate relations to each other' (1966: 414); see also Theda Skocpol's use of 'world time' (1979: 23).

⁷⁶ This paradox exists in sinology as well when a discipline aspiring to the historical variances of Chinese socio-political order has ended up viewing the Chinese history as static and changeless.

development as a spirally ascending process. This provides a powerful antidote to the extant IR and sociological theories.

As for most of the extant analyses of the causes and consequences of the Chinese Revolution, the 'mode of production' analysis squats at the root of their methods even if some of these authors are not Marxist. 'Mode of production' is identified by many authors as the fundamental 'general abstraction' from which concrete analysis of a society's patterns of development can be derived. Though 'mode of production' has not been given consistent definition, it is clear that this concept manifests itself as a series of clearly outlined collections of production relations which will give rise to more specific social, political and cultural forms as concretions of the general 'mode of production'. A typical case of this method is the orthodox Marxist conception of the 'realist moment' of geopolitics which claims that the capitalist international modernity should be understood as 'the historical subsumption of interstate competition 'under that between capitals'' (Callinicos 2007; see Rosenberg's critique in Rosenberg and Callinicos 2008: 87-89). For authors like Callinicos, capital accumulation as the 'theoretical core' of the mode of production theory operates as the sociological 'organizing principles' for understanding other concrete forms of socio-political orders which includes modern state-formation, geopolitical relations and even the 'uneven and combined' pattern of the globalization of capital (Callinicos 2007; Ashman 2009; Anievas and Allinson 2009 etc.)⁷⁷.

Sinological accounts have promised to capture the historical specificities of the Chinese development beyond any theoretical abstraction. It is ironic that Sinology has never been void of the problem of anachronism for its fetishism of the particularities of China's *tradition* (Cohen 1984; 2003: 48). The key problem here is that such tradition as the starting point for understanding China's historical evolution has been treated as no different from the concept of 'mode of production' which revolves around a

⁷⁷ It needs to be noted that some Marxists' analysis of uneven and combined development also has difficulties explaining transformation under some modes of production. For example, Anievas and Allinson insist that pre-capitalist epoch had no 'wholesale transformation' which is consistent with Sinology's claim that there was no significant change in ancient China, see Anievas and Allinson, 2009, 'The uses and misuses of uneven and combined development: an anatomy of a concept', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 22, no. 1, pp. 47-67.

misidentified category as ‘general abstraction’ from which all levels of particularities are derived. The typical case can be found in the idea of ‘Oriental Despotism’ which has foregrounded many explanations of cultures and socio-political forms. Oriental Despotism, as an expression of a deeper ‘Asiatic mode of production’ is predicated upon a generalized understanding of economic production of the Chinese society as a ‘hydraulic society’, in which man had to respond to ‘arid, semi-arid and particular humid environments’ via ‘hydraulic’ constructions that could be only realized by the state as the sole proprietor (Wittfogel 1957: 1). The ‘absence of private property’ as a derivative of the hydraulic condition is thus deployed for further addressing China’s other socio-political forms including the centrality of state-bureaucracy, the functional significance of literati examination, the lack of ‘transcendental tensions’ of Confucianism and even the so-called ‘strong resemblance’ between Maoism and premodern imperial order. This analytical process survives no empirical scrutiny because there have been plenty of ‘private property’ in pre-capitalist China and ‘transcendental tensions’ in Confucius’ original texts (see Liu Xiaofeng 2007: 85; Pomeranz 2001; Brook 1999: 125; Anderson 1979: 491). It is noteworthy that recent Sinolgoical studies have made substantial efforts to jettison the baggage of the static notion of ‘Asiatic mode of production’ having recognized its empirical blindness. However, their methods have made no substantial difference in the sense that they are still furnishing the particularities of the internal structure of the Chinese civilization without moving beyond it; thus they are still working around the concept of the mode of production rather than providing any alternative departure of ‘general abstraction’. As Friedrich Tenbruck has correctly argued, all sociological elaborations over ‘static’, ‘morphology’ or ‘structure’ were only ‘means towards the more accurate estimations of ‘dynamics’ in the service of prediction’ with the ‘core assumption that every societal formation is the outcome of a preceding one’ (Tenbruck 1994: 75). Because the ‘preceding structure’ is theorized on a self-constitutive basis, a uni-linear conception of social development is unavoidable. Thus no matter how much efforts have been made to give more historical nuances to the concept of ‘mode of production’ on the descriptive level, the aforementioned situation ‘did not change even when uni-linear ‘progress’ was superseded by less ambitious and multi-dimensional ‘social change’ (Tenbruck 1994: 75; see also Nisbet 1969; and Rosenberg 2006: 329). With the present case of China’s peasant-socialist revolution reinterpreted by Uneven and Combined Development, I will argue that the solution to all the aforementioned

variances of anachronism in Sinology and historical sociology is not to continue furnishing the particularities of ‘mode of production’, but to replace such a self-constitutive concept with an alternative ‘general abstraction’ from which non-linear historical development can be derived. Uneven and Combined Development can provide such a solution by resolving the fundamental problem of ‘ontological singularity’ which gives rise to uni-linear notion of development and corresponding anachronistic explanations.

The problem of ‘ontological singularity’ has been regarded as one of the basic premises of classic sociological theory. ‘It is this concept of the internal history of societies that underlies the rise of sociology’ (Tenbruck 1994: 75). Justin Rosenberg has highlighted the methodological internalism as the origin of a *lacuna* in classic sociological theories which leaves ‘international phenomena’ unexplained (Rosenberg 2006: 310). Rosenberg has further defined the method of ‘internalism’ as an expression of an deeper ontological problem of ontological singularity,

‘Sociological theory, it argues, has in the main operated with a conception of society as a singular, unitary and self-contained...Theorization of any given type of society has thus generally proceeded by first modeling its inner relational composition (its social structure), and then examining how its iterated reproduction in this form gives rise to immanent sources of development and changes’ (2013: 188)

Hereby, Rosenberg has made it very clear that the uni-linear notion of development is a consequence of the internalist mode of social analysis which focuses only on the inner composition of a social structure with clearly defined boundaries⁷⁸. It is inevitable that such mode of theorizing will lead to anachronism because the modeling of social-relational composition at a given point of history can be applied to social development in a much wider time-span; for example, the understanding of Confucian texts in its original form can be applied to Mao’s contemporary use of Confucianism as a way of ‘suasion and coercion’ (Wolf 1969) without noting both the historical mutations of Confucianism itself and Mao’s dramatic negation of it in a

⁷⁸ Such boundaries are always coterminous with those of nation-states in modern time, see Daniel Chernilo, 'Methodological nationalism and the domestic analogy: classical resources for their critique', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, vol. 23, no. 1.

completely different spatio-temporal context. The irony has thus emerged that though such historical accounts aspire to historical specificities, they have no conceptual devices for theorizing the accumulative development of history apart from allowing the characterization of a certain point of history to be replicated to other contexts.

Notably, this observation does not mean that anachronistic analysts have not recognized any changes over time on the empirical level; it rather means that they lack the theoretical device, or a proper 'general abstraction' that allows them to theorize such changes progressively. Theda Skocpol has certainly realized the historical reality that the internally determined developmental trajectory would deviate and reorient from time to time, and she has announced that such deviations and reorientations, which cannot be understood by theorizing the preceding social structure(s) should by no means be regarded as just 'certain fortuitous circumstances' (Skocpol 1973: 29). Skocpol has no problem figuring an independent, external realm of explanation such as geopolitics with her 'summate analytical skills' (Burawoy 1989), however, her failure of tackling anachronism is caused by a problem interdependent with internalism in classic sociology. As Rosenberg has noted in a much earlier text, in Skocpol's works, "the international' intruded powerfully into her sociological method without, however, itself being grasped as a sociological phenomenon' (Rosenberg 2007: 454). 'The international' treated as the remit of 'the social' can only lay out some structural context for the rise of a certain political agency such as the peasantry; it nonetheless sheds no lights on the specificities of such varying political agency in *longue durée* development. Implicitly, what determines the nature and character of the peasant revolution is still some preceding social structures operating similarly to a self-contained 'mode of production' (see Skocpol 1979: 263-283).

Here, the problem is clear that the conception of 'mode of production' or any other social reality based upon the internalist mode of analysis in classic sociology is not by itself a 'theory of change'. It is noted by some Marxists themselves that modes of production, such as capitalism always possess some elements irreducible to any corresponding 'cores' of the mode. Social systems such as market relations are substantial elements of both feudalism and capitalism, and 'these exists not exogenous to capitalism, nor as pockets of decline, but as an intrinsic and structured part of a wider system'. The transformation of a social form thus needs to be understood in that

‘wider system’ because modes of production, such as capitalism ‘neither evolve mechanically from what precedes, nor do they necessarily dissolve it’ (Foster-Carter 1978: 50-51). The so-called ‘wider system’ under which ‘multiple temporalities’ coexist to determine the patterns of a specific socio-political order requires an alternative ‘general abstraction’ that can give rise to a non-linear and accumulative conception of social development.

Uneven and Combined Development can successfully grasp the sociological core of the wider world-historical system beyond any singular, self-constitutive modes of production by postulating ‘multi-societal interaction’ as the rational ‘general abstraction’ of social development. On this basis, the analytical process of Uneven and Combined Development has become to examine a series of interaction among different social forces and the totality of these networks of interaction. In Marx’s original formulation of ‘the method of Political Economy’, it elicits a reciprocal process of concretizing the ‘general abstraction’ by mapping specific determinations, and then tracing them back to an ‘enriched totality’ (Marx 1973). As for China’s case, the peasant’s political agency as the pivot of modern transformation is not derived from any general abstractions such as the ‘peasant’s passivity’ or the stasis of Confucianism which occupied the centre of the concept of ‘mode of production’; instead, it has stemmed from China’s premodern condition of ‘nomad-sedentary co-constitution’ which gave rise to an imperial bureaucracy superimposed upon agricultural households and the peculiar structure of ‘developmental agrarian state’ (Perdue 2005); this has configured the potential political agency of the peasant as ‘bolstering the state-authority in order to promote social wellbeing’. Also, the modern revolution was not incentivized by the sweeping force of capitalist mode of production, but by the intersection of China’s internal decline of state-authority and the universalizing force of imperialism. This intersection gave rise to a combined development that China’s premodern elite class was actively assimilating the ‘privileges of backwardness’ from the industrial society to withstand the ‘external whip of necessity’ (Trotsky 1973: 20-23, 1980: 4-7); and more importantly, such a combination entails a relocated class relations that the rivaling regional militarists instead of a unified bourgeois class became the agency of China’s industrial modernization. This reconfiguration of class relations generated a particular conjuncture of crisis to which the communist revolution was compelled to respond.

The same conjuncture has also informed the communists that urban-based industrialization and capitalist liberal-democracy could never resolve China's crisis of backwardness. Thus by critically inheriting and negating the pre-existing modernization projects, the Communist Party has mobilized the peasant to substitute for the bourgeoisie and the worker for democratic revolution, and mobilized the peasant's human capability for advanced production force as a departure of socialist revolution (D'Mello 2009).

From the entire trajectory of the formulation of China's peasant socialism, it is notable that temporalities in both long and short terms are mobilized as a complex explanation to the multi-faceted peasant socialism. On one hand, there has been an enduring political agency of the peasant of marrying social egalitarianism with building a strong centralized state-The Self-strengtheners, the KMT and Mao's CCP have all inherited such a tradition. On the other hand, however, there were always some very specific conjunctural crises to which the elites mounted different revolutionary responses; for example, the Anti-Japanese struggles and the KMT's failure of modernization urged the formation of the CCP's 'fusing with the mass' strategy and guerrilla warfare. Interactions among variegated social forms has not only produced a series of enduring social realities such as the peasant's political agency, the general context of modern revolution and the constant imperative of resolving backwardness, but also a spirally ascending trajectory in which an ongoing historical process was interrupted, superseded or intersected by additional processes stemming from other social spaces; for example, the CCP's burgeoning working class movements in the 1920s was terminated by the KMT's project of developmental state, whereas, the CCP then entered a single process fusing national liberation/anti-imperialism and rural restoration (Deutscher 1964: 189-195). For both the existence of multiple temporalities and the complexities of developmental trajectories in specific conjunctures, multi-societal interaction remains as the only rational 'general abstraction' from which 'breaking down of conventional succession of historical stages can' be derived. Therefore, by replacing the ontologically singular 'mode of production' under which social development is self-constitutive and uni-linear, the theory of Uneven and Combined Development has presented an international conception of social development in which non-linear, accumulative evolution is an emergent property of multi-societal co-constitution. The enduring problem of

anachronism can thus be successfully resolved.

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