

## Chapter Three: The Reform and Opening Up

What constitutes dialectical movement is the coexistence of two contradictory sides, their conflict and their fusion into a new category (Marx 1847a, 103; 1847b, 168).

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of November, 1978, representatives from the 18 families of Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, Anhui Province, met and signed what was then a secret document. In 79 characters, the document stated that each family would subdivide their collective land, work their allocated plots to meet government quotas, and then sell any surplus for their own benefit. The reason: back in 1958 the village population was 120, but 67 died from hunger during 1958-1960 (in the midst of the 'Great Leap Forward'). They feared that starvation would haunt them again, as it had done once again in 1978. The result: in the following year, the farmers of Xiaogang village produced six times the amount of grain compared to the previous year. The per capita income of the farmers increased from 22 RMB to 400 RMB. Why was the document a secret? With the fully collectivised system in force, buying and selling was regarded as a 'capitalist' exercise and thus punishable. The farmers knew they were taking a risk, but they were fortunate that the local and provincial CPC officials were sympathetic to their endeavour. So also was the new leadership of the country, with Deng Xiaoping informally at the head. By the next spring, the word of Xiaogang's move was out. While some accused them of undermining socialism, the country's leadership saw it very differently: this would be the beginning of the household responsibility system and thus of the rural reform that drove the first period of the Reform and Opening-Up. By 1984, the household responsibility system had been implemented across the country.

I have begun with this specific example since it reveals the democratic origins of the Reform and Opening-Up and I will return to its immediate implications in a moment. But let us step back for a moment: the concern of this chapter is the Reform and Opening-Up, with a focus on its philosophical underpinnings. Some of the background has already been considered in previous chapters, whether in terms of liberating thought, seeking truth from facts, and liberating the forces of production (Xi 1999, 24; Li C. 2009, 146-49). or the universality-particularity dialectic in socialism with Chinese characteristics (Kang 2008, 7; He and Wang 2015, 20), or the contradiction between productive forces and relations of production during socialist construction (Deng 1979a, 182; 1979c, 189; CPC Central Committee 1981, 17; see also Hao 2011). In this chapter I will deal with the questions of returning to the countryside and the household responsibility system, deepening reform and how we should understand the 'wild 90s', the contradictory nature of the 'opening up'

to developed capitalist countries while maintaining self-reliance and sovereignty, the recalibration of class analysis in terms of internal and external dynamics (dealing also with the rise of a supposed ‘middle class’ and a new ‘working class’), and then the specific dialectical breakthrough of ‘one country, two systems’.

## One Big Pot and Household Responsibility

To return to the pioneering act of Xiaogang village, for it raises three initial features of the Reform and Opening-Up: rural and urban; collective and individual (expressed in terms of ‘eating from one big pot’ and the ‘household responsibility system’); and equality and inequality under socialism. To begin with, the impetus from the countryside was by no means new. Mao Zedong had already begun formulating the strategy of the ‘surrounding the cities from the countryside’ in the late 1920s. Given that China was an overwhelmingly rural country with undeveloped industry and a fledgling work class, Mao realised that the Chinese revolution needed to begin with rural workers and then liberate the cities. From Jinggangshan, through the Jiangxi-Fujian Soviet based in Ruijin, to the key Red Area around Yan’an (Shaanxi Province), this turned out to be a highly successful strategy. Analogously, a major impetus for the Reform and Opening-Up began in the countryside rather than the cities (Wang Yunjing and Yang 1994, 106–7),<sup>1</sup> with the exercise at Xiaogang village expressing Mao’s democratic adage: ‘from the masses, to the masses’ (Li C. 2009, 151–52). Obviously, the timing was fortuitous, for the post-1976 leadership was looking for initiatives to get the socialist project back on track (Deng 1985b, 117; 1985a, 123). In doing so, this leadership circle around Deng Xiaoping reveals a continuity-in-discontinuity with Mao’s initial revolutionary strategy, which should be understood in the dialectical terms of contradiction and *Aufhebung*, or *yangqi* (Zhou Y. 1997, 116).

The more substantive philosophical question concerns the contradiction between collective and individual, which is expressed the Chinese context in terms of ‘eating from one big pot [*daguofan*]’ and ‘household responsibility system [*lianchandaohu*]’. The first

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<sup>1</sup> As Deng Xiaoping put it: ‘In our democratic revolution, we had to act in accordance with China’s specific situation and follow the path discovered by Comrade Mao Zedong of encircling the cities from the rural areas. Now, in our national construction, we must likewise act in accordance with our own situation and find a Chinese path to modernization’ (Deng 1979a, 163; 1979c, 172–73). Or as Xi Jinping observes: ‘Comrade Deng Xiaoping warmly praised the creation of farmers in Xiaogang Village, Fengyang County, Anhui Province, and affirmed the socialist nature of the family contract responsibility system. Under the leadership of our country, the great creation of farmers in China led to the comprehensive implementation of the household contract responsibility system throughout the country, which greatly liberated agricultural productivity, significantly improved the living standards of farmers, and changed the outlook of the countryside’ (Xi 1999, 22).

image is of a large pot, in which the meal for everyone is cooked. People help themselves to how much they want, irrespective of the contribution of each person to the food in the pot. The second term – household responsibility system – is obvious: each household takes responsibility for the production of agricultural produce, meeting the government's quota and then being able to sell any surplus for their own benefit. It was precisely the shift from one to the other that the 18 households in Xiaogang village enacted in 1978, a system that was extended to the whole country by 1984.

Is this a shift from socialist collectivity to capitalist individuality? Not at all, unless we assume the facile equations of socialism=collective and capitalism=individual. The equations may take other forms, such as Asian societies being collectively oriented, while Western European societies are individual. Not only are these equations facile, they are also undialectical: the whole liberal (and capitalist) tradition sees the collective formed through the individual, who contributes to the social reality through his or her selfish endeavours (so Adam Smith). By contrast, the communist tradition assumes that the full flourishing and fulfilment of the individual can take place only through the collective. This is the philosophical point that the household responsibility system reflects: it seeks to enact not a capitalist path to vast income differentiation, but a socialist path to socio-economic wellbeing for all (Fang J. 2014, 59). Note carefully two points: first, it speaks of households and not individuals; second, as with the initial impetus in Xiaogang village, villages today continue to own their land collectively. Decisions concerning how the land is used by households are up to the village itself. For example, Xiaogang village flourished during the 1980s, but found it had to shift to leasing land in the 1990s when young people began going to the cities to work. By the 2000s, with the deployment of a new generation of technologies, the village once again began pooling resources to make the most of the new situation.

All of this brings us to the question of egalitarianism, which has been a repeated trap of the communist movement. As Stalin already observed in 1931, the idea of radical equality has more to do with primitive peasant 'communism', religious ascetics, or petty-bourgeois misperceptions. Socialism is not about the same wages for all, wearing the same clothes or eating the same food in the same quantity (Stalin 1931a, 118–19; 1931b, 120–21; 1934c, 354–57; 1934d, 361–64). Skills, tastes, and needs vary. It is not for nothing that socialism is defined as, 'from each according to ability, to each according to work'. In terms of the collective-individual relation, he observed that 'socialist society alone can most fully satisfy ... and firmly safeguard the interests of the individual' (Stalin 1934a, 28; 1934b, 27). We do not need to rely merely on Stalin, for Marx and Engels already castigated the crude notion of radical equality found in utopian socialism. So too, for Deng Xiaoping 'eating

from one big pot' was a formula for poverty, suffering and disaster, and it would certainly not liberate the productive forces and improve the lives of all (Deng 1985b, 115; 1985a, 121; 1986b, 155; 1986a, 158).<sup>2</sup> In this, it should be no surprise that 'eating from one big pot' should take on the figuratively negative sense of indiscriminate egalitarianism. Finally, the development of the household responsibility system was seen clearly as an exercise in enabling socialist democracy (Fang J. 2014, 60). It would not do to have every decision made by the centre, for this would be a betrayal of democratic centralism; instead, centralisation works only with healthy decentralisation, with initiatives coming from the masses. And if they work, they can then be implemented country-wide – as happened with the initiative from Xiaogang village.

## Deepening Reform

From the micro to the macro: on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November, 2013, the Third Plenary Session of the CPC Central Committee produced a significant document entitled 'Decision of the CPC Central Committee on Several Issues Concerning the Comprehensive Deepening of Reform' (CPC Central Committee 2013b).<sup>3</sup> I will address the content of the decision in a moment, but first we need to ask: why was this document produced at this time? Much had changed since the initiative of Xiaogang village and the initial steps of the Reform and Opening-Up under Deng Xiaoping's tenure. From personal experience in China in the first decade of the twenty-first century, I witnessed much debate about the direction in which China was going. It seemed as though everything was on the table: the CPC's legitimacy was at an all-time low, corruption was rampant, the gap between rich and poor was growing, and many schools of thought vied to get their views aired. Did the loss of a moral compass require a recovery of hierarchical Confucian values, as the renaissance of Confucian studies proposed? Should the achievements of the CPC be denied ('historical nihilism') and the path of bourgeois liberalisation be pursued? Should Marxist political economy be pushed aside and neoliberalism be embraced? Should China shift to a Western model of democratic socialism, or should it return to the values and practices of the Cultural Revolution? These and more were the questions being asked and proposals being made, not least by a swathe of Chinese thinkers and policy makers who had returned to the country from abroad in the 1990s. All these questions turned on the perceived shortcomings of the Reform and Opening-Up.

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<sup>2</sup> In an insightful article, Zhu Jiamu (2013, 103–5) points out that Mao Zedong began to see some of the same points in the late 1950s and early 1960s, including a critique of petty-bourgeois egalitarianism.

<sup>3</sup> Although I cite the original Chinese version in the main text, one may also consult the English translation (CPC Central Committee 2013a).

As I write, these questions have been resolved and the country's direction is very clear indeed, with more than ninety percent of the population confident about China's direction. A decade or more ago, I would talk with CPC members and they would say they were embarrassed about the Party, but that at least conditions in China had improved. These days, I talk even more with CPC members: the young members say they see no other path for China and hope to make their contribution to the greater project; the older members are once again proud of a hard-working and unified Party. Much of this change has to do with the decision from 2013 and what has been enacted since then. Notably, the document was produced after the first year of Xi Jinping's tenure as chairman of the CPC.

Let us consider the document in a little more detail. It is certainly comprehensive, dealing with: the integration of rural and urban development;<sup>4</sup> international engagement with a focus on the Belt and Road Initiative; developing further the socialist democratic political system in order to 'give full play to the superiority of the socialist political system in China'; comprehensively enhancing rule of law; restricting and supervising the exercise of power (*quanli*); socialist cultural power, with a balance of cultural openness and cultural confidence; social programs, which include education, employment and entrepreneurship, income distribution, an equitable and sustainable social security system, medicine and health care; social governance focused on peace and stability, as well as public security in terms of food, drugs, disaster, national security; ecological civilisation; and national defence, which includes civilian-military integration. Of these, pride of place is given to economic matters (the focus of three sections at the beginning). The initial point is that the 'basic economic system [*jiben jingji zhidu*]' will be enhanced, with a clear focus on state-owned enterprises as the core (Cheng 1997). In other other words, public ownership is the key, side-by-side with other diverse forms of ownership. I will have more to say on this matter in the next chapter, suffice to point out here that the 'basic economic system' (*zhidu* refers to an over-arching system) is clearly socialist, within which one finds a socialist market economy playing a 'decisive role [*juedingxing zuoyong*]' in the allocation of resources and distribution, along with the comprehensive enhancement of government planning. These two – market and planning – are components (*tizhi*) of the overall system. In fact, the other topics of the decision listed a little earlier are also components of the comprehensive socialist system.

The essence of the document appears in its opening section, where it speaks of the Reform and Opening-Up being a 'great new revolution [*xin de weida geming*] led by the

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<sup>4</sup> Of relevance for the treatment of the initial rural focus of the Reform and Opening-Up (see above), this point includes the modernisation of agriculture and people-centred urban development, which also entails an orderly process for enabling migrant workers to become urban residents.

Party under the new conditions of the new era'. Further, there will be 'no end [*yongyuan zhijing*] to practice, no end to emancipating the mind and no end to the Reform and Opening-Up'. The first two phrases recall Deng Xiaoping's emphasis (see Chapter One) on liberating thought and seeking truth from facts. Since these are the philosophical foundations of the Reform and Opening-Up, the latter too will have no end. And the overall goal of comprehensively deepening reform is not only to improve socialism with Chinese characteristics and modernise China's system and capacity for governance, but also to enable China to become a socialistically modernised society that is strong, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious.

The text addresses directly the question as to whether China is following a socialist or capitalist path: in implementing the Party's basic line, it is necessary to 'reject the old and ossified path of closure and rigidity, and reject any attempt to abandon socialism and take an erroneous path'. The erroneous path is of course capitalism. By contrast, 'we will stay committed to the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and ensure that reform is carried out in the right direction'. I will have more to say on this point below, which is usually described as distinguishing between two paths of reform. But let me close this identification of the key points of the 2013 decision by asking: why deepen reform? The initial response is that the decision attests to the sense that the Reform and Opening-Up is by no means 'complete', although to put it that way suggests that it will at some point come to an end. Instead, there is to be no end to such a process. More significantly, the text addresses implicitly the many problems that had arisen during what may be called the 'wild 90s'. These problems relate to all of the topics mentioned in the document that need further reform, from the economy, through social, cultural, and environment problems, to national defence. We do find a more explicit reference to these deep problems in the treatment of social governance: here are mentions of the 'root causes' and 'symptoms' of social problems, and for more effective and efficient measures to prevent and resolve social conflicts. The purpose is to ensure social harmony, peace, and stability (CPC Central Committee 2013b, 8). This question too will be a focus in what follows, but let me close this discussion by observing that the problems of the past are but one motivation for the decision. At the text makes clear, more are anticipated: it is not merely a case of 'crossing the river by feeling the stones', but that reform has entered a new 'deep-water zone'. By pooling the wisdom of the whole Party and society to the greatest extent, the need for the future is to 'ford dangerous rapids' by promoting the self-improvement and development of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics (CPC Central Committee 2013b, 1).

## *Revolution and Reform*

Two issues requiring further analysis arise from the decision: the relation between revolution and reform and the ‘wild 90s’. As for revolution and reform, this is an old question in the communist movement, a question that was initially framed in terms of either a comprehensive revolutionary process that sweeps away the old system, or working to reform that system to the point where quantitative change would lead to qualitative change. But the opposition is a false one, as Lenin already observed in an insightful solution: ‘either revolutionary class struggle, of which reforms are always a by-product ... or no reforms at all’ (Lenin 1917a, 282; 1917b, 213). In other words, reform should always be enacted in terms of revolution and not as a path to socialism. How does this work? Before a revolution, a Communist Party should advocate reforms that temporarily improve the conditions of workers, but the Party should always make it perfectly clear that a revolution and its resultant socialist system is the only real answer.<sup>5</sup> Reform for the sake of reform – ‘tinkering with washbasins’ (Lenin 1906a, 263; 1906b, 189) – under a capitalist system ultimately benefits that system and weakens the working class. By contrast, in a socialist system – even under construction – reform is absolutely necessary in order to construct socialism. The relics of the former capitalist system need to be overcome and more and more socialist features need to be established in light of conditions. But the context is always revolution.

It is in this light that we should understand both the decision on deepening reform’s statement that the Reform and Opening-Up is a ‘great new revolution’. Of course, it was Deng Xiaoping who initially observed that the Reform and Opening-Up, with its liberation of the forces of production and modernisation, is also a revolution (Deng 1979b, 231; 1979d, 235; 1980c, 311; 1980d, 310; 1992b, 370; 1992a, 358). In other words, if a communist revolution aims to establish a different socio-economic system with the aim of improving the lives of all workers, then reform is a crucial component of this aim (Chen X. 2015, 5). A socialist system does not emerge ready-made when power is in the hands of rural and urban workers through a Communist Party. Much needs to be done in light of the specific conditions of a country, especially if it is relatively ‘backward’ in economic terms. Indeed, a distinctive feature of proletarian revolutions is that – unlike bourgeois revolutions – they have mostly not been able to set up conditions beforehand, in terms of cultural framework, social assumptions and economic realities. All of this reforming work needs to

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<sup>5</sup> As Lenin recommends to public speakers and the Social-Democratic representatives in the Russian Duma, ‘five minutes of every half-hour speech are devoted to reforms and twenty-five minutes to the coming revolution’ (Lenin 1916b, 221; 1916a, 159).

be done after a Communist Party is able to gain power through a revolution. Further, we should not lose sight of the fact that the whole, lengthy socialist stage is a preparation for the realisation of communism – the ultimate goal of the revolutionary process (Zhu J. 2016, 35). In this sense may one speak of reform being the ‘embodiment of the spirit of Marxist philosophy’ (Ha 1989, 17).

At the same time, revolution and reform are distinct processes. Chinese material distinguishes between two dialectically related stages: the period from 1949 to 1978, with its fully planned economy, becomes the stage of revolution, while the period from 1978 to the present is the stage of reform (Wang Yunjing and Yang 1994, 102–3). Distinct, yes, but also intimately connected with one another in light of seeking truth from the facts of specific conditions. As Xi Jinping observes: ‘Although the two historical phases are very different in their guiding thoughts, principles, policies, and practical work, they are by no means separated from or opposed to each other’. Thus, ‘we should neither negate the pre-reform-and-opening-up phase in comparison with the post-reform-and-opening-up phase, nor the converse (Xi 2014a, Vol. 1:22–23; 2014b, Vol. 1:24–25; see also Wang W. 2014, 16–17).

### *The Wild 90s*

The second matter that arises from the 2013 decision on deepening reform is – as I have indicated – more implicit. It concerns the spate of problems and contradictions that emerged particularly in the 1990s, which I describe as the ‘wild 90s’. The new contradictions that arose were indeed profound and multiple. In terms of the economic base, a disjuncture emerged between the productive forces and relations of production. As Zan Jiansen (2015, 43) summarises: the leading role of the public economy (SOEs) began to be weakened; labour conditions took a turn for the worse, with a significant rise in labour unrest; income distribution became unbalanced, with a rapidly rising Gini coefficient; the resolute emphasis on economic growth began to have disastrous effects on the health of land, water, and air. At a superstructural level, a break emerged between the Communist Party and the people, with widespread corruption, ignorance of the basics of Marxism among some leading cadres, and widespread mistrust.<sup>6</sup> Further, there was a large grey area between the letter of the law and actual practice. One could get away with much, but as long it did not lead to social unrest, the police would let the situation be. As Zan observes: ‘These problems have seriously eroded the mass base and the foundation of political

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<sup>6</sup> A story from Xi Jinping’s early days as a regional governor illustrate the problem. Xi and other local party leaders were heading to a meeting and their car became bogged in a field. The local farmers initially came over to help, but when they saw it was a car with local CPC officials, the farmers began throwing rocks. Xi relates that this experience made him realise that deep-seated reform of the Party was needed.

power of our Party, seriously damaging the Party's image and the relationship between cadres and the masses' (Zan 2015, 44). Strong medicine was needed.

Zan also identifies the rise of ideological diversity in light of these problems, dominated by right and left tendencies. The most significant was what Chinese scholars call 'historical nihilism', which entails the following suggestions: Marxism was outdated and socialism had 'failed' (after 1989 in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union); the CPC was an aberration in Chinese history; fawning on foreign powers; and the denial of or 'farewell' to the revolution (Wang H. 2009; Zhu J. 2016, 32). In sum, this was a moment of historical amnesia. While there were concerted efforts to show that such historical nihilism was another face of bourgeois liberalism, with its roots in the soil of historical idealism (Thesis Group of the Marxism Research Institute, CASS 2009, 95–96), it also had a number of offshoots.

Most significant were the challenges to Marxist political economy as the guide for China's development, and its replacement by Western neoclassical economic theories. Indeed, there was a time when more and more economics departments in universities turned away from Marxism and taught neoclassical economic theory as the basis for China's Reform and Opening-Up. The landmark article that challenged the drift and set in train a wholesale restoration of Marxist economic theory was by Liu Guoguang (2005). At the same time, there was a comprehensive assessment of the failures of neoliberal economic policies, which noted the ten years of economic destruction in Russia and Eastern Europe, the lost ten years for South America, Japan's creeping decade, slowdowns in United States and Europe, all of which led to the initial crash of 2007-2008 – to which we can now add the massive crash of 2020 (Thesis Group of the Marxism Research Institute, CASS 2009, 94–95).

In terms of political ideology, there were pushes to adopt the trappings of a Western capitalist state, with its antagonistic political parties and bourgeois 'civil society' (Wang Yicheng 2013). But the idea that had most traction for a time was democratic socialism. Although the term may seem appealing, with its conjunction of 'democracy' and 'socialism', Chinese Marxists saw its danger. It was, they argued, a capitalist ideology, with a mixture of economic components based on private property. Apparent political and ideological pluralism ensured that the capitalist system remained the basis. Ultimately, it denied the guiding position of Marxism and negated the centrality of the Communist Party, and asserted the eternity of capitalism. In short, democratic socialism has nothing to do with socialism, let alone scientific socialism as the basis of socialism with Chinese

characteristics (Thesis Group of the Marxism Research Institute, CASS 2009, 97–98; Wang F. 2015, 35).

Many were the other proposals, whether ‘universal values’, which were really anti-communist and thoroughly bourgeois (CPC Central Committee 2006; Thesis Group of the Marxism Research Institute, CASS 2009, 98–99); or a ‘new enlightenment’ humanistic reading of the young Marx with a focus on depoliticised ‘human liberation’; or the dead-end of post-modernism (Dirlik and Zhang 2000), which not only reflected the decline of the West through seeking a utopian and individualistic ‘poetic dwelling-place’ and its associated ‘identity politics’, but also – through its suspicions of science and the state – implicitly denied the path of Chinese modernisation and rejuvenation (Chen X., at al. 2016, 6, 13–17). Conversely, there was also a response in a rather different direction, entailing a recuperation of traditional Confucian values in order to fill what was felt to be a vacuum of ‘values’. While the wave of new Confucian studies emphasised harmony as the key component, critics pointed out that such harmony also entailed feudal hierarchies (Wang F. 2015, 29). Indeed, as Wang Fumin (2015, 34) also points out, many of these proposals took as their underlying aim the need ‘save’ China. One wonders, of course, from what China needed to be saved.

The problems – or, rather, contradictions – of the ‘wild gos’ were many and deep, and Chinese scholars and policy makers were certainly not afraid to address them directly. But it was precisely these contradictions that led many in the West (unfortunately with a significant number of Marxists among them<sup>7</sup>) to assume that China was following a capitalist and bourgeois liberal path (Zhou X. 2016, 3). Marxists, liberals, and conservatives seemed to be on the same page, although their judgements differed. Foreign and mostly Western Marxists bemoaned or denounced what they saw as China’s ‘capitalist’ path, deploying all manner of betrayal narratives and conspiracy theories with their coded languages. Not a little Orientalism infused such misperceptions. Liberals, on the other hand, sought to cheer China onward, assuming that the supposedly ‘capitalist’ direction of China would eventually lead to what they saw as the necessary corollary of a capitalist political system and bourgeois liberalisation.

They were and are wrong, but why? The answer has three dimensions, the first of which concerns the distinction between two paths of reform. One path is to move from socialism to capitalism, which is what happened in Eastern Europe in the 1980s (even if it was not initially intended); the other path is reform along the socialist path (Jiang Z. 1989,

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<sup>7</sup> To restrict ourselves to Marxist commentators, hypotheses included ‘capitalist socialism’, ‘bureaucratic capitalism’, ‘neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics’, ‘capitalism with Chinese characteristics’, and ‘state capitalism’. For a rebuttal of these misrepresentations, see Boer and Yan (In Press).

64–65; Xue 1995, 33). The capitalist path has its own internal contradiction already foreseen by Deng Xiaoping, between the ‘left’, which sought to resist the supposed capitalist path by advocating a winding back of the Reform and Opening-Up and a return to the Cultural Revolution, and the ‘right’, which advocated a complete process of capitalist transformation and bourgeois liberalisation (Lu 2005, 60–61). Or, as Zhou Xincheng (2018, 16) observes: ‘If we talk only about socialism without reform, socialism will become lifeless and have no future. If we talk only about reform and do not adhere to socialism, socialism will lose its inherent essential characteristics and turn into capitalism’. Obviously, the path taken is reform as a way to deal with the internal contradictions – between forces and relations of production and between economic base and superstructure – of socialist construction. An insightful way of putting this distinction between two paths of reform is in terms of ‘what to change’ and ‘what not to change’: what should be reformed are contradictions within the task of socialist construction; what should not be changed is the overall socialist system. However, reform is not an end in itself: ‘We do not reform for reform's sake’, for ‘reform is to adjust the relations of production with the aim of promoting the development of productive forces’ (Zhou X. 2016, 6).

Second, a distinction needs to be made between incidental (or cyclical) and systemic. The mistake by the critics who saw China's path as capitalist is to confuse incidental or cyclical problems with those that are systemic (Lo 2007, 121–22, 129, 149). Thus, the problems of social and labour unrest, rural migrant workers in the cities, the gap between rich and poor, disjunction between the CPC and the masses (with associated corruption), environmental degradation – these and more were of an incidental nature at a certain stage of the Reform and Opening-Up. They were certainly not systemic. Thus, the way to solve these problems was not to wind back the Reform and Opening-Up, but to take it further.

Third, the deeper philosophical approach is to bring contradiction analysis (and thus dialectical materialism) to the fore. In this context, the eternal nature of contradictions is a given (from Mao Zedong, but ultimately from Engels (Kong 2016, 13)), as is the basic underlying contradiction – also in socialist construction – between the forces and relations of production (Zan 2015, 42). But I would like to focus on the insight from dialectical materialism on the primacy of internal contradictions and the need for such contradictions to be resolved through internal processes (Jiang Y. 1990, 9; Chi 2018, 8–9). As we saw in the first chapter, the initial problems were those of stagnating economic performance after a few decades of an exclusively planned economy. While such an approach initially enabled the liberation of the forces of production by removing the

ownership of productive forces from former landlord and capitalist bosses, after time it lead to new bottlenecks that had to be addressed in light of China's internal conditions. More specifically, the relations of production entailed in an exclusively planned economy no longer met the needs of developing productive forces, so that the latter began to stagnate. Hence the Reform and Opening-Up, which sought not only to release the forces of production from their restrictions, but also to adapt the relations of production to new productive developments. In turn, this process led to new contradictions as productive forces leapt ahead. This was the case particularly in the 'wild 90s', which continued to have implications into the early 2000s. The answer, however, was not a winding back of the Reform and Opening-Up, but a deepening of the process itself (Zan 2015, 43).

This emphasis on the Reform and Opening-Up as an internal dialectical process enables us to understand the role of external factors. These include the shock dismantling of the Soviet Union, which posed – at many levels – the question, 'Whither socialism?' (Zheng and Hong 2014, 4), as well as the developments of capitalist countries that had adopted neoliberal policies from the late 1970s. While these developments no doubt had an influence, with Chinese researchers studying them in great detail, they were not determinative of China's own socialist path.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, we can see the logic of deepening reform as an answer to the internal and incidental contradictions of the 'wild 90s'. As Zhou Xincheng observes:

Acknowledging that there are still contradictions in socialist society, it logically follows that they must be solved through reform. Moreover, once a contradiction is resolved, new contradictions will arise, which need to be solved through reform. It is in the process of constantly emerging contradictions and resolving them through reform that socialist society has developed. Therefore, reform is an eternal topic in socialist society. Reform is only ongoing, not complete (Zhou X. 2018, 14; see also Fang J. 2014, 62).<sup>9</sup>

The facts speak for themselves: a decreasing Gini coefficient in light of both the resolute poverty alleviation program and the growth of a middle-income group to almost 600 million; the most extensive anti-corruption campaign since Mao Zedong; the rolling out of a comprehensive social security system on a sound economic basis (Fang J. 2014, 65); the restoration of the unity, focus, and Marxist-orientation of the CPC, which has re-earned public trust; more than 90 percent of the population now confident in the direction in which China is going; and the comprehensive project of ecological civilisation, in which

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<sup>8</sup> Thus, the Western Marxist hypothesis (Brink 2008; Panitch and Gindin 2013) that a monolithic global capitalism determined China's moves from the late 1970s misses the dialectical point arising from contradiction analysis.

<sup>9</sup> By now it should be obvious that the Reform and Opening-Up is not an extended version of the Soviet Union's brief step backwards with the New Economic Policy (NEP) of the 1920s.

China – through typical ‘Chinese speed’ – is now leading the world. The list can go on, but now we are witnessing a whole new development of productive forces, in which government, SOEs, and private enterprises are instigating a synergised digital transformation that simply cannot be found anywhere else in the world. Yet, in China they do not celebrate too much, for the decision on deepening reform warns that China has entered ‘deep waters’, requiring concerted effort as it moves forward.

## Opening Up

Let us now turn to the ‘opening-up [*kaifang*]

 part of the slogan. In this case, the emphasis is mostly on the international dimension, although it has ramifications for internal processes. My focus is on the relations between socialism and capitalism, which will lead to a treatment of how Marxist class analysis has been redeployed.

Recalling that contradiction analysis emphasises both unity and struggle, I draw on two perceptive articles that identify the layers of such an analysis (Rong 2002; Shang 2004). They begin by pointing out that in terms of international relations between socialist systems like that of China and capitalist systems, one must always keep in mind that the two systems are fundamentally opposed. Ultimately this opposition comes out in favour of socialism, which is both better than a capitalist system and the only way that China can be saved and develop (Deng 1979a, 166–67; 1979c, 175–76). We should not, however, jump to the conclusion that on a global level we can have either socialism or capitalism, and not both. This assumption would entail deploying a typical Western either-or perspective. Instead, the Chinese approach is to argue that the two systems also have distinct connections.

The most obvious of these concerns science and technology: already with Deng Xiaoping, we find the arguments that science and technology are also forces of production, and that China should learn as much as possible from scientific and technological developments in capitalist countries to as to advance its own interests (Deng 1979a, 167–68; 1979c, 176–77; 1992b, 373; 1992a, 361–62). Crucially, science and technology may have made significant progress within capitalist systems in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but this historical reality does not make them ‘capitalist’ by nature (Deng 1980b, 351; 1980a, 348). Here our authors – following Deng Xiaoping – deploy a version of the old *zhongti-xiyong* saying: Chinese substance, Western know-how. Proposed in the second half of the nineteenth century,<sup>10</sup> it was an effort to deal with the intractable problems of

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<sup>10</sup> The fuller version initially came from Zhang Zhidong (in *Quanxue pian* of 1898) as *zhongxue wei ti, xixue wei yong*: Chinese learning as the fundamental structure, Western learning for practical use. The formulae expressed an effort to mediate a debate that had been raging for some time between those who sought to

how to relate to a technologically more advanced 'West' while not betraying China's richer cultural and historical heritage. The relatively few countries that comprised the 'West' (all former colonisers and comprising only 14 percent of the world's population) were seen to have little to no cultural substance worth adopting, but much technical knowledge and experience. The problem already then was how to avoid the corrosive and corrupting influences that came from the West while making the most of its then more advanced science and technology. As one would expect, the problem itself and its succinct four-character expression have been the topic of immense debate in China for more than a century.

With Deng Xiaoping we find the beginnings of a new approach to this old problem. Deng clarifies again and again that engagements with Western capitalist countries would include science and technology, controlled levels of foreign investment, and opening up trade with those countries, but that all of these these would take place in terms of the socialist road. Here Fang Keli's famous recalibration of the famous saying is pertinent, since it brings out what Deng Xiaoping was seeking to express. For Fang Keli (2006; 2015), it should be not merely *zhongti xiyong*, Chinese substance and Western know-how, but *mahun zhongti xiyong*: the spirit of Marxism, the system of China and the application of the West. In other words, Marxism provides the overarching spirit and framework in which one can understand the role of Chinese substance and Western technological prowess. To be added here is the fact that Fang Keli was responding to debates raging in the 'wild gos'. On the one side were the modern neo-Confucians (with whom he was identified), who urged a ditching of Marxism and a recovery of the Confucian value of harmony within the framework of hierarchy. On the other side were those who argued that capitalism was better than socialism and that China should embrace capitalist modernisation and bourgeois liberalisation. These approaches we have already encountered, but it was Fang Keli's proposal – initially made in 2006 – that won wide approval and is seen to have resolved the debate.

That was the debate in the 1990s and into the early 2000s, when it was still assumed that China lagged behind Western capitalist countries – due to China beginning the process of modernisation far behind the West. As I write, however, it has become increasingly apparent that the former colonisers known as the 'West' have lost their innovative edge, which was actually based on plundering technological advances from other countries (a colonialist model), or at least seeking to clone or crush competition. In our time, technological innovation has clearly shifted East, so much so that Western

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reject Western models and those who wanted a fuller 'Westernisation'.

countries are increasing lagging behind and even backward (although some are now beginning to realise this reality).

A further dimension of international engagement with capitalist countries leads to another contradiction, now between self-reliance and globalisation. In the early days of the People's Republic, the reality of economic blockades led Mao's emphasis on independent and self-reliant socialist construction, relying on the strength of the Chinese people (Shang 2004, 12). At least this was true in relation to capitalist countries with their relatively advanced technologies. China did have close connections with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, until the Sino-Soviet split of the 1960s. However, the turn inward led to an exacerbation of China's economic stagnation and backwardness. From the late 1970s, the emphasis was that China could not rebuild itself behind closed doors and so it sought closer cooperation with developed capitalist countries so as to make up for the widening gap in economic development and technological innovation. 'The modern world is an open world', observed Deng Xiaoping (1984d, 64; see also 1985b, 117), and the path of history is for ever greater integration and interaction (Xi 2018, 11).<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, China will never again depend on another country for its socialist development, since it will depend on its own efforts, hard work, and creativity. The point here is both retrospective and prospective: the long history of humiliation and semi-colonisation by foreign powers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has made China resolute in maintaining its sovereignty and brooking no interference. This position also entails no interference by China in any other country's internal system, a principle embodied in the Belt and Road Initiative. Prospectively, the increasing cooperation with other countries – including capitalist ones – is mutual: as China develops, its increasing economic strength will benefit others and contribute to global economy and culture (Deng 1984j, 78–79; 1984g, 86). We may put it this way: global interaction through self-reliance; win-win (*gongying*) through anti-colonial sovereignty; 'neither dependent [*yifu*] on others, nor plundering [*lüeduo*] others' (Xi 2018, 11; see also Rong 2002, 23; Shang 2004, 12).

That said, China still has a long way to go in its international engagement. As Chen Shuguang (2018, 11, 15) observes, China's economic strength may now be the main driver of global economies, but its cultural and discursive power remains relatively weak. To deploy the Marxist distinction between base and superstructure, mutual cooperation at the

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<sup>11</sup> The reference is to Xi Jinping's key text on Marxism, delivered as a speech on the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 2018, celebrating the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Marx's birth (see Chapter Nine). On this matter, Xi Jinping quotes from *The German Ideology*: 'the more the original isolation of the separate nationalities is destroyed by the advanced mode of production, by intercourse and by the natural division of labour between various nations arising as a result, the more history becomes world history' (Marx and Engels 1845a, 45; 1845b, 50–51).

economic level is relatively easier and follows a global path (as Marx and Engels already saw) of ever greater integration. By contrast, mutual understanding at a superstructural level – politics, culture, ideology – is more difficult and will take much longer (Boer 2020, 1).

## Class Analysis

Closely related to the question of opening-up to developed capitalist countries is that of class analysis. A casual observer may feel that China has put aside class analysis, especially since the chaotic and traumatic Cultural Revolution's emphasis on class conflict as the primary contradiction. The decision of the CPC Central Committee (2006) on a 'harmonious socialist society [*shehuizhuyi shehui hexie*]' may add to this impression, especially if one assumes that harmony is incompatible with contradiction. Internationally, peaceful co-existence, win-win cooperation, and a community of common destiny for humankind, may suggest that the struggle between socialist and capitalist systems is over, or at least that the desire is to relegate this struggle to the past. These perceptions are mistaken, for class analysis remains an important feature of Chinese Marxist analysis, both internally and externally.

Internally, class analysis is deployed to understand developments during the Reform and Opening-Up. To set the scene: in the aftermath of the 'wild 90s' it became reasonably common to see international observers – including some Marxists – suggest that China was seeing the rise of a new 'bourgeoisie' or 'middle class'. Led by an increasing number of wealthy entrepreneurs, this group's numbers swelled quickly and they would – so it was hypothesised – at some point enact a bourgeois revolution and seize power, turning China into a capitalist state with bourgeois democracy. This perception gained China significant support among capitalist countries, giving it space to grow at 'Chinese speed', but it is a profound misreading.

The reality is quite different: the almost 600 million people whose living standards have been drastically improved are urban and rural workers. These improvements are the result of liberating the forces of production and its associated targeted poverty alleviation program. The latter has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty, which constitutes 7 out of 10 worldwide who have escaped poverty (World Bank 2019, 1). By the dawn of 2021 absolute poverty (based on the need for less than 0.1 percent) will have been eradicated. Being lifted out of poverty is one step, but seeing one's livelihood improve to the level of *xiaokang* – moderately well-off, healthy, and secure – is another. It is these people who are now called in China the 'middle-income' group, with immense capacity as

an internal economic driver. As I write during the extraordinary year of 2020, this reality has enabled China to become the global recovery engine after the pandemic.

But do they comprise a new 'bourgeoisie' or 'middle class'? No, for the terms are redolent with the history of capitalist systems in Western Europe. In that part of the world, the bourgeoisie arose in towns where they engaged in manufacture and trade. While they pressured governments – many of them absolute monarchies – to enact legal reforms, construct infrastructure, and establish firm borders with uniform policies, they were ultimately opposed to such forms of governance. Through a series of bourgeois revolutions – from the 16th-century Netherlands onward – they took political power, established secular capitalist states, and gradually introduced bourgeois parliamentary democracy, or the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie. This history is not China's history, which has followed its own path. In China, the middle-income group is clearly aware of the core role of CPC policies in improving their livelihoods and they are overwhelmingly supportive of the CPC and confident in the direction in which China is going. Indeed, a sizeable portion of them are members of the almost 100 million strong CPC.

Questions remain, concerning the wealthy private entrepreneurs, party officials who leveraged their positions for corrupt gain, and low-paid migrant workers (Dong and Wu 2011, 60). During the 'wild 90s' and into the early 2000s, there was increasing concern that private entrepreneurs, many of them new billionaires, would form a new political force outside the CPC. Not only have they never become a class 'in itself', with associated class consciousness, but they have by and large become CPC members or non-party supporters. Further, the overwhelming expectation in Chinese society is that one has benefited from wider support (family and society), then one's turn must come to contribute to the well-being of others. We may call this philanthropy with Chinese characteristics, since it is not based on individual will or a guilt conscience, but on an inescapable social and cultural assumption. As for corrupt CPC officials, these have been comprehensively eradicated in the most resolute 'tigers and flies' anti-corruption campaign since the time of Mao Zedong. Migrant workers: while my earlier observations on rural and urban workers being lifted out of poverty applies here, the problem of migrant workers and their 'left-behind' children in rural areas was a topic of major social and policy concern even ten years ago. The solution is typically Chinese: with a refocus on rural regeneration, the countryside has begun to provide more and more opportunities, so much so that a good number of technically trained and educated young people – agricultural specialists, teachers, medical professionals, and so on – have been increasingly moving to the countryside for work. At the same time, the migrant workers who have so many jobs in the cities are now the focus of policies ranging from safe and convenient

transport, housing, adequate care for their children, and reform of the residency system (*hokou*) to enable their families to move to cities where needed. In short, in the same way that there is no European-style 'bourgeoisie' in China, so also there is no 'working class' opposed to them. In fact, according to classifications in China, everyone is a 'labourer [*laodongzhe*]', with each type of work carefully specified. A 'worker [*gongren*]' is one who works in a factory, which is one type of labourer.

Let us turn to the underlying philosophical questions, shaped in terms of contradiction analysis. The first step is to recall Mao Zedong's (1957b; 1957c) distinction between contradictions among the people and with external hostile forces. Internal contradictions are primarily non-antagonistic, but also – due to external efforts to stir up trouble – need to be managed so they remain non-antagonistic. Further, given that contradictions will be a feature of the long socialist stage, these contradictions will be manifested in terms of different classes for a long time to come (Dong and Wu 2011, 62). But they are not to lead to polarisation and class conflict, upon which capitalist states and their political systems are erected. It is for this reason that we find the development not of the antagonistic political parties typical of capitalist states, but of 'consultative multi-party democracy' in China, operating through consultation, cooperation, and debate.

Perhaps more pertinent is the core dialectical point concerning the identity and struggle of opposites. As we saw earlier, Mao Zedong followed Lenin in proposing that identify is temporary, but struggle is permanent. In light of the development of the Reform and Opening-Up and as an answer to the problems of the 'wild 90s', we find the landmark decision of the CPC Central Committee on developing a harmonious socialist society. The text stipulates that 'social harmony is the essential attribute of socialism with Chinese characteristics', entailing that such a society is 'democratic, ruled by law, fair and just, honest and friendly, full of vitality, stable and orderly, and harmonious between human beings and nature (CPC Central Committee 2006, 1). The philosophical implication is that the emphasis in the contradiction has shifted, from struggle to identity. As Chen Xueming observes (2015, 3), this development has 'changed the "relative" status of identity in contradiction'. Thus, Marxist philosophy has 'developed from advocating the combative nature of contradiction to emphasising the identity of contradiction'.

The identity of opposites may be the emphasis in China today, but this does not mean that struggle has disappeared. Internally, we see such struggle in the agitations in the Hong Kong SAR, whose capitalist system means that class struggle dominates, or in the Xinjiang and Tibet autonomous regions, or indeed on Taiwan island, where externally supported separatism is on a cyclical rise. But these are 'cards' played by both former

European colonial powers and especially the last European colonial power, the United States. In seeking to stir up trouble and vainly hope for the breaking up of China, we are in the realm of class analysis on an international level. While Chinese analysts are keen to emphasise peaceful coexistence and development (Chen X. 2015, 3), based on a community of common destiny for humankind, they are under no illusions concerning the agenda of some external capitalist forces.

From the founding of the People's Republic, there have been waves of attempts to restrict China's rejuvenation, keep it in a 'backward' and subservient state, or dismantle it as a whole. Witness the economic and political blockade by former colonisers in the 1950s and 1960s, or the round of sanctions after the attempted 'colour revolution' in Tiananmen Square after 1989 (Losurdo 2015, 191–94), or the desperate last-ditched effort by a rapidly fading United States in the 2020s. Obviously, the Chinese are well-accustomed to such efforts and know well how to deal with them. But let us distinguish between the economic base and superstructural elements. Economically, colonial capitalist powers have alternated between trying to restrict or contain China, or cajole it into following a capitalist path (for example, admitting China to the World Trade Organisation). In terms of superstructure, some of the items mentioned earlier under the 'wild gos' are applicable. These include the promotion of 'universal values', an unchangeable 'human nature', historical nihilism, and democratic socialism – all of which may be summed up as 'bourgeois liberalisation'. The assumption by former colonisers that Chinese people hanker after such liberalisation and its elusive values is a profound misreading of the Chinese situation, for the simple fact is that that they can see that liberal freedoms actually constitute 'a community of the free and its dictatorship over people's unworthy of liberty' (Losurdo 2011, 248). Both economic and superstructural efforts continue to fail, although China remains on guard against their potentially corrosive influences.

This is where class analysis comes to the fore, since these struggles are ultimately class struggles (Zhu J. 2016, 38–39; Mei 2018, 38–39). International bullying, 'waging a world war without gun smoke', seeking neo-colonial hegemony – these and more are the weapons of class struggle waged periodically by a few capitalist countries on China, among others. China's refusal to be intimidated or deviate from its path comes from a long experience of dealing with such international class oppression against socialism (Deng 1989d; 1989c; 1989b; 1989a). Where does this leave the core philosophical category of the identity and struggle of opposites? Obviously, it is not simply a shift from struggle to identity, from anti-colonial struggle to 'peaceful coexistence'. Identity has an increased emphasis, both internally and externally, but it cannot be separated from the reality of struggle.

## One Country, Two Systems

Earlier, I intimated that Hong Kong SAR (and indeed Taiwan island) are manifestations of class struggle, both internally and externally. Both parts of China have capitalist systems, in which class struggle is inescapable. Both are also sites of imperialist efforts to interfere with China's internal affairs and are thus manifestations of international class struggle. At the same time, Hong Kong SAR and Taiwan island, along with Macao SAR, embody a clear deployment of contradiction analysis in terms of 'one country, two systems'. Since Deng Xiaoping was the architect of this unique policy, my primary references are to his explication of the practice, albeit with an eye on the philosophical implications.

To begin with, Deng Xiaoping specifies (1984m, 101; 1984c, 107; 1987a, 218; 1987b, 217) that the 'one country, two systems' concept 'should be attributed to Marxist dialectical materialism and historical materialism', as this tradition has been developed in China. More specifically, contradiction analysis is the key, in terms of the way socialist and capitalist systems can work together non-antagonistically within one country. Here some terminological clarification is needed: the four-character phrase reads *yiguo-liangzhi*. This is a shortened version of the original formula, *yi ge guojia, liang zhong zhidu*, or one country, two types of systems (Deng 1984k; 1984f). The 'one country' refers to China as a distinct sovereign state, with its inviolable borders, political structure and social structure; 'two types of systems [*zhidu*]' means specifically two socio-economic systems. *Zhidu* (制度) is the key, for it has – as noted earlier – the senses of system, or an over-arching framework with a primarily economic reference. Thus, China has a socialist system, while Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR and Taiwan island have capitalist systems. It is important to understand this specific terminology, for it is often misunderstood outside China. For example, former colonisers such as the UK misinterpret 'one country, two systems' as referring to two political structures, two forms of governance. Thus, Hong Kong – they believe – follows a Western bourgeois model, while the mainland follows a system of socialist democracy, or the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>12</sup> Clearly, this is a mistake: for Deng Xiaoping and his comrades, the systems (*zhidu*) refer primarily to socio-economic realities, and not to the political and territorial questions of a state.

<sup>12</sup> We can see such a mistake in the perceptions of the 2020 national security law for Hong Kong SAR, with Anglophone countries that were part of the British Empire misinterpreting it in purely political terms (Quanguo renmin daibiao dahui 2020). By contrast, in China and in many formerly colonised countries, the national security law is described as Hong Kong's 'second return'. This understanding should come as no surprise, since the British stole Hong Kong from China as part of the Opium Wars and tried to prevent and booby-trap the whole process during negotiations in the 1980s. For a detailed history of the negotiations, see the long footnote in the third volume of Deng Xiaoping's selected works (pp. 373-76).

However, the systems do not have equal status in two respects: first, socialist China permits a few 'special regions [*teshu diqu*]' to retain their capitalist systems for quite some time, perhaps even for a century; second, the main part of the country continues under socialism (Deng 1987a, 219; 1987b, 218; see also 1984k, 59; 1984f, 69). In other words, a sovereign one country is the dominant and determining category,<sup>13</sup> and this one country follows a socialist system (*zhidu*) within which the capitalist systems (*zhidu*) of Hong Kong SAR, Macao SAR, and Taiwan island play a subordinate role. The philosophical point that arises here concerns the internal relations between the opposites of a dialectic: as Mao Zedong already specified, one side of a contradiction is always dominant, while the other is subordinate. Even so, this contradiction must be managed not only so that damage from the subordinate side is contained, but also so that it can contribute the socialist whole of China (Li, Zhang, and Li 1994, 59; He and Wang 2015, 21). This point is even more pertinent to Taiwan island, 'which the United States regards as its unsinkable aircraft carrier' (Deng 1984l, 86; 1984h, 93). While the proposal for the policy in relation to Taiwan indicates even greater flexibility, so much so that the island could even keep its armed forces for a time, Deng also indicates what became a consistent policy: the mainland would never give up the option – if necessary – of using non-peaceful means for normalising the situation with Taiwan island (Deng 1984i, 49; 1984a, 59; 1984l, 86–87; 1984h, 93).

Deng also deliberated at length on questions of governance and potential disturbances in Hong Kong SAR. He was fully aware that Hong Kong as a colony never had a Western-style bourgeois democracy. Further, such a parliamentary approach, which arose in the specific conditions of Europe, does not transfer well to other parts of the world: 'no Western system can be copied in toto', and one should certainly not judge whether Hong Kong is 'democratic' or not in terms of whether or not it has copied such a model (Deng 1987a, 220; 1987b, 218–19). We can now see that the efforts to impose bourgeois democracy on former colonies has either failed or led to another form that may be called 'colonial democracy'. More of that elsewhere, suffice to note here that Deng also specifies that the administrators of Hong Kong SAR should be competent, committed to China as a whole, and that the process of selecting such administrators should undergo a twofold process involving initial elections and then appointment by the central government (Deng 1984b, 74; 1984e, 82; 1987a, 220; 1987b, 219).

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<sup>13</sup> In the chapter on sovereignty and human rights, we will see that such sovereignty is a distinctly new anti-colonial form, predicated on inviolability and non-interference. Deng asserted this position very clearly in negotiations over Hong Kong SAR (Deng 1982b, 12; 1982a, 23; 1984l, 84; 1984h, 91).

In regard to potential disturbances, another feature of contradiction analysis arises, now in terms of the identity and struggle of opposites. While the ‘one country, two systems’ approach focuses on identity (Fan 2000, 2), on mutual benefit in which things that oppose each other also complement one another (*xiangfan-xiangcheng*), Deng knew well enough that the struggle of opposites would not disappear (Zhou Y. 1997, 127). Concretely, he knew that external and internal forces may well seek to create trouble in the period leading up to Hong Kong’s return to China, as well as afterwards. Apart from the British negotiators threatening a ‘disastrous effect [*zainanxing de yingxiang*]’, he also foresaw anti-communist forces within and without seeking to use Hong Kong SAR as a lever to cause trouble elsewhere on the mainland – as had already happened in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The answer: if needed, intervention from the Central government would be more than appropriate to maintain peace and stability, especially if such disturbances involved sabotage and separatism (Deng 1982b, 14; 1982a, 25; 1984b, 73–75; 1984e, 81–83; 1987a, 220–21; 1987b, 219–20).

As I write, the ‘one country, two systems’ approach to Hong SAR, Macao SAR, and Taiwan island may seem like a well-established practice – albeit misinterpreted by some former colonisers. At the time, it was clearly a breakthrough, ‘something new, without precedent in world history’. Deng saw it as a unique deployment of contradiction analysis, in contrast to capitalist countries that play a zero-sum game in relation to socialism and seek imperialist hegemony (Quan 2008, 23). Indeed, Deng hoped that this policy would have global ramifications, especially for other developing countries with whom China has a particularly close connection (Deng 1987a, 215; 1987b, 214; 1984k, 59; 1984f, 69; 1990b, 352; 1990a, 340).

Throughout this brief explication of the breakthrough ‘one country, two systems’ policy, I have sought to draw out the philosophical points arising from contradiction analysis. These include the reality of two systems functioning within one distinct entity, the primacy of one aspect of a contradiction over the other, and the reality of both identity and struggle between the opposites. As is so often the case with Deng Xiaoping, these philosophical points arise from between the lines, from the practical considerations of Chinese reunification, although he was aware of the precedent set with potential global ramifications. There is one further feature of contradiction analysis to be mentioned: it invokes a Chinese concept with a significant pedigree: ‘one divides into two [*yifenweier*]’. This concept can also be found in another key concept of the Reform and Opening-Up, to which I now turn.

## Conclusion: One Central Task and Two Basic Points

I have left until last this distinctly Chinese formulation in relation to the Reform and Opening-Up: ‘one central task and two basic points [*yi ge zhongxin, liang ge jibendian*]’ (Deng 1992b, 370; 1992a, 358–59; see also Jiang Z. 1992, 2–3, 5). To wit: the central task is to focus on economic development and improvement of people’s lives, while the two basic points concern adherence to the Four Cardinal Principles and adherence to the Reform and Opening-Up (Zhao 1987, 4–5). Obviously much is contained in this brief formulation, but before elaborating on its dialectical features, let me note a slight reformulation in terms of ‘two aspects and one key point [*liangdianlun he zhongdianlun*]’ (Jiang X. 2018, 2; Li C. 2009, 150). Why the change? It indicates a clearer continuity with Mao Zedong’s explication of dialectics at the intersection between Chinese tradition and Marxist philosophy. Not only did he speak of ‘two aspects [*liangdianlun*]’ in relation to the *yin-yang* relationship in Chinese philosophy (Mao 1956b, 320; 1956a, 340), albeit as a metaphysical precursor to the materialist dialectics of Marxism, but he also invoked the essence of dialectics in terms of ‘one divides into two [*yifenweier*]’ (Mao 1957d, 332–33; 1957a, 516; see also 1937a; 1937b; Xia and Chen 2009, 1379).<sup>14</sup> We may identify two traditions behind this formulation. One stems from traditional Chinese philosophy, clearly expressed by Zhu Xi (1130-1200 CE) of the Song dynasty: ‘The master thinks that one divides into two [*yiweifener*], two into four, four into eight ... He pointed to the heart of the fan with his hand, and said, “There is only one principle, divided into two [*fen wei liangge*]”’ (Zhu Xi 1986, 105).<sup>15</sup> The other comes from Lenin’s engagement with Hegel in 1914, where he writes of the ‘splitting of a single whole and the cognition of its contradictory parts ... is the essence ... of dialectics’ (Lenin 1915a, 316; 1915b, 357). As we saw in the previous chapter, it was primarily from Lenin that Mao Zedong developed the idea in the 1930s. As he did so, Mao turned Chinese philosophy over and placed it firmly on its materialist feet – to borrow a metaphor Marx used in relation to Hegel.

To return to Deng Xiaoping: the ‘one central task’ is to focus on economic development by liberating the forces of production. Since I have discussed this topic in the first chapter and will return to it (from another angle) in the next, I will not address it here.

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<sup>14</sup> During the 1960s there was a somewhat heated debate over ‘one divides into two’ versus ‘two unites into one’. A useful summary from the *Beijing Review* is provided by Li Xue (1972). The concept has a two-edged dimension in Mao’s thought: although he spoke it being the essence of philosophy, he also deployed it in launching the Cultural Revolution in order to focus on ‘class struggle as the key’. Our sources in relation to this material, however, are unreliable since they were published by Red Guards at unknown locations (Mao 1964a; 1964b; 1965b; 1965a).

<sup>15</sup> Precursors may be found in the *Xici* 1.11 section of the *Yijing* (available at <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang>).

My concern is with the ‘two basic points’, with the Reform and Opening-Up and the Four Cardinal Principles. These two prongs aim to counter ‘leftist’ and ‘rightist’ tendencies in relation to the project of economic development. The Reform and Opening-Up itself (the topic of the chapter as a whole) sought to counter the leftist risk, which was very fresh in everyone’s memory due to the chaos and turmoil of the Cultural Revolution. Entailing a hasty and impractical leap to full communism, this leftist deviation meant nothing more than ‘universal poverty [*pubian pinqiong*]’ (Deng 1979a, 165; 1979c, 174). Such leftism neglected the realities of socialist construction in terms of liberating the forces of production, from each according to ability and to each according to work, the importance of initiative and innovation, and the observance of economic laws – in short, the scientific socialism that was a necessary and patient preparation for communism.

The Four Cardinal Principles were targeted at the ‘rightist’ risk. In a key speech delivered in the context of the all-important Third Plenary Session of the CPC’s Eleventh Central Committee, Deng touched on liberating thought, seeking truth from facts, and the focus on socialist modernisation. But his main concern was to identify four ideological and political principles:

1. We must keep to the socialist road [*shehuizhuyi daolu*].
2. We must uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat.
3. We must uphold the leadership of the Communist Party.
4. We must uphold Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (Deng 1979a, 164; 1979c, 174).

None of these points are particularly new, as Deng points out. They are part and parcel of the socialist project. But why identify and emphasise them at this crucial juncture? In the speech Deng identifies the ‘rightist’ deviation as their target: the Reform and Opening-Up may be seen by some as a path to capitalism and bourgeois liberalisation, and thus an abandonment of Marxism-Leninism. While this assumption may come from those of a ‘leftist’ bent, who would see the new project as a turn to the ‘capitalist road’, it was more likely to come from the ‘rightist’ deviation, which would urge full bourgeois liberalisation. In the hindsight of four decades of the Reform and Opening-Up, we can also see the ‘rightist’ deviation is a recurring problem among international observers (unfortunately, with some Marxist among them), who have urged and assumed that China was indeed going down the capitalist road. The Four Cardinal Principles are a clear statement to the contrary: China will not and cannot deviate from the socialist road, which focuses on improving the socio-economic conditions of the masses and is thus ultimately superior to capitalism; the dictatorship of the proletariat as the broadest and thus a higher

form of democracy; the leadership of the Communist Party, since without a Party integrated with the masses socialist construction of the New China would be impossible; and the fine tradition of Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought (and not its deviation into Maoism during the Cultural Revolution). It should be no surprise that the Four Cardinal Principles have been a touchstone ever since Deng's speech, especially since their affirmation in the crucial declaration from 1981, which was the culmination of a few years arduous work (CPC Central Committee 1981, 11, 16).

Thus, the 'two basic points' emphasise the need to manage the contradiction between 'leftist' and 'rightist' deviations, between ill-advised efforts to ignore China's specific conditions in constructing socialism and the capitalist road. However, 'one central task and two basic points' – reformulated as 'two aspects and one key point [*liangdianlun he zhongdianlun*]' – has other dimensions that are ably summarised by Zeng Lingchao (2006, 76): forces and relations of production; public and non-public ownership; Reform and Opening-Up and the dangers of bourgeois liberalisation (with its attendant crime and corruption); sovereignty and opening up to the rest of the world; one country, two systems; opposing 'leftist' and 'rightist' dangers.<sup>16</sup> Not a bad summary of the main topics of the present chapter, although Zeng also emphasises that in any contradiction, one side plays a dominant role, such as forces of production, public ownership, economic development, sovereignty, and one country.

I close on a related note, which captures Deng Xiaoping's practical approach to the dialectics of contradiction analysis. It concerns the concrete image of the 'two hands' (Lu 2005, 62; Kang 2008, 5; He and Wang 2015, 22). For example, one hand should grasp the improvements of the Reform and Opening-Up, while the other hand should 'deal a crushing blow [*yanlidaji*]' to economic crimes (Deng 1989e, 306). Or in relation to economic construction and the legal system, one hand should grasp (*zhua*) each side (Deng 1986c, 154). The same can be said for material and 'spiritual civilisation [*jingshen wenming*]' (Deng 1992b, 379). It will not do for one hand to be 'hard [*ying*]' and the other 'soft [*ruan*]', for 'both hands should be hard [*liang zhi shou dou yao ying*]' (Deng 1992b, 378).<sup>17</sup> This is how the theory of 'two aspects [*liangdianlun*]' actually works (Deng 1989e, 306).

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<sup>16</sup> Zeng also includes: planning and market; material and spiritual civilisation; democracy and rule of law (and legal system); emancipating the mind and seeking truth from facts; distribution according to work and non-distribution according to work; and stability and development (see also Fan 2000, 2).

<sup>17</sup> By the 14<sup>th</sup> congress of the CPC, 'both hands' would become part of government policy (Jiang Z. 1992, 3).

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