Interpreting Socialism and Capitalism in China: A Dialectic of Utopia and Dystopia

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ABSTRACT
We argue that the dialectic of utopia and dystopia enables an alternative, albeit controversial, way for framing debate over the tensions between socialism and capitalism in China. In doing so, we acknowledge but differ from alternative explanations: Socialism in China has simply become an empty veneer over rampant and unbridled capitalism; capitalism in China is of such a different variety that it is hardly capitalism at all; “socialism with Chinese characteristics” is a prolonged experiment in the New Economic Program. Theoretically, we draw upon Anatoly Lunacharsky, Ernst Bloch, and Fredric Jameson. A significant factor for understanding this dialectic is Bloch’s idea of the synchronicity of nonsynchronicity. The next step analyzes the permutations of this dialectic in the Chinese situation of the tension between socialism and capitalism. We propose three formulations: the need for economic and political strength in the face of international forces, the use of capitalism to build socialism, and the fostering of the productive forces of capitalism to provide the basis for the full realization of communism. How these variations manifest the dialectic of utopia and dystopia is the burden of our final section, where we seek to move past simplistic oppositions.
The complex intersections between socialism and capitalism in China have vexed more than one interpreter. For some, socialism in China since Mao has simply become an empty veneer over rampant and unbridled capitalism. For others, the capitalism in China is of such a different variety that it is hardly capitalism at all. And for others, “socialism with Chinese characteristics” is a prolonged experiment in the New Economic Program, first attempted in the USSR of the 1920s to rebuild a shattered economy. We would like to take a different approach, deploying the dialectic of utopia and dystopia as our interpretive frame. This requires an outline of how such a dialectic works, with references to the proposals of Ernst Bloch and Fredric Jameson. The key is that the very possibility of utopia arises out of dystopia—indeed that utopian glimpses may be located within the worst possible forms of dystopia. However, the converse also applies in two respects: dystopia may arise from utopia, and the very definition of utopia requires a dystopian presence or at least the threat thereof. A key factor for understanding this dialectic at its deepest level is Bloch’s idea of the contemporaneity of noncontemporaneity. The next step is to analyze the permutations of this dialectic in the Chinese situation of the tension between socialism and capitalism. Initially, we propose three formulations: the need for economic and political strength in the face of hostile international forces, the use of capitalism to build socialism, and the fostering of the productive forces of capitalism to provide the basis for the full realization of communism, under the guidance of a socialist political and cultural framework. How these variations manifest the dialectic of utopia and dystopia is the burden of our final section, where we seek to move past simplistic oppositions.

Theory: On Utopia and Dystopia

For the theoretical framework of our analysis concerning the dialectic of utopia and dystopia, we draw on the work of Ernst Bloch and Fredric Jameson. Before we do so, we would like to introduce an intriguing precursor: Anatoly Lunacharsky. In his rich and almost lost work, Religia i sotsialism, Lunacharsky draws upon Feuerbach’s argument concerning religion but gives it a dialectical twist. For Feuerbach, the gods are projections of all that is best in human beings, which human beings should once again appropriate.
for themselves. Lunacharsky interpreted this to mean that the gods provide ideals toward which human beings strive (a theory that would underpin his model of education in the USSR). But now he provides his dialectical reading: the gods embody both revolutionary and reactionary possibilities. They may be the embodiment of the aspirations of the poor and of hatred for the rich and powerful, standing for a “complete denial of all noble rank, of all noble birth, of any war, of any vengeful feeling.” At the same time, the gods may also sit comfortably in the seats of power, giving voice to the dominance of nobles and princes. More tellingly, people’s aspirations for freedom, social justice, and equality, if not communism, are inspired by none other than the gods. Yet, with the establishment of a new order, the revolution soon turns into reaction, with the gods becoming conservative or reactionary. For Lunacharsky, revolution and reaction are inseparable, with the one providing the conditions for the other. He frames this tension in a way that would echo Ernst Bloch many years later: Christianity may be simultaneously a “creed of democracy” and a justification for “meekly bearing the yoke” of oppression.

Ernst Bloch would have to both rediscover this insight (since he knew not of Lunacharsky) and sharpen it. Thus, for Bloch utopian possibilities may be found in even the most degraded and apparently irretrievable material. Out of the vast range of Bloch’s utopian hermeneutics—in which he glimpses utopia in myriad moments of the full scope of human and natural existence, from everyday life, through festivals and myths and literature, to revolution itself—we focus on two examples. The first concerns myth, legend, and folktale, where the very possibility of utopian hope may be expressed and preserved within a reactionary account. Indeed, a characteristic feature of so many (ruling-class) stories is to recount the futility of rebellion and the harsh punishments that will result. Again and again, we encounter myths in which a rebellion against the ruling powers, if not the gods themselves, is cast as the act of “sinners,” “scoundrels,” and even “terrorists.” Yet, if one reads from below and takes into account the dominant ideological perspective of such stories, they become so many instances of the effort by the downtrodden to stand on their feet, to let the homo absconditus emerge from the gloom. Bloch’s point is not so much to extract these revolutionary efforts from the stories in question but to point out that they need their reactionary context in order to exist at all—in terms of both the historical preservation of rebellion and the political possibility of revolution itself.

The second example concerns one of Bloch’s most arresting arguments, namely, that fascism also contains a utopian impulse. The initial point is
that the form (not the content) of fascism expresses a desire for another world than this one. But the key lies in the influential formulation of the “noncontemporaneity” (Ungleichzeitigkeit) of the present, or in shorthand, the “contemporaneity of noncontemporaneity,” in order to explain the rise of fascism in Germany. For Bloch, a mode of production such as capitalism always contains precapitalist traces, which exist at different levels and modalities simultaneously in the present. They are like a “cultural groundwater,” which lies closer to or farther from the surface, depending on the place. At the same time, they challenge and resist the present; they “contradict the Now; very strangely, crookedly, from behind.” Here fascism finds room to arise, for it can construct such resistance in terms of its false myths and hopes, of the Blond Beast, of blood and soil. But this noncontemporaneity also creates the possibility for socialist revolution, in which the unattained hopes of earlier forms, which gain “additional revolutionary force precisely from the incomplete wealth of the past,” meet the expectations of a “prevented future” and unleashed forces of production with which the present is pregnant.

This important argument, with its call for a multitemporal and multispatial dialectic, implicitly provides a significant philosophical analysis of the success of socialist revolutions—all the way from Eastern Europe to Asia—in supposedly “backward” countries rather than “advanced” capitalist ones. We will return to this point below.

A third and related feature of Bloch’s argument is really implied rather than stated clearly. Not only is utopia enabled by dystopia, but utopia itself cannot exist without a dystopian presence. However, before we elaborate on that point, let us draw upon Fredric Jameson’s argument concerning the first side of this opposition. For Jameson, utopia is both a political project and a hermeneutics. Politically, utopia is inescapably socialist, for it “now better expresses our relationship to a genuinely political future than any program of action.” Politics slips easily into hermeneutics, particularly when one understands utopia as the decentered anticipation of a future socialist society and mode of production that emerges from our present by means of a low-level rupture. The hermeneutical dimension of this approach is articulated in Jameson’s earlier work, where he seeks to enrich Marxism by drawing not only on Bloch but also on Mikhail Bakhtin, the Frankfurt School, and Paul Ricoeur’s dialectic of suspicion and recovery in terms of ideological and utopian hermeneutics. For Ricoeur, the key is not to overturn the moment of suspicion but to find what is positive in that moment in order to move on to recovery. So also with Jameson’s reworking: utopian interpretation seeks out
the utopian dimensions of even the most reactionary, resistant, and degraded material, searching for the point where, especially in the very act of avoidance and concealment, the wish for something vastly new and better shows through: "A Marxist negative hermeneutic, a Marxist practice of ideological analysis proper, must in the practical work of reading and interpretation be exercised simultaneously with a Marxist positive hermeneutic, or a decipherment of the Utopian impulses of these same still ideological texts."18

What about the other side of the opposition? Jameson’s formulations, and even those of Bloch, assume the dominance of dystopia from which utopia emerges. But what if we begin with utopia? Does it then need dystopia in some way to be utopia at all? Here we need to extrapolate an important point from both Bloch and Jameson: utopia is by definition imperfect and incomplete. The dystopian presence appears in a double register, as both threat and presence. As for the threat, as soon as utopia locks the gates, scuttles the ships, and permits no one to leave, it has already become dystopian. Here we need only think of the partially closed borders of Eastern Europe at certain times in the twentieth century, if not of North Korea at different times. The claim to closure and completion and perfection is thus its decisive step to repression and the end of the utopian drive. Similarly, as soon as a utopia claims that it is the only one, that all others are dystopian, it too has become like the others. Yet, even if the gates remain open, the threat remains, but now dystopia takes another form. The incompleteness and imperfection of utopia is the signal of the persistent presence of dystopia, leading to the apparent paradox that openness and imperfection constitute the very definition of utopia. And it must remain so to remain utopia at all.

Practice: Socialism and Capitalism in China

With this dialectic of utopia and dystopia in mind, we would like to explore the Chinese experience of more than sixty-five years of attempting to construct socialism (although the Communist Party is almost one hundred years old, having been founded in 1921). In particular, we are interested in how the shift from revolution to reform raises the tension between utopia and dystopia in a distinctly practical fashion. Pre-1949 China may have needed revolution to deal with the urgent problems of exploitation, economic and political chaos, and the Japanese occupation. But since 1949, and especially since 1976, the process has shifted clearly to reform after revolution. The key is Deng Xiaoping,
whose decisive shift to reform opened up the tension between utopia and dystopia in a new way. In these terms, Deng moved to characterize the Cultural Revolution as a utopian drive that became distinctly dystopian, which paralyzed China politically and caused deep economic and social rifts. In response, he proposed a process of reform, which he believed would overcome this dystopian experience. In doing so, he formulated not only “socialism with Chinese characteristics” but also “market socialism”—to the consternation of a good number of international socialists. More fully, he explained: “There is no fundamental contradiction between socialism and a market economy. The problem is how to develop the productive forces more effectively . . . If we are to keep to the socialist system, it is essential for us to develop the productive forces.” This approach was a profound challenge to some orthodox Marxist positions, according to which a market economy as a part of a capitalist economy ought to be abandoned since China was already a socialist country—as happened during the collective drive from 1958 to 1976.

However, the reforms fostered under the inspiration of Deng Xiaoping and carried further since his time have led to yet another level of the dialectic of utopia and dystopia. This dialectic may be seen in three ways: the need for economic and political strength, the use of capitalism to build socialism, and the need to foster the full development of capitalism under socialist guidance so that communism may emerge. We take each in turn, aware that they may be controversial for some engaged in research on China. To begin with, the drive for economic and political strength is needed in a global situation that remains hostile to Chinese socialism. Interference by the United States and Western Europe may have taken different forms from its earlier crude efforts—such as launching sabotage raids from Taiwan in the 1950s or the embargo with the aim of stunting China’s economic recovery from years of civil war and Japanese occupation. But it remains a reality. The push for “regime change” has now been outsourced to nongovernmental organizations, which push the mantra of “human rights” and “democracy” while seeking to destabilize Tibet, Xinjiang, and most recently Hong Kong. In the face of this dystopian dimension of geopolitics, China has pursued the drive for economic strength. It has borne obvious fruit. China has become the second-largest economy in the world and is disrupting the global status quo, even without realizing its full economic potential. The increasing obsession with Chinese power in the United States and Western Europe is but a reflection of their own stumbles and declining position. Already in some respects, China is more technologically advanced than any other place on the globe.
And with economic power comes military strength, which remains a necessity in the realities of geopolitics.

Already, the dystopian dimensions of this response to global pressure should be obvious, but we hold off discussing them until we have covered the other two forms of the dialectic. The second may be drawn from Lenin’s justification of the New Economic Program: using capitalism to build socialism. The practice of this form of the dialectic goes back to the foundations of modern socialism, embodied in none other than Friedrich Engels. We mean not merely the fact that he opted—while a near-destitute exile in London after the 1848 revolutions in Europe—to become a partner in the family firm of Ermen and Engels in Manchester, in order to ensure that the Marx family, and indeed the growing circle of socialists, remained housed and fed. More importantly, we mean that a Marxist, more than anyone else, should know how capitalism really works. So why not use that knowledge to advance the cause of socialism? Engels continued this strategy after he sold his partnership, for he invested astutely and decisively in the stock market for the rest of his life, leaving a small fortune for the burgeoning socialist movement. This model has been used since in some of the more effective socialist organizations, such as the Frankfurt School and the International Institute for Research and Education in Amsterdam. Both were founded and initially funded by the scions of big business.

To return to Lenin: he and the other Bolsheviks argued that the best way to restore a broken economy, after years of revolutions and international and civil wars, was to permit certain levels of market exchange with the countryside, granting concessions to some international mining companies and industries, and employing specialists at higher rates of pay to rebuild the economy. The result was the New Economic Program of the 1920s, brought to an end by Stalin in 1929 and the collectivization drive. Lenin and Stalin were fully aware of the dangers of allowing some forms of market exchange, but they felt the dangers worth it for the sake of building socialism. In China and under Deng Xiaoping’s urging, the process began to go much further, for Deng argued that there was no necessary contradiction between socialism and some capitalist economic forms, assuming that the latter would be directed by the former. Indeed, Deng understood the mandate that Marxism is practice in the sense that it would make use of what would unleash productive forces. The employment of some capitalist methods was to be undertaken as a way of “accelerating the growth of the productive forces.” Deng always understood this approach as part of the strengthening of
socialism, not merely in terms of economic strength, as noted earlier, but also in terms of political and social strength. We would add that today this process continues, almost to the point of paradox (to an outside observer). Thus, the 2014 meetings of the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party agreed to continue the process of reforming the economy, while at the same time President Xi Jinping sought to strengthen Marxism by blocking any push for bourgeois democracy and by drawing heavily on Mao Zedong concerning the “mass line” campaign in its push for closer integration and sensitivity between government and people.26

The third variation on the dialectic is perhaps the sharpest, for it argues that the full realization of the productive forces of capitalism needs to be fostered under the direction of a communist government that has already won power in a revolution. This argument has a couple of forms, one drawing on the classical argument of Marx that communism cannot appear until capitalism has flourished and realized its full potential and the other relying on the dialectic of the synchronicity of nonsynchronicity. As for the former, it relies on Marx’s observation: “A social formation never comes to an end before all the forces of production which it can accommodate are developed, and new, higher relations of production never come into place before the material conditions of their existence have gestated in the womb of the old society.”27 Communism in this orthodox sense is not communism unless it develops from capitalism. This position led to the expectation that socialist revolutions would first happen in the “advanced” capitalist economies of Western Europe, since here the objective contradictions of capitalist development would generate the final crisis of that mode of production.28 However, China’s situation is unique, for it missed its opportunity to develop into a full capitalist economy and thereby produce the classic pattern for socialist revolution in the context of a “mature” capitalism. Instead, the socialist revolution happened before the full florescence of capitalism. Thus, in order to foster its forces of production to a point where they are superior to capitalist ones, China’s socialist government has found it necessary to encourage the economic potential of capitalist forces of production so that they may provide the basis of socialist forces of production. That is, China has harnessed and seeks to guide capitalist forces of production for the sake of creating a situation for the full realization of socialism. This sharp formulation of the dialectic both is a massive experiment and produces its own intense contradictions. Not least is the contradiction that one is, in economic terms, in favor of capitalism for the sake of the development of forces of production but is, in
political terms, against capitalism for the sake of the development of relations of production.

The argument, however, has one catch: no successful revolution has happened in an “advanced” capitalist economy, so the model first put forward by Marx cannot be regarded as classical. Instead, socialist revolutions have taken place and consolidated themselves in places regarded as relatively “undeveloped” or “backward”—Eastern Europe and Asia. On this matter it seems that Bloch’s insight into the contemporaneity of noncontemporaneity is now the norm. Thus, the significant presence of disparate older economic and social forms in the situations of Russia, China, Vietnam, and Laos and indeed the various revolutions in Africa and South America have generated sharper awareness of the depredations of capitalism and thereby the conditions for the realization of formerly unrealized expectations of a better society, embodied in what Kautsky called “heterodox communism.” Crucially, however, such nonsynchronicity remains after the socialist revolution. It may actually be said to be exacerbated. What enabled the revolution in the first place now seems to hobble the construction of socialism. So we find the extraordinary nonsynchronicity of socialist governments fostering the productive forces of capitalism, hoping that they may lead to the full unleashing of such forces under socialism—but also leading some to see this simply as a retreat to bourgeois capitalism.

Thus far, we have distinguished three—albeit related—variations of the dialectic of capitalism and socialism, with a focus on China. It should clear by now that socialism can only be understood with capitalism, but in ways that may well be rather unexpected. The question remains as to how these variations are manifestations of the dialectic of utopia and capitalism.

**Between Dystopia and Utopia**

Initially, it may seem that—in terms of our discussion—socialism occupies the space of utopia and capitalism occupies that of dystopia. The continued presence of capitalism within socialist construction and reform therefore marks the inescapable presence of dystopia within socialism. One need only consider the responses of capitalist nation-states after communist revolutions to see such opposition in practice: the “entente” after the Russian Revolution, with its economic blockade and extensive assistance for the White Armies during the Civil War; the collusion of European powers with Nazi Germany before World War II in order to isolate and destroy Stalin; the lack of recognition
of the People’s Republic of China after the Chinese Revolution and the continued hostility to China even today. But this opposition is also to be found in the inner workings of capitalism, for which greed has been recoded as “self-interest” and the pursuit of profit at any expense—human and environmental.30 Further, at the heart of capitalism is what Marx discerned as the “capital-fetish.”31 Going much further than his earlier discussions of alienation, let alone the well-known fetishism of commodities, capital-fetish is the belief that money simply produces money, in and of itself. The very core of capitalism works in a profoundly destructive fashion, turning human beings into objects and destroying them in the process. At an everyday level, this reality appears in China as bribery, embezzlement of public funds, denial of justice, and so on. At a macro-level it appears as the astonishing wealth disparity between the tycoons and the laid-off workers, the difference between the extravagant expenditure in some big cities and the extreme poverty in some remote rural villages, the gap between the prosperous eastern part and the impoverished west, and most seriously, the wide gap between some of the communist cadres and the masses. Deng Xiaoping is by no means the only leader to have addressed such issues, as Xi Jinping’s “mass line” program currently under way in China indicates.32

It should come as no surprise that socialism in such a situation faces periodic crises of “faith.” Apart from the continuing question of a long-term socialist government maintaining its legitimacy, the crisis of faith appears as a direct response to the harnessing of capitalist economic forms for the sake of socialism. According to a survey of student communists at Guangzhou University in Guangdong Province, which is one of the most economically developed parts in China, “Only 27.4% of student Communists believe that communism will be realized, . . . 75.8% of them have not ever read Manifesto of the Communist Party, 24.66% of them have never read a book written by Marx, Lenin, Mao Zedong, Deng Xiaoping, or Jiang Zemin.”33 To an outside observer, these figures seem quite high; for a Chinese observer, they reveal a crisis of faith. As Ma Yongjun points out, the “problem of faith is the most serious problem in present China. . . . With economic development and social progress, a serious problem is emerging with respect to faith in Marxism, which is regarded as the ideology of Chinese authority.”34 The response from the government is perhaps to be expected. Thus, President Xi Jinping has begun to talk openly of the need to restore faith in Marxism. At a local branch meeting in Hebei Province in September 2013, Xi cited previous Chinese leaders in his call for renewed faith.35 “Ideals and belief are like vitamins for communists,” he said in his typical way.
of trying to keep in touch with his rural roots: “Without [them] the Party will suffer from ‘vitamin deficiency’ and consequently get ‘rickets.’”

Apart from the moralizing nature of such positions, we are suspicious of the simple opposition between socialism and capitalism, with the former representing utopia and the latter representing dystopia. On closer examination, this approach soon dissipates, particularly if we recall Marx’s, and indeed Lenin’s, arguments that capitalism is both the best and worst of all possible economic systems. It provides the conditions for socialism by destroying ossified social forms that remain and thereby enables an extraordinary expansion of productive forces; simultaneously, it produces yet greater and subtler mechanisms for economic enslavement. But what of socialism? Here we would like to invoke once more the contemporaneity of noncontemporaneity. While the greater presence of unrealized aspirations of precapitalist forms of action and thought creates a stronger potential for a socialist revolution, and while a revolution in these circumstances is faced with an even greater nonsynchronicity in its deployment of capitalism itself in order to create the conditions for the full realization of communism, the very nature of nonsynchronicity means that reactionary forces also continue to be present. For Ernst Bloch, this reality explained the rise of fascism in Europe in the early twentieth century. But we suggest that it also explains the tendency in China for conservative if not reactionary types of thought and practice to gain a foothold and resonate with some. A more obvious example in China is the rise of neo-Confucianism, with the explicit support of the government, such as funding numerous centers of Confucian studies and Confucius institutes worldwide. The aim is clear: to harness the Confucian theme of harmony for the sake of the socialist project. But the underside of Confucianism is thereby also reinvigorated. For Confucius, harmony was never far away from hierarchy; indeed, harmony enabled the complex social hierarchy to function more smoothly. The unanswered question here is whether harmony in neo-Confucianism can be delinked from hierarchy in order to provide a renovated cultural framework. A less obvious example, but perhaps even stronger, is the continued sympathy in some quarters for reactionary political thought from abroad. We do not mean the liberalism espoused by some, with calls for bourgeois “democracy” and “human rights.” We mean the political thought of Carl Schmitt and Leo Strauss, the one a brilliant conservative who drew upon the traditions of Counterreformation thought, the other widely regarded as the “father” of neoconservatism in Europe and the United States. Liu Xiaofeng has been perhaps the most influential purveyor of this tradition, moving away from his earlier focus on “cultural Christianity” to draw upon Strauss.”
Concomitant with these strains of reactionary thought is a dismissal of Marxism, echoing in a curious fashion the dismissals of Chinese socialism among some in the international Left.38

We would like to close on a slightly different note, building on this analysis of nonsynchronicity, but now with an eye for utopian possibilities. We suggest that Xi Jinping’s proposal of the “Chinese dream” embodies—perhaps unwittingly—the openness and incompletion of the socialist project. Xi launched the idea of the Chinese dream at the Twelfth National People’s Congress in 2013: “The Chinese dream is after all the dream of the people. It must be realized by the people whom we firmly rely on. We must constantly bring benefit to the people. . . . All the Communists, especially the cadres of the party, must stick to the faith in communism, always place the people at the highest position in their mind; . . . be firmly against formalism, bureaucracy, hedonism, extravagance, and all phenomena concerning passivism and corruption; . . . vow to adhere to and strive for our chosen cause for the party and the people.”39 Notably, the contents of the Chinese dream are deliberately vague and open. Xi Jinping—who has a Ph.D. in Marxism—has “sent out” this idea so that people may take it up and respond in their own way, in a typically dialectical fashion that echoes Mao Zedong’s “From the masses, to the masses.” Government officials too have taken up the idea and developed it further, stressing the need to work toward a strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and modernized socialist country. In other words, the dream is another way of speaking of the openness and incompletion we have been stressing throughout our argument.

Or perhaps it is better to use an alternative terminology that speaks—following Lukács40—of becoming rather than being. In this way we can jettison the misleading language of perfection and speak of utopia as a process of becoming that is constantly reformulated. In this respect it folds back to the project of Marx and Engels, who, as Krishan Kumar notes, “went out of their way to deny that the future socialist or communist society would be a closed or completed system.”41

Notes


7. Ibid., 150.

8. Anatoly Vasil’evich Lunacharsky, Religiia i sotsializm: Tom 1 (Moscow: Shipovnik, 1908), 64.


10. Anatoly Vasil’evich Lunacharsky, Religiia i prosveshchenie, ed. V. N. Kuznetsova (Moscow: Sovetskaia Rossiia, 1985), 92.


13. Ibid., 97.


16. That rupture “opens up a space into which Utopia may enter, like Benjamin’s Messiah, unannounced, unprepared by events, and laterally, as if into a present randomly chosen but utterly transfigured by the new element.” Ibid., 231.

17. Thus, “all class consciousness—or in other words, all ideology in the strongest sense, including the most exclusive forms of ruling-class consciousness just as much as that of oppositional or oppressed classes—is in its very nature Utopian.” Fredric Jameson, The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 289.

18. Ibid., 296.

19. Debate continues on this question, for some argue that the economy did in fact advance during the Cultural Revolution and that the rupture of that time—breaking the hold of ancient patterns and the economic elites—enabled China to launch itself into the massive economic growth of the period that followed. See the excellent study by Mobo Gao, The Battle for China’s Past: Mao and the Cultural Revolution (London: Pluto, 2008).


22. Here BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank are beginning to provide a distinct alternative to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.


28. It also continues to generate dismissals of the revolutions and efforts to construct socialism in places regarded as economically “backward.” For instance, see Terry Eagleton, Why Marx Was Right (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).


32. Deng Xiaoping’s observation from 1986 has been echoed by each leader since then: “In essence, the purpose of political restructuring is to overcome bureaucratism, develop socialist democracy and stimulate the initiative of the people and of the grass-roots units.” Deng Xiaoping, “On the Reform of the Political Structure” (1986), in Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, vol. 3 (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1993), 117–21, at 118.
33. Du Yahui, “On the Cause and Strategy of Insufficient Identity as a Communist in Present College Students—A Survey Based on Samples from Gongzhou University,” *Journal of Xianning University* 31, no. 11 (2011): 185; translation by Li. The survey was carried out in June 2011 by the author and his research group.


35. “In 1925, Mao Zedong wrote, ‘I have faith in communism and advocate a proletarian social revolution.’ Deng Xiaoping, who orchestrated reform and opening-up, told a CPC [Communist Party of China] national conference in 1985 that: ‘In the past, however small or weak our party was, and whatever difficulties it faced, we maintained a great fighting capacity thanks to our faith in Marxism and communism. With common ideals we have strict discipline. Now, as in the past and in the future, that is our real strength.’ Addressing a symposium in 1999 to mark the 78th anniversary of the CPC, Jiang Zemin, then general secretary of the central committee, said ‘Communists should adhere to socialism and communism as their fundamental political convictions, as well as Marxist dialectical materialism and historical materialism as their outlook on the world.’ In 2006, Hu Jintao, Xi’s predecessor, told a ceremony for the 70th anniversary of the Long March that, ‘a lofty ideal and firm belief should be upheld as a great banner for pooling cohesive force and inspiring people to advance, as well as the source of strength for overcoming difficulties and winning battles.’” Yang, “China’s Leadership Takes ‘Big Exam’” (paragraphs removed).

36. Ibid.


38. David Harvey describes the situation in China as “neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics.” Harvey, *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 120–51.


40. Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study in the Unity of His Thought* (London: NLB, 1970 [1924]), 72–73. Becoming echoes in an interesting way the much-reworked Confucian category of datong, or great harmony. Confucius may have seen this harmony as a past phenomenon, now lost, while later commentators cast it in terms of a future stage, but the emphasis is not on perfection but on gradual process toward the harmony of disparate forces in which both utopia and dystopia are present. William Theodore De Bary, Wing-tsit Chan, and Burton Watson, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 175–76; Kang Yuwei and Lawrence G. Thompson, *Ta T’ung Shu: The One-World Philosophy of K’ang Yu-wei* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1958).
