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Communication, the Nexus of Class and Nation, and Global Divides

Reflections on China's Post-Revolutionary Experiences

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Abstract

This paper locates the problematic of communication and global divide in the nexus of class and nation in the context of post-revolutionary China's twisted developmental path and its world historical economic ascent in the era of neoliberal globalization. After a brief overview of the politics of class mobilization for nation-building during the Maoist period, the paper moves on to examine the role of communication in contributing to reform-era China's spectacular rise in the global hierarchy of economic power on the one hand and a drastic process of domestic social stratification and class polarization on the other. As China's lower social classes are making redistributive and social justice claims on the Chinese state and propelling it to fulfill its socialist promises from within, China's increasingly denationalized middle class are protecting this state from the outside by championing Chinese nationalism in the global symbolic arena. These historically specific re-articulations of class and nation not only continue to bolster China's post-revolutionary state in the capitalist global order, but also make it impossible to completely shed its socialist color.

Keywords: class, nation, media, information technologies, China, socialism

Introduction

The official slogan of the 2008 Beijing Olympics, "One World, One Dream", expresses a grand universal appeal for a common humanity. Yet the huge communicative divide between China and the West over and beyond the Olympics – dramatized by Western and Chinese media confrontations over China's human rights record and Tibet – underscores a profound global divide between China and the West. This global divide, which is closely linked to China's deepening domestic political economic and socio-cultural divides, compels us to reflect upon China's twisted post-revolutionary history, including the terms of its reintegration with the West, and the role of communication in it.

This chapter explores communication and global divides in the nexus of class and nation in the case of post-revolutionary China. As Desai (2008) has argued, class and nation both have material base in the capitalist logic of uneven development in the modern world, and the historical processes of class formation and nation-building are closely intertwined. For the Chinese as well as many other peoples outside the core of Western capitalism, the historical struggle for nationhood and the formation of the nation-state was closely entangled with the struggle against the tidal waves of uneven

development unleashed by capitalism and imperialism. As late as the mid-1980s, the most powerful argument that the post-Mao media mobilized for capitalistic development was still one that invokes the danger of Chinese nation "being expelled from global citizenship" (Wu 2008).

After nearly three decades of capitalistic development, China appears "wealthy and powerful", so much so that it is now the largest creditor of the US state, and it managed to stage the most spectacular Olympics ever to celebrate its reintegration with the global capitalist order under the slogan of "One World, One Dream". That this slogan has become such a farce has further underscored the point that the thesis of globalization as decline of nation-states and nationalisms is a mistaken one (Desai 2008: 397). At a time when neoliberalism has widened the class divide everywhere in the world and when the class divide intersects with so many other social and cultural divides, it seems more urgent than ever to bring back class into the analysis of global divides.

By locating the problematic of communication and global divides within the nexus of class and nation, I also hope to address what Desai (2008: 298) identified as an unproductive scholarly division of labor between a study of nations and nationalisms focuses primarily on culture and a political economy of national and international capitalist development that foregrounds class. Because media and communication encompass both political economy and culture in this age of informational economies and creative industries, media and communication scholars are uniquely positioned to address both the political economy and cultural politics of class and nation.

I first offer an overview of the different articulations of class and nation in China's developmental path in the Maoist era (1949-1977) and the reform era (1978-2002), focusing on the respective roles of communication and cultural politics in these two periods. Then, against the drawbacks of sustained Western critiques of China's human rights record and the rising tide of Chinese nationalism in response to these critiques, I will discuss the highly fluid dynamics of class and nationalistic politics in the political economy and cultural politics of China's ongoing transformation since 2003. At the center of my analysis is the importance of challenging the depoliticized politics of neoliberalism and the necessity of bringing politics back to the discourse of development, as well as the continuing relevance of the anti-imperialist legacies of Chinese nationalism and its pursuit for an alternative socialist modernity to capitalism.

Communication and Class Mobilization for Nation-building in the Mao Era (1949-1977)

In the aftermath of the unprecedented Western media celebration of Chang and Holliday's 2005 book, *Mao: The Unknown Story*, in which Mao and along with him, the Chinese Communist revolution and Maoism as a form of socialism, was so thoroughly demonized that it seems futile to even speak of the liberating aspect of the Chinese Communist Revolution and the Chinese pursuit for socialism these days. The daily pounding of Western news headlines about China's human rights abuses and press freedom violations have reinforced this anti-communist ideology in a supposed post Cold War world.

Despite all its horrors, it is nevertheless important not to view the Chinese Communist Revolution as an unfortunate and misguided adventure. This revolution was an

outcome of a prolonged and sustained effort by a vast multitude of the Chinese people to overthrow imperialism, feudalism, and comprador capitalism, the well-known "three mountains", and to lay the foundations for building a socialist modernity as an alternative to capitalism. It is an important landmark on the long and worldwide emancipatory project known as the international communist movement launched in Europe 160 years ago (Sharma 2007: 4).

In the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR that gave birth to new nations, an argument has been made that the USSR, rather than being communist in any meaningful sense, might more accurately be regarded as a powerful form of developmentalism. Thus, "20th century communism was as much, if not more, about the logic of uneven development of world capitalism as it was about the logic of class and capitalist exploitation" (Desai 2008: 418). In China, socialism and nationalism were closely intertwined historically, and the Chinese communists were also more nationalists than communists. Because of the Chinese nation's "class" position in an imperialist international system, "the Chinese revolution… was first national and then social, and could not be otherwise" and Chinese communists "held a firm conviction that if social interest conflicted with national interest, the social must yield to the national" (Lin 2006: 40). Nevertheless, to the extent that the Chinese nation was declared by Mao to have finally stood up after the victory of the Communist Party's peasant-based social revolution, and to the extent that the PRC was and is still defined constitutionally as a state led by the working class and centered on the class alliance of workers and peasants, Maoist Chinese nationalism has an indisputable anti-imperialist and socialist legacy.

After having overthrowing the "three mountains", the political economy of nation-building in the PRC, first faced economic embargo from the capitalist West and then a split-up with the USSR within the international communist movement, ended up having to rely on the ruthless extraction of the domestic agricultural surplus (the domestic equivalent of uneven trade in international markets), or more bluntly, a state-imposed rural-urban apartheid through the household registration system, for the country's initial industrialization. After the disaster of the Great Leap Forward in 1958, Chinese peasants, after having served as a powerhouse for the Chinese revolution, became the primary victims of a massive famine.

However, Maoist nation-building policy did not abandon Chinese peasants and rural society altogether. It continued to invest in agriculture, and made use of top-down methods to give back to agriculture, the peasants and rural society. The existence of "Three Great Divides" that is, the divides between rural and urban China, between workers and peasants, and between manual labor and mental labor, was of great concern (Lu 2008). Because social developments took priority over economic development, Chinese achievements in the areas of adult literacy, basic education and health care were the envy of the developing world during the Maoist era (Wen 2008). In cultural politics, the mass media's socialist rhetoric glorified the workers and peasants as the protagonists of Chinese history. Urban educated youth and intellectuals were encouraged, and even compelled to go to the countryside to bridge "Three Great Divides", to learn from the peasants, and to transform their own petti-bourgeoisie class consciousness.

Although the Maoist era is often reduced to the Cultural Revolution, which is denounced for the excess of its class struggle discourse and its torture of intellectuals and officials, it is important to understand the class politics of the Cultural Revolution, a revolution in

the area of culture and ideology aiming to sustain the socialist gains of the Communist revolution, and to prevent "capitalist restoration". As Wang Hui (2006: 36) argues, Mao promoted the concept of class to stimulate debates and struggle within the party's political culture, in order to avoid depoliticization under the conditions of the party's administration of power. Mao's concept of class denoted the attitudes of social or political forces toward revolutionary politics, rather than the structural situation of social class.

The Cultural Revolution aimed to cultivate the new subjectivities of the popular classes, and the realization of the central task of the Chinese communist revolution, that is, "the dismantling of class relations formed through a history of violence and unequal property relations" (Wang 2006: 37). However, Mao's highly subjectivist concept of "class" contained internal contradictions and dangers. The supposedly progressive politics of "class struggle" quickly degenerated into an essentialized discourse of class identity, becoming "the most oppressive kind of power logic, the basis for the merciless character of subsequent faction fights" during the Cultural Revolution (Wang 2006: 37). Spontaneous political and discursive debates aiming at transforming repressive social relations and fighting against the rise of techno-bureaucratic power were turned into depoliticized symbolic violence of the most brutal type.

The Maoist period, while cutting itself off from Western media and capitalist consumer culture, developed many indigenous forms of popular media and communication, including big character posters, Red Guard tabloids, revolutionary songs and operas, and in the countryside, wired radio, local arts and cultural troupes, commune propaganda units, and mobile film projection teams. Although the communicative and cultural empowerment of the popular classes during this period was a mixed bag, suffice it to say that manipulation above by Mao and faction power struggles did not explain everything (Zhao 2008: 199). Indeed, perhaps as a dialectic of the Cultural Revolution, the legacies of that popular communication empowerment have found their expressions in the languages, tactics, and organizational skills of workers, peasants, urban citizens, and even Falun Gong members in variegated struggles against the bureaucratic capitalist state and its domestic and transnational capitalist collaborators during the reform era. And to this I turn.

ICTs, Media, and the Neo-liberal Re-articulation of Class and Nation under Deng Xiaoping and Jiang Zemin (1978-2002)

The reform period starting in 1978 marked a dramatic re-articulation of class and nation in the political economy of Chinese development, and along with it, a radical re-orientation of the class nature of Chinese nationalism and the development of a depoliticized neoliberal cultural politics of class and nation. Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and the media have played instrumental roles in these processes.

The Role of ICTs in Constituting Uneven Development

Instead of trying to narrow the "Three Great Divides", the political economy of post-Mao "reform and openness" pursued uneven development by design under Deng's slogan of "letting some people get rich first", and ICTs have been the primary agents of this process. Moreover, precisely because Western theories of information society

posit a society detached from the politicized domain of culture as a terrain of struggle within and against capitalism and an economism beyond social division and political conflicts (Schiller 2007), or an "end of politics (Mosco 2004), it had a particular ideological appeal to a post-Mao Chinese ruling elite who just came out of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution and suffered from the violence of its essentialized "class struggle" discourse. If Mao had led a popular social revolution in the first half of the 20th century by mobilizing China's lower social classes and championing the cause of anti-imperialism, the party-state under Deng Xiaoping and his successor Jiang Zemin installed China's "digital revolution" from above by relying on the country's technocratic elites and rearticulating China's political economy with transnational capitalism. The anti-politics of neoliberal politics and technocratic rationality dominated China's "digital revolution" (Zhao 2007a).

As the state prioritized the ICT sector for massive investment and concerted policy development since the mid-1980s, and as China and the IT sector became the two poles of growth for transnational capitalism (Schiller 2007), the Chinese state, which had started the reform process by decollectivizing agriculture and temporary boosting agricultural production and increasing rural income, had by the mid-1980s ignored agriculture, the peasants, and rural society. An unsustainable rural economy created the largest wave of migration in human history, with more than 120 million rural migrant workers on the move. Despite all its heavy-investments and its exponential growth, a World Bank report claimed that the 4 million workers in "China's IT industry in 2003 accounted for less than 1 percent of the country's total labor force" (Qiang, 2007: 6).

Moreover, just as railways were built in the peripheries of global capitalism during the colonial era in order to serve the interests of metropolitan capital, reform-era developments in Chinese ICTs have been prioritized to coordinate two-intertwined developments in transnational capitalism: the shift to post-fordist flexible production by connecting transnational capital with the vast labor pool congregated in China's special economic zones and coastal regions, and the rise of information industries as the primary sectors of capital accumulation on their own right (Hong 2008; Schiller & Zhao 2001; Schiller 2007). Despite their rapid diffusion, the distribution of telephone and Internet services has been highly uneven between the coastal, central and Western regions, and between urban and rural China. The rural-urban divide, of course, are closely intertwined with regional and ethnic divides within China's economic and cultural geography.

With ICTs as both the key enabling infrastructure and as a leading economic sector, the Chinese economy was quickly turned into a foreign-investment driven, export-oriented, and increasingly dependent economy, with dependency on Western, especially the US, consumer market on the one hand, and increasingly, on raw material from non-Western countries on the other. Within this international division of labor, China's input is primarily cheap labor, made possible by a repressive state and its regressive agricultural policy, and of course, at the expenses of the environment, rural society, and social development in general. As China's leading export industry, the ICT sector itself is also highly dependent on core foreign technologies, and sweatshop conditions are common in China's IT assembly lines (Hong 2008). The world's information revolution is partly built on the backs of Chinese women migrant workers on these assembly lines.

As China became the workshop of the world, the lion's share of the profits goes to cosmopolitan capitalists in the West, while Chinese workers receive a pity income. Within

this global political and symbolic economy, the Chinese state, because it does the "dirty job" of controlling Chinese workers on behalf of transnational and domestic capital, accumulated a huge foreign currency (mostly US dollar) reserve, while simultaneously harvesting the Western media's condemnation of human rights abuse in the country. As China became the poster-child of the World Bank promoted ICT4D strategy, Chinese society became fragmented, polarized, and deeply fractured along class, region, gender, ethnicity, and other social and cultural divides. By 1997, the World Bank had reported that China's Gini coefficient index, which measures inequality on a scale of 0.001 to 1 (where 1 reflects absolute equality), had increased from a score of .28 in 1981 to 0.458 (Anagnost 2008: 498), making China, which still claims to be a socialist country, more inequitable than the United States (.408) and one of the most inequitable societies in the world – ranking 90th among 131 countries in a UN assessment in 2005 (Manthorpe 2006). Chinese state investment in education was among the lowest in Asian countries throughout the 1990s, leading to a 30 million increase in adult illiteracy between 2000 and 2005, while the radical marketization of medical care system and the collapse of cooperative medical care in the rural area turned China's health care system from an envy of the developing world during the Mao era into one of the most unfair in the whole world, ranking 188 out of 191 countries in a 2005 World Health Organization (WHO) assessment. Rather than speaking of "China", it has become more meaningful to think about China in terms of "one country, four worlds": the ultra-modern and high-income Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen constitute the first world, and ethnic minority and border areas and extremely low income rural areas the fourth world (Hu, Zhou and Li 2001: 167).

Media's Role in Rearticulating the Politics of Class and Nation

ICT's role in constituting China's uneven development was matched by the state-controlled but highly commercialized media's role in rearticulating the neoliberal cultural politics of class and nation.

First, a repressive media control regime effectively depoliticized development and prohibited open debates about the class orientation of China's "reform and openness" process. This created the key enabling political condition for cheap labor as China's "comparative advantage" by disenabling the circulation of labor struggles and suppressing the formation of radical working class consciousness (Zhao and Duffy 2007). That this affects a process that witnesses the displacement of tens of millions of former state enterprise workers and the emergence of 120 million migrant workers as wage earners must be seen as an event of truly world-historical significance (Schiller 2008). The most striking fact is this: instead of being able to complete the process of forming themselves as an urban working class, members of this massive migrant workforce are not able to reproduce themselves materially and culturally in the cities (Ngai 2005; Hong 2008). Moreover, with an estimated of more than 200 million rural labor force in need of non-agricultural work, the process is just beginning (Wen 2008).

Second and as the other side of the coin of class (dis)-formation, as many party members got rich first by becoming capitalists themselves and as the party incorporated the newly constituted capitalists and comprador elites into its ranks and turned itself into a nationalist party, or a party of all people, it continued to frustrate autonomous capitalist class formation by restricting liberal and neoliberal intellectuals from enjoying their full

press freedom in the mass media, and by prohibiting private capital from entering the core areas of the media system (Zhao 2008).

Third, while still opportunistically mobilizing the anti-imperialist dimension of Chinese nationalism in its ongoing bargaining with the US for a better deal within the global capitalist order, the party leadership and the mainstream media foreground a pragmatic and cultural form of Chinese nationalism, using it as an instrument for rallying popular support for the party-state-led project of "the Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" (Zhao S. 2004; see also Wu 2008). As China repositions itself "from a Third-World anti-imperialist nation into one of imperialism's 'strategic partners'", essentialized Chinese cultural values and symbols, even vernacular beliefs and practices such as the fetish with the "lucky" number of 8, receive the highest level state sanction. The 8.08 pm grand opening of the August 8, 2008 Beijing Olympics with the Zhang Yimou directed high-tech cultural spectacle is the ultimate embodiment of this version of Chinese cultural nationalism in the digitalized neoliberal era.

Fourth, as the media abandoned the Maoist discourse of class and class struggle, it embraced the discourse of "social strata" and dedicated themselves to the formation of "the middle class", making the growth of this class "a national project that signifies China's membership in the developed world" (Anagnost 2008: 499). Within this discourse, the middle class – whose size and exact constitution remains fizzy, ranging between 5 to 15 percent of the population – becomes a prized political and cultural trope, a force for social stability and perhaps even the agents of (bourgeoisie) Chinese democracy. Under this neoliberal mode of citizenship, "[c]itizen-subjects were no longer defined as equal members of a collective political body but by the degree of their individual progress towards middle class status" (Anagnost 2008: 499). Thus, one witnessed one of the greatest ironies in the cultural politics of post-revolutionary China: the discourse of "class struggle" was taken to its essentialized extreme when Chinese society was relatively egalitarian during the Cultural Revolution, and it was totally suppressed during a period of rapid class polarization during the reform era.

Fifth and as the other side of the media's role in its contribution to, and anticipation of, "middle class" formation, workers and peasants, the prized class tropes of the Maoist era, re-emerged as the "vulnerable social groups" in the official discourse. Rather than a structural factor and a class-charged political issue, inequality is depoliticized and articulated as "cultural difference in a hierarchy of national belonging" (Anagnost 2008: 497). Rather than the revolutionary and productive backbone of the nation, peasants have become the burden of the nation's march toward its ascendancy in the neoliberal global order. At best, they are the ones who need to improve their own individual "qualities", and if they try hard, they can perhaps even become a member of the middle class; at worst, they are doomed to be sacrificed as the "price" for the building of a market society utopia and for the realization of China's "great national destiny" (Zhao 2008: 318).

Communication and a New Politics of Class and Nation in Hu's China (2003-)?

The post-colonial state, as Partha Chatterjee wrote, aimed to "find for 'the nation' a place in the global order of capital, while striving to keep the contradictions between capital and the people in perpetual suspension" (1986: 68). This seems to be exactly what the

post-revolutionary Chinese state has done. To the extent that China has made the largest contribution to global poverty reduction since the 1980s, this is no small achievement. But there are two major problems.

First, this is a damned place in the global order of capital. Apart from and perhaps precisely because of the mounting global political economic crises that we found ourselves in after 30 years of global neoliberal revolution, China has become the target of critique in a global public opinion arena dominated by Western-based transnational corporate media. The liberal human rights discourse has become not only the ideology by which the West condemns China, but also has been mobilized by domestic Chinese liberal intellectuals in their critique of the party-state. This is neither to defend the Chinese state nor to dismiss the Western liberal democratic discourse altogether. China's problems are real. Social and cultural conflicts in every corner of China have intensified, including in Tibet. However, China's problems are deeply embedded in the global political economy and are thus global in nature.

And this is my second point. The problem for both China's bureaucratic capitalist rulers and those in the West who wish for a peaceful evolution of post-revolutionary China into a capitalist liberal democratic polity is whether the new national politics of Chinese middle class formation can happen fast enough before China's low social classes are ready for yet another social revolution in an uneven global order that continues to provoke Chinese nationalism. On the one hand, the specific Chinese manifestations of the contradictions between capital and people are erupting on a daily basis across the nation; on the other hand, different strands of nationalisms are on the rising within and beyond Chinese borders.

If the 1980s ended with the single event of the state's crackdown in 1989, the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st Century have been characterized by intensified and dispersed social conflicts among different social forces on a daily basis. As the processes of social stratification, class polarization, and cultural displacement accelerate, the frequency and velocity, as well as the breadth and scope of conflicts and resistance have also intensified. Despite the state's relentless repression and its pervasive and ever-expanding information control regime, various social forces inside China are communicating their social struggles.

Since 2003, it has become apparent that censorship can no longer keep a lid on the voices of domestic opposition against the ruling elite's agenda of further market-oriented developments at the cost of social justice, equality, and environmental sustainability. Along with the rising tide of popular protests, a protracted debate on the future of China's reform, known as "the third debate on the reform", engulfed the Chinese media and cyberspace between 2004 and 2007. Old revolutionaries, left-leaning intellectuals, and grassroots, online critics of market-oriented reforms mounted successive waves of criticism against the further privatization of China's state-owned sector, the entrenchment of private property rights in the Chinese legal system, and the dominance of Western-style market economics in China. Deng's "no-debate" curse, that is, there should be no debate about the capitalist or socialist nature of the reform, was broken; the neoliberal reform agenda was challenged (Zhao 2008: 287-338).

As the Hu Jintao leadership consolidated its power in the aftermath of the SARS crisis in 2003, China has entered a post-reform era. Although the depoliticized logics of neoliberal politics has not been fundamentally challenged, the division over China's

developmental path is once again discussed as a political issue. Throughout the reform period, the specter of the Cultural Revolution has been effectively invoked to undermine any real political criticism of neoliberal oriented development. “So, do you want to return to the days of the Cultural Revolution?” was the most powerful counter to any critique of the reform process (Wang 2006: 2). Today, in light of mounting domestic social conflicts and in the aftermath of a devastating global financial crisis that has not only discredited neoliberalism, but also rendered China’s exported-oriented developmental strategy utterly unsustainable, accusation of any critique of the current developmental path as an attempt to return to the Cultural Revolution has become less effective.

At the center of Chinese national politics, the Hu Jintao leadership has tried to address the excesses of neoliberal reforms in the 1990s through a combination of ideological and social policy initiatives. Since 2003, a new discourse on development has been promoted to correct the single-minded pursuit of economic growth at the cost of social development and environmental sustainability. The official ideology has put more emphasis on social justice and equity, or social harmony. In late 2005 and early 2006, in response to economic depression and social disintegration in the rural areas, the party leadership recycled a key slogan of socialist idealism of the 1950s; that is, to “construct a socialist new countryside”. Concurrently, the leadership has launched a whole set of redistributive and social welfare oriented policies, including abolishing the agricultural taxes and tuition fees for compulsory education to relieve the burden for farmers, increasing transfer payments to poor provinces to close the staggering regional gap, and establishing social security and health care benefits for the rural population. The 2008-2009 global financial crisis and the collapse of Western consumer demands for Chinese goods has further compelled the Chinese state to develop China’s internal market, boost domestic consumption and improve social welfare for the lower classes.

In the media, telecommunication, and cultural areas, state authorities have launched various projects aiming at improving access in poor rural areas. Instead of relying on the neoliberal “universal service fund” mechanism, China’s telecommunication authorities, in the context of a heightened political discourse of “constructing a socialist new countryside”, resorted to Maoist campaign methods to solve the problem of connecting China’s most remote villages. By the end of 2006, 99.5% of all Chinese administrative villages had telephone connections (Zhao 2007b). Meanwhile, the Ministry of Culture and its local counterparts are in the process of implementing its cultural provision projects in the rural areas.

To be sure, these top-down statist projects of communication and cultural enfranchisement have limitations. As Lu Xinyu (2008) pointed out acutely, one of the main challenges of the party’s “socialist new countryside” initiative is to reconstitute Chinese peasants as social subjects, rather than turn them into passive objects receiving state compensation. Nevertheless, if the mythic universal service fund of the global neoliberal telecom policy regime has yet to deliver universal service to the world’s poor, neither are NGOs equipped to do the job of wiring all the world’s remote villages. Popular struggles for communication and cultural citizenship must be concretized in national politics and state policies. In China, recent state-led projects of communication and cultural access are the political and policy results of the struggles of millions of Chinese peasants and the claims they have made on the nominal socialist state.

Grassroots-oriented projects of media and cultural empowerment have also been

initiated. Sun Heng, a migrant singer, for example, has played an important role in working class cultural empowerment through his Beijing Young Migrant Workers' Art Troupe – an amateur music band of, for and by migrant workers since 2002 (Zhao and Duffy 2007: 241). For their part, some urban intellectuals, in perhaps yet another twist of the Maoist revolution, have even willingly returned to the countryside to pursue rural reconstruction initiatives. Professor Wen Tiejun, for example, is leading a project of rural reconstruction by mobilizing university students to work with peasants. Drawing on revolutionary symbolisms and cultural repertoire, red arm bands identify these students for their revolutionary color, while the popular Cultural Revolution song "Solidarity Is Power" not only provides the immediate medium of bonding between the students and the peasants, but also inspires peasants to recognize the power of being organized (Wen 2008).

Meanwhile, middle class nationalism is on the rising. Commercialized media outlets, the Internet, and mobile phones – the fruits of China's market reforms and the very means of China's re-integration into the global order of capital, have also become the channels by which the most globalized segment of the Chinese population, namely, overseas Chinese and the educated urban youths inside China, expresses the multi-faceted discourses of a transnationalized Chinese nationalism. The outburst of Chinese nationalistic sentiments in the aftermath of the global media coverage of the unrest in Tibet in March and April 2008 is a powerful manifestation of China's rising bourgeoisie nationalism within and beyond Chinese borders. In this movement, overseas Chinese and China's Internet savvy urban youth of the reform era have taken the lead in defending the Chinese state's sovereignty over Tibet in the realm of global public opinion, in struggling for the legitimacy of the multi-ethnic Chinese nation-state, in exposing the Western media for their apparent biases in their coverage of the protests in Tibet. In earlier debates on cultural imperialism, the "active audience" thesis has been deployed to discredit the cultural imperialism thesis. However, in this case, an active transnational Chinese audience mobilized themselves to fight against what they perceived to be the bluntest manifestations of cultural imperialism and racism in the Western media.

For example, one of the widely circulated You Tube videos, "Tibet Was, Is and Always will Be Part of China", was produced by a second-year Chinese university student studying in Canada. The famous website anti-cnn.com was launched by the 23-year old Rao Jing, a recent Tsinghua University graduate in Engineering Physics and an Internet entrepreneur. The Western media continue to fail to acknowledge the independence existence of Chinese popular nationalism by trying to argue that these videos are ordered by the Chinese government or that these youth are manipulated by the government. However, as Gries (2004: 20) has argued, such a view risks "dangerously trivializing the roles that the Chinese people and their emotions play in Chinese nationalism". Still, when Rao and his anti-CNN website, after having first been brought into the global media spotlight by the Western media, were reported favourably by leading CCTV programs, there is no question about a convergence between popular and official nationalistic discourses. The grassroots were leading the Chinese state in this instance. The Western media have given the Chinese state and Chinese media a perfect opportunity to re-establish their hegemony over Chinese society.

To be sure, nationalism as a political ideology is always Janus-faced everywhere in the world. Chinese nationalism is also complicated, fluid, and multifaceted. Some

strands of Chinese nationalism express chauvinistic tendencies and reflect what Leslie Sklair (2001: 29) described as "an arrogant overconfidence in the overprivileged" in response to China's economic ascendancy. Chinese critiques of the US, for example, have often been advanced from the perspective of an aspiring nation aiming to achieve more parity in global power relations, that is, within a realist paradigm defined by the concepts of "comprehensive national power", "national interests", and "the rule of the game" within the order of global capitalism (Zhou 2006). Thus, although some aspects of today's Chinese bourgeoisie nationalism resonate with Maoist anti-imperialism with its critique of Western hypocrisy, it does not have an anti-capitalist class politics.

However, some aspects of the online grassroots nationalistic discourses are more radical than official nationalistic discourses in the media. For example, the Chinese state has been reluctant to condemn the US invasion of Iraq and is collaborating with the US on the war against terrorism. In contrast, there are strong critiques on the Internet about the US's war in Iraq, and some Chinese popular nationalist discourses have moved beyond a reactive and inward-looking stand on Tibet to take on global issues. One of the most popular You Tube videos on the Tibet issue, for example, presented a devastating montage of pictures depicting the sufferings of Iraqi children under the US's war in Iraq and asked the US to stop this war first before trying to free Tibet.

Because the party has not explicitly denounced its anti-imperialist legacy and because it continues to be wary of Western attempts at disintegrating China, nationalism as an official discourse of domestic political legitimation and the dominant foreign policy position of accommodating American global hegemony have always co-existed in tension with a more radical discourse of nationalism as an oppositional force against imperialism and an unjust global order. In fact, official nationalism and the party's foreign policies have been consistently contested in popular nationalistic discourses. Popular left nationalists accuse the Chinese state for compromising the principle of international justice in the single-minded pursuit of economic development on behalf of the ruling elite and the interests of transnational capital, and they have routinely charged the dominant foreign policy elite with being naïve, soft, and selling the interests of China's low social classes in dealing with the U.S. and Japan throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Zhao, S. 2004; Zhou 2006; Shirk 2007; Zhao 2008). These are discourses of popular nationalism which the party-state could neither associate with nor claim to speak for (Hu 2006). Lin Chun's (2006: 238) following observation is particularly insightful:

> As long as the global liberal ideology with an open or unspoken anticommunist (and racist) influence continued to be (perceived as) destablizing, with the collapse of the Soviet Union in the background, official fear and public caution readily joined forces in China. If historically the weak and vaguely proposed liberal solution fell through in revolutionary China because of the liberal-colonial alliance, the constant economic and political "China bashing" at the present had a similar impact. The cold war survived in hot globalization to keep the concept of imperialism alive.

Thus, if China must revisit its developmental path and make it ecological and socially unsustainable, the West must overcome the legacies of Orientalism, imperialism, and cold-War inspired anti-communism in its understanding and treatment of China.

Conclusion

Saskia Sassen (2006) has analyzed in some detail the emergence of "global classes", the movement toward postnational and denationalized citizenship, and their implications for politics. The objective and subjective microstructures of power and authority in globalized and globalizing China, however, go far beyond what Sassen has described. For example, many members of China's ruling communist elite are said to "rule naked" in China. Not that they do not dress up; as a matter of fact, they often dress up in the grandest of global super-brands. Rather, this refers figuratively to the widespread phenomenon of Chinese officials striped themselves of their families by sending their spouses and children, and along with them, illegally accumulated wealth, to the West. Thus, for the Chinese ruling elites under "neoliberalism with Chinese characteristics" (Harvey 2005), not only there is no society, let alone a socialist one, individuals and their families have strategically (re)located themselves to different nations to secure the maximum personal advantage in a global capitalist order. Meanwhile, some women Christian believers belonging to underground rural churches in China's hinterlands claimed that they are not afraid of suppression by the Chinese state, not because they can count on the protection of God, but because then US president George Bush is also a Christian (Author's Interview with Yu, Jianrong, July 2008).

And yet, paradoxically, Chinese nationalism not only remains a force to be reckoned with, but also has acquired a strong and powerful transnational dimension. That is, as China is further integrated into the global order of capital, members of China's increasingly denationalized middle class are articulating their transnationalized nationalism and waging struggles for China's territory integrity and national dignity in the global symbolic arena. In doing so, they are bolstering the legitimacy of the Chinese state. Thus, as China's workers and peasants are making redistributive and social justice claims on this state and propelling it to fulfill its socialist promises from within, China's increasingly denationalized middle class are protecting this very state from the outside. This historically specific re-articulation of nation and class at the current juncture not only continues to bolster China's post-revolutionary state in the order of global capital, but also makes it impossible to completely shed its socialist color. Even more interestingly, in an attempt to counter the West's liberal democratic discourse and to fight against a transnationalized Tibetan ethno-nationalist movement, the Chinese state, while championing Chinese nationalism on the one hand, has been compelled to reclaim class-based solidarity with the Tibetan nation on the other. In a highly symbolic move in January 2009, the Tibetan Autonomous Region National People's Congress established March 28 as Tibet's annual "Serf Liberation Day". In the official media discourse, this is to commemorate the Chinese People's Liberation Army's quelling of a March 10, 1959 armed rebellion led by "the Dalai Lama and his supporters in the upper ruling class ... with assistance from some western powers", and the subsequent completion of a "democratic reform" that led to "the emancipation of millions of Tibetan serfs and slaves" from the Dalai Lama's "feudal serfdom" and "theocracy" (Xinhua News Agency, 2009).

To be sure, Chinese liberals and neoliberal intellectuals – who have ready access to the Western media and whose suppression by the state always makes global news headlines, call for Western-style democracy and the end of one-party rule. However, among China's low social classes, socialist values and Maoist slogans remain the language of resistance against the state's capitalistic oriented development policies. Instead of call-

ing for regime change, workers and farmers are trying to make the state live up to its revolutionary mandate against foreign capitalists, private interests, and local authorities (Harvey 2005; Perry 2007). "New left" intellectuals, for their part, have insisted on "the continued importance of the state's political authority in domestic struggles for social justice and equality" (Anagnost 2008: 500). As Lu Xinyu put it, one of the tasks of China's "new left" is to "use social movements to temper the left hand of the state" (Author's Interview, June 27, 2008).

During the Maoist era, the official slogan proclaimed that "only socialism can save China". During the reform era, when China has played such a pivotal role in bolstering the global capitalist order, it was said that "only China can save capitalism". Now, with mounting global financial, social, cultural and ecological crises, it is not clear whether even China can save capitalism. Nor will the demonization of China for its human rights records – let alone resorting to the ugly face of racism – do the job. On the one hand, China's popular classes are crying out against being sacrificed for China's rising in the global capitalist order, while critics who have argued for socialist renewal are threatening to gain strength in China's symbolic universe, especially on the Internet, despite the party-state's draconian regime of control. On the other hand, the anti-imperialist legacies of Chinese nationalism continue to animate Chinese politics at the global stage.

Hegel and Marx have both been credited for saying that all great world-historical facts and personages strike twice, first as tragedy and then as farce. But maybe this is not the end of the story for the Chinese quest for domestic and global justice, equality, and dignity in the name of socialism. If the post-Mao Chinese state has unleashed the forces of the market under the name of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" from above, China's leftist intellectual forces and subordinate social agents have rediscovered China's revolutionary legacies and the socialist discourse in their attempts to subject both the power of the post-Mao state and the power of the market to societal needs. It is precisely in this sense that I have argued, "perhaps not only the Party's official socialist slogans per se, but also their reappropriation by various Chinese social forces and the unfolding societal processes of subordinating both state and market to the social needs of the working people, are what the struggle for socialism in China is about" (Zhao 2008: 343). Chinese popular energies are infusing Chinese politics, economy and culture with more democratic and egalitarian impulse, and this time, perhaps more enduringly.

If the Maoist socialist experiment was a tragedy; the Dengist reform program a farce, is it possible that socialism may strike China for a third time, neither a tragedy, nor a farce, but a "reasoned utopia", in the way that Pierre Bourdieu (1998) elaborated? As Lin (2006: 287) put it, "[t]hat capitalism does not have an answer to China's and world's fundamental problems, is what sustains the quest for alternatives." Whatever forms such alternatives may take, they may indeed resonate with the 2008 Beijing Olympics slogan "One World, One Dream" in one sense: the dream for the full development of human potentials across all the global divides.

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