

## Change and Continuity in Chinese Values\*

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"Are we not," asked a veteran British missionary in his letter to the London Missionary Society in 1869, "much superior to them [the Chinese]? Are we not more manly, more intelligent, more skillful, more human, more civilized, nay, are we not more estimable in every way? Yes, according to our way of thinking. No, *emphatically* no, according to theirs. And it would be nearly as difficult for us to alter our opinion on the subject as it is for them to alter theirs."<sup>1)</sup> This statement nicely captured the head-on collision between the two separate "worlds," with two distinct claims of superiority based on two different value systems. There could be no meeting of minds, no common frame of reference for peaceful resolution of disputes, in this kind of fundamental value collision. The conflict between the two diametrically opposed images of world order merely waited an opportune moment—and a plausible excuse—for the militarily stronger party to impose its standard and will upon the weaker one.

In the ensuing confrontation between the two world views (since the Opium War), Chinese culture was no match for Western arms. The traditional Chinese world order, institutionalized in the tribute system, was destroyed by the onslaught of the stronger imperialistic West. In

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1) A letter by Griffith John to the London Missionary Society, c. 1869, in R. Wardlaw Thompson, ed., *Griffith John, The Story of Fifty Years in China* (New York: A.C. Armstrong and Sons, 1906), p. 254.

the process a significant portion of Chinese territory was sliced up like a melon as the spoils of victors, or colonized as "concessions" in coastal cities. Sun Yat-sen characterized China under the unequal treaty system as a "hypo-colony"—a grade worse than a semicolony—due to the multiple control and exploitation exercised by the imperial powers.<sup>2)</sup>

How much of traditional values survived the onslaught, how much was retained, revised or transformed in the successive course of nationalistic, Maoist, and Dengist revolutions? Chinese values are reflected (and sometimes deflected) in and through various lenses and mirrors (arts, culture, language, literature, socialization, ideology, and law and politics). This essay examines the particular dimension of values manifested in China's interaction with the outside world. In pursuing this diachronic analysis of value change, I discuss the meaning and functions of values (and norms) in social process as a broad conceptual framework for normative analysis, then examine some salient traditional, Maoist, and Dengist values. The essay concludes with a brief assessment of the future implications of value changes in post-Mao China.

## I. Values and Social Order

The most common meaning of "value" in the Western sociological sense is a criterion that influences selective human behavior by providing evaluative standards of desirable and preferable human conduct. "A *value* is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence."<sup>3)</sup> Values are a frame of reference for all human behavior except a narrow band of the most rigidly instinctive motor behavior. Norms, often used interchangeably

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2) Sun Yat-sen, *San Min Chu I: The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1932), p. 39.

3) Milton Rokeach, *The Nature of Human Values* (New York: Free Press, 1973), p. 5.

with values, refer to specific prescriptive or proscriptive rules of behavior for a particular role or for a particular situation. Values, as general moral and definitional criteria and symbols, can exist independently of any specific situations; norms are role-specific and context-specific modes of preferred behavior. Values, as standards for establishing what should be regarded as desirable, provide the grounds for accepting or rejecting particular norms.

The means/ends distinction is expressed in two kinds of values—instrumental (means) and terminal (ends) values.<sup>4)</sup> Values as empirical components of social process can be conceptualized and analyzed as dependent variables—which change as other variables change; as independent variables—which cause change in social attitude and behavior; and as intervening variables—which lead to action when activated. Values provide epistemological paradigms that perform cognitive, evaluative, explanatory, and prescriptive functions for human selective behavior. Values help us to define the state of the world, to evaluate the meaning of the world so defined, to explain the human condition, and to prescribe a correct line of action.

In spite of a long and rich history of value-centered politics in China, however, there is no Chinese term for “value” that corresponds to the Western social science usage. The Chinese word *jiashi*, which is translated as “value,” has the narrow “scientific” meaning of “price” or “worth,” as commonly used in economic studies (surplus value, market value, commodity value, or exchange of unequal values). Modern mainstream economics in the United States, it should be noted here, has acquired the reputation of a dismal science largely because so many of its theoreticians became committed, as Oscar Wilde once said, to knowing the price of everything and the value of nothing. Even worse is the habit of equating “value” and “price” by defining and measuring the worth of everything, including human beings, in terms of the price

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4) For further elaboration, see *ibid.*, pp. 11~12.

the market system of supply and demand puts on it.

I recall a revealing (shocking, to some) incident at the two-day national symposium on Chinese values held in New York City in late 1977 under the auspices of the Asia Society. As some twenty China specialists were examining the meaning of Chinese values as reflected in China's own arts and literature, in China's past and present, in Chinese law and politics, and in Marxism and Maoism, one participant suddenly interrupted, "What is the Chinese word for value? Does anybody know?" Even though most participants had studied and used Chinese, what followed was like the proverbial testimony of six blind beggars describing an elephant. Organizer and editor Ross Terrill urged everyone to think about the question and send him a note after the conference. When the symposium papers were eventually published as a book, Terrill noted in his introduction: "The nearest Chinese equivalent to our term 'values' is, I think, *shih-chieh kuan* [*shijie guan*], or 'world view.' It is significant that *shih-chieh kuan* suggests more of a conscious standpoint than does the English word 'values.'"<sup>5)</sup>

Values are not the only determinant of human behavior. By providing people with definitions of social situations and standards of behavioral preference, however, values are a major factor in the evaluation and prediction of human behavior in a given cultural setting. In the political process of both domestic and international society, an important function of values is to lay a moral foundation of shared beliefs and standards and to give or deny legitimacy. A typology of societies is often based on kinds or types of value system; some examples are feudal society, capitalist society, bureaucratic society, socialist society, class society, free society, totalitarian society.

System transformation is umbilically linked to a fundamental and

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5) Ross Terrill, ed., *The China Difference* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), p.4. It is not clear how many participants suggested the term *shijie guan*; I wrote him a letter suggesting this term as the Chinese equivalent of "values," at least during the Maoist era.

irreversible change in social values. Throughout human history, every great transition from one system to another has been accompanied by a widening zone of incoherence in the image of social reality. Discrepancies between theory and practice of the existing social order translate into anomalies (or contradictions in Marxist/Maoist terms) of the established "social paradigm." When anomalies and discrepancies accumulate, the dominant social paradigm (or world view) can no longer provide explanations—let alone answers—for the changing social reality. Like a bent lens or a broken mirror, the paradigm becomes dysfunctional, causing a legitimacy crisis. Out of this incoherence, an alternative social paradigm emerges to challenge the old system. "Every transformation of man, except that perhaps which produced neolithic culture," as Lewis Mumford observed, "has rested on a new metaphysical and ideological base; or rather, upon deeper stirrings and intuitions whose rationalized expression takes the form of a new picture of the cosmos and the nature of man."<sup>6)</sup>

A value in and of itself is neither good nor bad. It depends on what it does to human relationships—and how it does it. This too is a value judgment! Notice the contrast between the functionalist school in sociology (from Emile Durkheim to Talcott Parsons) and the conflict Marxist school (from Karl Marx to Mao Zedong to Antonio Gramsci). The functionalist school takes social values and norms as "givens" in any social system, and stresses their consensus-generating and order-maintaining functions. Durkheim takes a "law-as-facts" approach, conceptualizing norms and rules as "social facts" acting as the "moral authority" of internalized values and norms, and constraining individual choices by arousing guilt if one fails to conform. In Durkheim's conception of society as a "reality *sui generis*," the attitude of moral respect as an integral component of internalized norms and institutionalized values functions as a social law and order.<sup>7)</sup> Parsonian value theorists

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6) Lewis Mumford, *The Transformation of Man* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956), p. 231.

see society as a "moral community" with commonly shared values that legitimate social structure and social order by exercising normative control over a range of human relationship. They assert that "whatever their origins, values are an independent variable contributing to, or detracting from, the organization and integration of a society."<sup>8)</sup>

In contrast, Marxists and neo-Marxists generally regard values and norms as reflecting the world view of the dominant class in any social and political order, to be used as an ideological instrument for class exploitation. Social values and norms serve as social anesthesia for the victims of the oppressive social, political, and economic order, persuading them to accept the existing social arrangements as immutable and inevitable. As Marx put it: "The ruling ideas of a period have always been nothing but the ideas of the ruling class... In each epoch, the thoughts of the ruling class are the ruling thoughts; i.e., the class that is the ruling material power of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual power. The class that has the means of material production in its control, controls at the same time the means of intellectual production."<sup>9)</sup> Mao put it more simply: "The proletariat seeks to transform the world according to its own world outlook [*shijie guan*], so does the bourgeoisie."<sup>10)</sup> Gramsci conceptualized a hegemonic world order as a consensual form of dominance, which is sustained by broadly based consent through acceptance of an ideology and institutions congruent with the global dominance structure.<sup>11)</sup>

7) For a succinct and sympathetic summary and analysis of Emile Durkheim's work, see Talcott Parsons, "Emile Durkheim," *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. 4 (New York: Free Press, 1968) : 311~319.

8) Chalmers Johnson, *Revolutionary Change*, 2d ed. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1982), p. 21.

9) Quoted in *ibid.*

10) Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong], *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1966; originally published in 1957), p. 37.

11) See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and

## II. Values in Traditional China

The nature, strength, and persistence of traditional Chinese values were most dramatically revealed during the first half of the nineteenth century, when China was faced with a continuing threat from the dynamic and expansionistic West. The most striking aspect of the traditional Chinese image of world order is the extent to which it was colored and shaped by the values of the Confucian moral order. Indeed, world order was no more than a corollary of the Chinese image of internal order, and thus really an outward projection of China's self-image. What are the values embodied in this Confucian moral order?

Clearly, the value of harmony stands out. *The Doctrine of the Mean*, a Confucian canonical text that guided the socialization and intellectual process of traditional China for centuries, idealizes harmony not only as the proper norm in human relations but also in the relationship between man and nature. Harmony had more than an aesthetic appeal; it was also a powerful political and social doctrine designed to perpetuate the conservative status quo. The symbols of harmony became omnipresent "in innumerable era names, place names, personal names, street, palace, temple, and studio names throughout Chinese history."<sup>12)</sup>

How was this harmony to be achieved? The Confucian value system laid heavy stress on the doctrine of superordination-subordination in the Five Relationships—ruler and subject, husband and wife, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, and friend and friend—as well as in the distinction between superior men, who work with their brains, and inferior men, who labor with their muscles. This hierarchical social order at home provided an absolute criterion for conceptualizing China's

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trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

12) Arthur F. Wright, "Struggle v. Harmony: Symbols of Competing Values in Modern China," *World Politics* 6 (October 1953) : 34.

relations with non-Chinese states.

There are several reasons for the strength and stability of the traditional Chinese image of world order. First, the absence of any rival or challenging civilization became a potent factor in the development of China's self-image and China's image of the outside world. Chinese scholarship glorified Chinese civilization at a time when contemporary states such as Korea, Vietnam, and Japan lived under the powerful shadow cast by Chinese culture and language. Second, the alien conquerors—Yuan or Mongol (1279~1367) and the Qing or Manchu (1644~1911)—actually reinforced the Sinocentric world order. They seized political power through military conquest and ruled from the top down, without altering the ideological continuity of Confucianism. The relatively short tenure of Mongol rule may have been a consequence of insufficient Sinicization of the Mongols. As if determined to avoid the fate of the Mongols, the Manchus proved to be the most thoroughly Sinicized of all the alien dynasties. They became staunch champions of the Chinese cultural heritage, and by the mid-nineteenth century, the Sinicization of the Manchus was almost complete. Manchu was abolished even as a secondary official language; the Manchus no longer knew their mother tongue. Third, natural geographical barriers decisively influenced the evolution of the Sinocentric value system. China is guarded on the west by almost endless deserts, on the southwest by the Himalaya Mountains, and on the east by vast oceans. Thus cut off from the other centers of advanced human culture, China gradually developed a unique sense of its civilization and place under the sun and a system of human relations complete unto itself. This was not a system of international relations in the modern Eurocentric sense; it was instead hierarchical, stratified social order enforced by the preponderance of power and virtue anchored in China.

Although there is no equivalent Chinese term, Western scholars coined the term, "tribute system" to describe traditional Chinese world order. The Westphalian Eurocentric principles of international relations

and law were alien to the letter and spirit of the tribute system. Such principles as state independence, state sovereignty, and state equality, upon which modern international law is built, were meaningless for the Chinese; in fact, they were repugnant to their sense of a universal state and civilization. The outer parameters of the traditional Chinese world order were largely cultural, separating the civilized from the barbarian. The dividing line between power and virtue—that is, between might and right—were never drawn. More often than not, right defined might, not the other way around, and power was often viewed as the reflection of virtue and rectitude. This cultural and normative image of social order was seldom compromised because, as noted earlier, it was seldom challenged.

Faced with the Western “barbarian” challenge in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Qing officials refused to deal with them except in time-honored traditional terms, because “the laws of the Heavenly Court,” as the secret Qing diplomatic papers, “The Complete Account of Management of Barbarian Affairs,” put it, “being firmly established, cannot suffer any slightest change.”<sup>13</sup> In the end, China’s struggle, without sufficient military power to contain the Western challenge within the hierarchical order of the Sinic tribute system, boomeraged with China’s acceptance of the unequal treaty system imposed by the West. China’s response to the West should not be viewed within the Westphalian framework of the international system, for the Sino-Western confrontation was no less than a system-to-system conflict between two diametrically opposed images of world order.

To a large extent, then, the traditional Chinese value system was undone by its own success. The legitimacy of the Sinocentric world order rested more on moral virtue than military or nationalistic power. The concept of a universal state ruled by the Son of Heaven by heavenly

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13) For documentation and further analysis, see Samuel S. Kim, *China, the United Nations, and World Order* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979), ch. 1, pp. 19~48.

mandate was devoid of any racial or nationalistic imperative. Yet there was a self-serving motive in the ideology of Qing politics. The Manchus as alien conquerors suppressed racialist-nationalist sentiments by championing the Chinese cultural heritage and by inculcating the virtue of harmony and obedience in the political socialization. The suppression of Chinese nationalism in Qing politics was a crucial factor in the failure of China's response to the Western challenge.

The traditional Chinese value system left no room for egalitarianism in international relations. Although the Chinese developed neither a crusading nor a colonial doctrine, their value system ruled out the thought of external policy in terms of mutually beneficial interactions between or among equal sovereign states. The burden of adjustment always fell on the tributary states. It was not until some eighty-four years after the Macartney Mission and sixteen years after the establishment of permanent diplomatic missions in Beijing by the treaty powers that China reciprocated by sending its own diplomatic missions abroad.

The heavy weight of the past crippled the adaptability of the Qing bureaucracy. Unable to change the traditional mode of handling external (barbarian) affairs in the face of Western encroachment, the Qing leaders turned the worship of the past almost into a state religion. With their hands, feet, and minds bound to ritual, harmony, and hierarchy, the Chinese were poorly prepared to cope with conflicts. Their regard for harmony as a supreme value had taught the bureaucracy the art of harmonizing divergent social and political pressures. This worked in times of peace and prosperity, perhaps, but was totally inadequate in times of crisis. The reasons for the repeated failure of Qing officials to adjust their image of world order to the rapidly changing international situation, to revamp the tribute system to suit changing practice, and to adapt their Confucian values to the modernization drive were cultural and historical. Their inward-looking normative self-sufficiency made Qing officials contemptuous of Western ideas and values, if not Western arms, and correspondingly ignorant of the West. To depart from tradition

was viewed not as a necessity for state survival but an ultimate betrayal of *raison d'état*. The failure of China's response to the Western challenge is a story of paradigm lost.

### III. Values in Maoist China

There is little doubt, according to the Mao domination thesis,<sup>14)</sup> that Mao played the definitive restructuring role at critical turning points in the history of the PRC's foreign policy by retaining firm control of the superstructure of the Chinese polity. Mao's retreat to the "second line of command" in the day-to-day operation of domestic policymaking during the period 1959~1965 actually increased his involvement in re-defining China's place in the world in the face of deepening Sino-Soviet conflict. "I have met no one, with the possible exception of Charles de Gaulle," said Henry Kissinger of his encounter with Mao, "who so distilled raw, concentrated willpower. He was planted there with a female attendant close by to help steady him (and on my last visits to hold him up); he dominated the room—not by the pomp that in most states confers a degree of majesty on the leaders, but by exuding in almost tangible form the overwhelming drive to prevail."<sup>15)</sup> In his most recent book on the structure and process of Chinese foreign policy making, which draws heavily on extensive interviews with the key members of China's foreign policy establishment, including Premier Zhao

14) For the Mao domination thesis, see K.J. Holsti et al., *Why Nations Realign: Foreign Policy Restructuring in the Postwar World* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 204, 208~209; John Gittings, *The World and China, 1922~1972* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Samuel S. Kim, *The Maoist Image of World Order* (Princeton, N. J.: Center of International Studies, Princeton University, 1977); Michel Oksenberg, "Mao's Policy Commitments, 1921~1976," *Problems of Communism* 25 (November-December 1976): 1~26; and Michael Yahuda, *Towards the End of Isolationism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983).

15) Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1979), p. 1058.

Ziyang, A. Doak Barnett writes:

Few details are available on how foreign policy was formulated in the Maoist era, but some Chinese who were involved in or close to the process at that time now say that Mao was totally dominant and made almost all of the "big decisions." Zhou Enlai, premier from 1949 to 1958, was in charge of the conduct of foreign affairs. Unquestionably, he had a significant say in foreign policy formulation. However, some Chinese who were close to Zhou at that time now stress that Mao's dominant role, especially in making broad strategic decisions on foreign policy, greatly overshadowed that of Zhou.<sup>16)</sup>

It therefore seems safe to equate Mao's image of world order with the basic values guiding China's interaction with the outside world during the period of his reign (1949~1976). Although there were some conceptual and methodological similarities between the traditional and Maoist images of world order—such as the tendency to define national power in terms of moral virtues and the tendency to project outward a model of domestic values—their values were fundamentally different. The traditional Chinese image of world order was hierarchical, centering on such values as harmony and elitism in social process. As already noted, the inability to conceptualize international relations in egalitarian terms made the traditional Chinese image of world order anachronistic.

The Maoist image of world order substituted a new value of struggle, for the traditional value of harmony; populism for the traditional value of elitism; egalitarianism for the traditional value of status and hierarchy; national sovereignty, independence, and equality for the traditional value of tributary relations in external relations; transformation politics (the "continuing revolution") for the traditional value of status quo conservatism.

Mao's repeated stress on the importance of remolding one's world

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16) A. Doak Barnett, *The Making of Foreign Policy in China* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1985), pp. 7~8.

view (*shijie guan*) as a necessary condition for changing the objective world was based on his belief in the malleability of human nature. The human mind is like clay in a potter's hand. As Mao put it: "The concept of man lacks content; it lacks the specificity of male and female, adult and child, Chinese and foreign, revolutionary and counterrevolutionary. The only thing left is the vague features differentiating man from beast."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Mao attacked the metaphysical world view, as exemplified in the traditional Chinese saying, "Heaven changeth not, likewise, the Tao changeth not," as having too static and reactionary a conception of social change.

In trying to fit Marxism to Chinese conditions, Mao decisively shifted from determinism to voluntarism. The overwhelming lesson of the Chinese Communist Revolution, as Mao saw it, was the triumph of the human will over innumerable obstacles—or the strategic triumph of "millet plus rifles" over "Chiang Kai-shek's aeroplanes plus tanks." From this revolutionary romanticism Mao drew his main inspiration in seeking to resolve a multitude of domestic and foreign problems. Indeed, Mao reminds us of Max Weber's paragon of a leader and hero: "Certainly all historical experience confirms the truth—that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible. But to do that a man must be a leader, and not only a leader but a hero as well, in a very sober sense of the word."<sup>18</sup>

Indeed, the populist egalitarian ethos permeated Mao's thinking to such an extent that it should be regarded as the supreme value in his world view. Mao's populist/egalitarian value was expressed in his trenchant criticism of Stalin well before the Sino-Soviet dispute escalated into open polemics in 1960. In the opening paragraph of his critique of Stalin's *Economic Problems of Socialism in the Soviet Union*, for

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17) Quoted in Donald J. Munro, "The Malleability of Man in Chinese Marxism," *China Quarterly*, No. 48 (October-December 1971): 617.

18) H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 128.

example, Mao wrote: "He [Stalin] says nothing about the superstructure"; "he sees things, but not people"; and "his *fundamental mistake* [*jiben cuowu*] is *his lack of faith in the peasant*."<sup>19</sup> Mao sarcastically characterized Stalin's approach as "cadres decide everything" and "technology decides everything." If this is so, Mao asked, what about the masses? This egalitarianism also came across in his private interview with André Malraux in 1965, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution:

Humanity left to its own devices does not necessarily reestablish capitalism (which is why you are perhaps right in saying they [the Soviets] will not revert to private ownership of the means of production), but it does reestablish inequality. *The forces tending toward the creation of new classes are powerful*. We have just suppressed military titles and badges of rank; every "cadre" becomes a worker again at least one day a week; whole trainloads of city dwellers go off to work in the people's communes. Khrushchev seemed to think that a revolution is done when a communist party has seized power—as if it were merely a question of national liberation.<sup>20</sup>

The Cultural Revolution may be accepted as a case study of miscarried normative transformation. Originally, Mao saw this "revolution" as a necessary and desirable risk in his attempt to deal with the problem of the superstructure in a fundamental way. The Cultural Revolution attempted a normative and structural transformation of the whole establishment in China. Mao admitted that such a transformation, designed to reassert a proletariat quest for social justice and equality and once again "to touch the souls of people," can succeed two or three times at most in the course of one century. In short, his was a hero's quest to make the impossible possible and to recapture a lost paradigm.

19) Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong's Thought], (n.p., 1967), p. 156; Mao Zedong, *Mao Zedong sixiang wansui* [Long Live Mao Zedong's Thought] (n.p., 1969), p. 204; emphasis added.

20) André Malraux, *Anti-Memoirs*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1968), p. 373; emphasis added.

Clearly, all the chaos, disruption, factionalism, and xenophobic nationalism spawned by the Cultural Revolution did not follow Mao's normative scenario. What went wrong? It may suffice to note only a few anomalies. First, Mao, an old revolutionary propelled by a sense of great alarm and urgency, telescoped all phases of societal transformation—normative, structural, and behavioral—into a convulsive, once-and-for-all leap, defying his own conception of “continuing revolution” as a protracted, phased struggle. Second, Mao's Machiavellian impulse—what matters most is correct line or ideology, not the means—reasserted itself during the Cultural Revolution, defying the means-ends complementarity. Third, the unity between ideology and organization, which Franz Schurmann once identified as the quintessence of the Maoist revolution,<sup>21</sup> was disconnected and ruptured. Fourth and finally, no attempt was made to identify the Cultural Revolution as part of a global system transformation. Instead, atavistic nationalism was allowed full play, and China's foreign policy was left largely unprotected from the disruptive spillovers of domestic turmoil, adversely affecting Beijing's diplomatic relations with friends and foes alike.

The Cultural Revolution also highlights a problematic dimension in Mao's value system. Although there is a coexistence of both positive and negative elements in Mao's world view, the negative always seems to overshadow the positive. One English word Mao is said to have learned is “anti-Mao.” Surely, it was not Mao's love for the United States as much as his hatred of the Soviet Union that had led him to decisively restructure China's relations with the superpowers. The dominance of negative values and visions, which contradicts his sanguine and optimistic image of human nature, explains why Mao proved to be more effective and successful in the revolutionary phase than in the post-revolutionary phase of modern Chinese history.

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21) Franz Schurmann, *Ideology and Organization in Communist China*, 2d ed. (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1971).

Mao's sanguine conception of human nature also extended to his exaggerated, romantic conception of the role of ideology or line in social process. The supreme importance of dialectical, two-line struggle was elaborated by Mao as follows:

Whether or not a line is ideologically and politically correct decides everything. If the Party's line is correct, then we will get everything; if there are no men, we will get men; if there are no guns, we will get guns; if we do not hold power, we will get power. If our line is incorrect, even if we have all of these, we can lose them. The line is the key link; once it is grasped, everything falls into place.<sup>22)</sup>

In the end, however, Mao's revolutionary optimism—rooted in his belief in the power of the conquering human willpower and the omnipotence of a correct line or world view as the master key to social progress—began to wane. His chosen successor (Lin Biao) betrayed him; the Chinese youth disappointed him; even the Chinese peasants disappointed him. As he felt let down by the masses, Mao began to show the signs of ideological combat fatigue. In 1975, when he was already well on his way to meet Marx, Mao wrote a poem for his ailing comrade Zhou Enlai, which ended with a prophetic note: "You and I, old friends, can we just watch our efforts be washed away?"

#### IV. Values in Post-Mao China

The death of Mao in September 1976 marked a watershed for system transition. The challenge for the post-Mao leadership was to redefine Chinese values and restructure the whole system for the post-Mao era while maintaining some continuity with the past by reaffirming or reinter-

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22) Mao Zedong, "Summary of Chairman Mao's Talks to Responsible Local Comrades During His Tour of Inspection" (mid-August to September 12, 1971), trans. in *Chinese Law and Government*, Vol. 5, Nos. 3~4 (Fall-Winter 1972~73) : 33.

preting the core principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought. Of course, this challenge cannot be separated from the succession power struggle. In the first round of the transitional process (September 1976 to May 1978), Premier Hua Guofeng, Mao's heir apparent, jumped the gun by reasserting Maoism as the cardinal values and principles for the post-Mao era. In his eulogy speech at the funeral for Mao on September 16, 1976, Hua called Mao "the greatest Marxist of the contemporary era." Under Chairman Mao's leadership, Hua went on, the CCP defeated not only the opportunist lines but also, during the Cultural Revolution, "triumphed over the counterrevolutionary revisionist line of Liu Shao-chi [Liu Shaoqi], Lin Piao [Lin Biao] and Teng Hsiao-ping [Deng Xiaoping]." Hua also declared that China must follow Maoist lines in both domestic and foreign policy. "Internally," he said, "we must conscientiously study Marxism-Leninism-Mao Tse-tung Thought, take class struggle as the key link, adhere to the basic line and the policies of the party for the entire historical period of socialism, persevere in continuing the revolution under the dictatorship of the proletariat." The Maoist line to be followed in foreign policy was defined as follows:

Externally, we must continue to carry out resolutely Chairman Mao's revolutionary line and policies in foreign affairs, uphold proletarian internationalism, and never seek hegemony. We must strengthen our unity with the international proletariat and the oppressed nations and oppressed people the world over, strengthen our unity with the people of the third world countries, and strengthen our unity with all the countries subjected to aggression, subversion, interference, control or bullying by imperialism and socialism-imperialism so as to form the broadest possible united front against imperialism, in particular against the hegemonism of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States. <sup>23)</sup>

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23) Excerpts from Hua's funeral speech, distributed in English translation by Xinhua (New China News Agency), were published in the September 19, 1976, issue of *New York Times*.

Hua's reassertion of Maoism started with a bang but vanished with a whimper. In spite of Hua's arrest of the "Gang of Four" in October 1976, Hua's tenure was short-lived. With the return of Deng Xiaoping to power in 1977, the "correlation of forces" in domestic politics began to shift. The pronouncement of the Dengist normative principle, "Practice Is the Sole Criterion for Testing Truth," published in the *Guan-gming ribao* on May 11, 1978, was a critical turning point in the transition from radical Maoism to pragmatic Dengism. Deng's oft-quoted statement about cats being good, whether black or white, so long as they caught mice, has thus been reformulated as an epistemological/ideological principle to refute Hua's "conservative" line that "whatever the decision made by Chairman Mao was, we will resolutely support; whatever Chairman Mao's directive was, we will unswervingly obey."<sup>24</sup> Unprincipled pragmatism is the justification for shifting from Mao's value-oriented approach to Deng's interest-oriented approach in post-Mao China.

The decision of the 11th CCP Central Committee in December 1978 to "shift the focus of all party work to socialist modernization" marked a strategic turning point *away* from Maoist normative politics, the dawn of the post-Mao reform movement. Even Marshall Ye Jianying, who reportedly resisted the wholesale repudiation of Maoism, had to perform another ideological somersault at the meeting in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the founding of the PRC on September 29, 1979:

In the sphere of ideology, they [the orthodox Maoists] turned the relationship between the subjective and the objective and between the mind and matter upside down, exaggerating to the extreme the reaction of social consciousness on social being, of the superstructure on the economic base and of the relations of production on the productive forces, in the belief that man could effect at will a so-called

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24) *Hongqi* [Red Flag], No. 3(1977): 10.

change or transformation of the superstructure and the relation of production...

At present, the four modernizations constitute the pivot of our political life... The work of every district, every department and every unit, right down to every single individual, as well as the credit due to it, will be judged by its direct and indirect contribution to modernization.<sup>25)</sup>

In an anti-Maoist manner, the post-Mao leadership claims that class struggle was more or less over by 1957. The principal contradiction [*zhuyao maodun*] is no longer the contradiction between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, we are told, but the contradiction between people's needs and backward economy and culture.<sup>26)</sup> During the Maoist era, there was a recurrent tendency to make a virtue out of weakness by defining "national power" as a sum total of both material and normative power. This conception of national power has been abandoned; the post-Mao Chinese leadership now defines status and security in terms of material power alone.

The accelerated march to the promised land of modernization has brought a drastic revision in the Chinese conception of time. "Time has never been looked at in financial terms," writes a Chinese writer, Tong Gang, "and therefore has been ruthlessly wasted: prolonged construction periods, endless meetings and meaningless conversations... All these show the little value we place on time. 'Take your time', has been an expression so often used as an excuse that it hardly offends anybody."<sup>27)</sup> Following the new slogan, "Time Is Money, Efficiency Is Life," the State Council shortened the lunch break to just one hour (from the traditional two hours) as of January 1, 1985. To

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25) Ye Jianying, "Comrade Ye Jianying's Speech," *Beijing Review*, No. 40 (October 5, 1979) : 17, 23.

26) See Jie Wen, "Class Struggle and the Principal Contradiction in Socialist Society," *Hongqi*, No. 20 (1981) : 26~31.

27) Cited in *New York Times*, January 28, 1985, p. A2.

boost the catching-up process and to emulate the work ethic of the United States, West Germany, and Japan, post-Mao China has jettisoned the lunchtime nap as superfluous luggage of the past.

A more serious challenge to Maoism is the open assault on egalitarianism in practically all sectors of Chinese society. Egalitarianism is now conceptualized as an ideological albatross that slows the tempo of the modernization drive. Maoist egalitarianism is blamed for enterprises "eating from the big pot of the government" and workers "eating from the big pot of the enterprise." The post-Mao reform movement celebrates a latter-day version of social Darwinism, stressing the survivability of the fittest through rigorous competition.

The most dramatic change of post-Mao China is found in the progressive revision of the normative principle of self-reliance. During the Maoist era, self-reliance was conceptualized as the only way that China—and other developing countries—could keep initiative in their own hands, preserve their resource sovereignty, prevent the structural penetration of their national economies by imperialist predators, and liberate themselves from the vicious, self-perpetuating process of the exchange of unequal values. Interdependence in the capitalist world economy was likened to the interdependence "between a horseman and his mount."

Although self-reliance never meant autarky, it was a uniquely Maoist principle of maximal self-realization. What is striking about post-Mao China is not only its ambitious modernization drive but also the manner in which economic growth is being pursued almost as an intrinsic value in itself. What used to be called "exchange of unequal values" has now become "international trade norms and practices." Technology is now claimed as having no class character; in fact, it is regarded as the master key to China's modernization drive. Foreign loans and credit, which used to be *verboten* in the vocabulary of Maoist political economy, has now become an integral part of the budgetary process. *Renmin ribao*, the most widely used medium for disseminating official values and norms for Chinese mobilization politics, has already begun publishing bilingual

(Chinese and English) commercial advertisements for foreign multinational corporations as well as Chinese construction companies seeking to outbid Taiwan, South Korea, and the Philippines in the exportation of cheap labor<sup>28)</sup>—clear evidence of the extent to which post-Mao China has shifted from the self-reliant to the interdependent model of development.

Has Mao Zedong Thought already become a purely symbolic shell devoid of any substantive value components? By early 1981 there were signs of ideological malaise, or what the *Renmin ribao* candidly acknowledged as “a crisis of faith in Marxism.” The official reassessment of Mao Zedong and Mao Zedong Thought in mid-1981 was a first attempt to end the ideological confusion plaguing post-Mao Chinese politics. The official reassessment of Mao Zedong at the 6th Plenum of the 11th Central Committee of the CCP in late June 1981 checked blind anti-Maoism by publicly declaring the coalition consensus about the outer parameters of the permissible and the possible. What emerged may be characterized as symbolic “re-Maoization” and substantive “de-Maoization.” The “Resolution on Certain Questions in the History of Our Party Since the Foundation of the People’s Republic of China” acknowledges that Mao “outlined the correct strategy of the three worlds and advanced the important principle that China would never seek hegemony” and thus “made major contributions to the liberation of the oppressed nations of the world and to the progress of mankind.”<sup>29)</sup>

This partial endorsement suggests that there has been considerable controversy and soul-searching among the post-Mao elite about the redefinition of Mao Zedong Thought. The result appears to be a balanced and politically viable compromise between the practical require-

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28) See, for example, *Renmin ribao*, June 7, 1980, p. 8; June 9, 1980, p. 8.

29) “On Questions of Party History,” *Beijing Review*, No. 27 (July 6, 1981) : 24, 29. This 30,000-word document deals almost exclusively with domestic politics, exempting the history of Chinese foreign policy from public criticism.

ments of de-Maoification and the normative requirements of re-Maoification. In order to sustain its modernization drive without at the same time appearing to weaken national independence and self-reliance, the post-Mao leadership has resorted to a selective invocation of Maoism, a “Dengification” of Mao Zedong Thought. Mao Zedong Thought has been resurrected as a “valuable spiritual asset” and “our guide to action for a long time to come,” but it has been resurrected in a flexible and ambiguous manner. The quintessence of Maoism has been reformulated in terms of three principles: seeking truth from facts; following the mass line; and maintaining independence. The latest twist to the modernization drive is a call for a new class struggle, not class struggle as the key link to historical progress, but class struggle as a way to build “socialist spiritual civilization” and to further the development of modernization.

True to form, the Chinese repeatedly claims, in response to foreign scholarly and press commentaries, that this selective invocation does not constitute a de-Maoification of post-Mao China. In January 1981, China banned an Asian edition of *Newsweek* with a cover showing happy Chinese peasants and workers pulling down an enormous statue of Mao from its pedestal. In late September 1983, the Chinese authorities banned sales of *Time* magazine, which carried a cover picture depicting Deng and Mao with the words, “banishing Mao’s ghost.” Even more embarrassing was the cover article by the born-again old China hand Theodore H. White, who flatly—and absurdly—declared that Mao “became a God—but also, with almost no doubt, insane.” This censorship indicates a belated embarrassment-limitation strategy.

A Chinese publicist in the authoritative *Renmin ribao* distinguishes between “de-Maoization” (*feimaohua*) and “demystification” (*feishenhua*), asserting that China is restoring Mao Zedong’s Thought to its *original form* (presumably referring to early Maoism before 1957) by refuting the distortions of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four. At the same time, he argues that “certain things which were wrong or overdone”

in Maoist superstructural politics had to be discarded. The revision is explained as the necessary process of eliminating any *theological* authority that Lin Biao and the Gang of Four had bestowed upon Maoism.<sup>30)</sup> Deng Xiaoping offers a more blunt and explicit exposition of what is happening to Mao Zedong Thought:

In many respects, what we are doing is what Comrade Mao Zedong suggested we should do but have failed to do; setting right what he mistakenly opposed and doing a good job in what he failed to do properly. We will continue to do so for a long time to come. Of course, we have developed and continue to develop Mao Zedong Thought.<sup>31)</sup>

Is it possible for socialist China to suffer from "alienation"? Marx conceptualized alienation as the commodification of workers, which fostered social order and the political pacification of the working class in nineteenth-century capitalist society. In his recent book, Frederick C. Teiwes concludes that authority in China has passed from the largely "charismatic" stage during Mao's lifetime to a more stable "legal-rational" stage.<sup>32)</sup> This judgment seems somewhat premature. That the legitimacy crisis has not yet been fully solved is evident in the furious debate over "alienation" in contemporary China. Of the some 600 articles and essays on the topic published between 1978 and 1983,<sup>33)</sup> a lengthy theoretical piece by Zhou Yang, chairman of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circle, has been the most controversial. Published in the authoritative *Renmin ribao*, the article jolted official circles by arguing that the symptoms of "socialist alienation" [*shehuizhuyi de yihua*] are manifest in all fronts--ideological, political, and

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30) *Renmin ribao*, March 9, 1979, p. 2.

31) Cited in Wang Qi, "Inheriting and Developing Mao Zedong Thought," *Beijing Review*, No. 52 (December 26, 1983): 20.

32) Frederick C. Teiwes, *Leadership, Legitimacy and Conflict in China* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1984).

33) See Xing Benshi, "The Alienation Issue and Spiritual Pollution," *Renmin ribao*, November 5, 1983, p. 5.

economic.<sup>34)</sup>

Zhou's article stirred new waves in the Party's rectification campaign against "spiritual pollution." The official challenge to Zhou's socialist alienation thesis has become part and parcel of the attempt to strike another balance between leftist and rightist deviational errors. As a *historical* concept and phenomenon, it is suggested, alienation cannot apply to contemporary socialist China, because three major sources of alienation—private ownership, the system of employed labor, and the antagonistic division of labor—have all been abolished. The socialist alienation thesis mistakenly blurs the fundamental difference between socialism and capitalism.<sup>35)</sup>

In the end Zhou had to profess self-criticism: "I was preoccupied with opposing 'Left' errors without giving much thought to the grave influence of bourgeois ideology, which has been seeping into China since the policy of opening to the outside world was implemented."<sup>36)</sup> Yet the "spiritual pollution" campaign, far from solving the "crisis of faith" at home, has merely fueled the crisis of confidence among Chinese intellectuals and foreign investors about the continuity of the current liberalizing reform. In January 1984, Deng intervened decisively to end the campaign, which had only been started in October 1983.

On December 7, 1984, the *Renmin ribao* front-paged a direct and frontal editorial assault on Marxist orthodoxy as an anachronistic hindrance to China's modernization march: "Marx died 101 years ago. There have been tremendous changes since his ideas were formed. ... So we cannot use Marxist and Leninist works to solve our present-day

34) Zhou Yang, "An Inquiry into Some Theoretical Problems of Marxism," *Renmin ribao*, March 16, 1983, p. 4.

35) For a scholarly rebuttal of the socialist alienation thesis following the latest party line, see Xing Benshi, "The Alienation Issue and Spiritual Pollution," *Renmin ribao*, November 5, 1983, p. 5; Wei Jianlin, "Socialist Practice and the So-called 'Socialist Alienation'," *Renmin ribao*, November 13, 1983, p. 5.

36) *Beijing Review*, No. 40 (December 12, 1983): 12.

problems."<sup>37)</sup> If the socialist Soviet bloc was stunned, the capitalist West accepted this as a triumph of capitalism, the greatest leap of one quarter of humankind into the capitalist world economy. Within a few days, the *Renmin ribao* apologized for a printing error! The editorial pronouncement should have read that we cannot expect the works of Marx and Lenin "to solve *all* of today's problems."<sup>38)</sup> Ever since this embarrassing ideological flip-flop, Deng, like a high priest caught exposed in a red light district, has gone out of his way to express his abiding confidence in, and fidelity to, "socialism"—whatever this may mean.

## V. Conclusion

Despite the periodic attempts to strike a dialectical balance between extreme leftist and rightist errors, the major shifts and changes initiated by the post-Mao leadership since 1978 can be regarded as constituting an across-the-board assault on the Maoist value system. Post-Mao China under the leadership of Deng Xiaoping has undergone a remarkable reorientation from Mao's value-oriented self-reliance model to Deng's open-door model. China has moved from "politics in command" to "economics in command," from regional self-reliance to regional specialization through the special economic zones and other schemes, from social egalitarianism and normative incentives to the economic division of labor and specialization and material incentives, from symbolic diplomacy to neorealist diplomacy, from aid-giving to aid-seeking, from model-projecting to model-seeking, from fear of dependency to fear of isolationism and backwardness, from autocentric social development to export-oriented growth, from the revisionist challenge to make new international norms and rules to pragmatic adaptation to the existing international legal norms and practices.

37) "Theory and Practice," editorial, *Renmin ribao*, December 7, 1984, p. 1.

38) *Ibid.*, December 10, 1984, p. 1.

In the process, official Communist ideology has undergone a radical reinterpretation. The Maoist egalitarian policy is now characterized as antagonistic to the Marxist version of scientific socialism. Yet the vanguard policy of encouraging some people and some regions to take the lead in becoming rich first is described as an important Marxist policy, because it encourages the advanced and spurs on the backward.

Given the failure of all previous reform movements to synthesize Western ideas with Chinese values, a critical question remains. Do the series of reform measures initiated by the post-Mao leadership add up to a piecemeal transformation of the Chinese system? Every system has a self-repairing and self-regenerating capacity. In the case of China, however, individuals at the top seem to be playing a more decisive role than political and social institutions in maintaining, reforming, or transforming the system as a whole.

To date, post-Mao reform has produced remarkable economic results. As for the prospects of post-Mao reform leading to a nonviolent and noncataclysmic system transformation, we are left with a number of imponderables. Can China's New Long March move far enough and fast enough to satiate the revolution of rising consumerism and commercialism? Can it do this without creating new classes in socialist China? Can it succeed at all without a legitimizing Chinese model of development? Can it contain or resolve the resurgence of traditional values ("feudalistic ideas" such as female infanticide, or the unaffordable use of land and lumber for burial, defying the government's plea for cremation)? Can it effectively contain and isolate Western "pollutants" without creating a crisis of confidence among foreign investors? Can the current ideological contradictions and incoherence be clarified or resolved within the narrow centralist band of the Chinese political spectrum without provoking another two-line class struggle? Can it bring about a fair and equitable distribution of the material benefits of the modernization reform? How long can the post-Mao leadership maintain its current dual peaceful coexistence policy toward both superpowers?

How long will the open-door policy continue after Deng is gone? On these and other related questions, the jury is still out.