

People's China: a New Civilisation

The Hope for European Socialism in the Chinese Alternative

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For 21st Century Socialism

A pamphlet from the Ernest Bevin Society.

Soviet Communism : A New Civilisation? was a 1936 book from the famous Fabian socialists Beatrice and Sidney Webb. It was written at a time when the British Empire's control of world politics was fading. And when Fascism and Global Leninism looked like rival models of the future.

The Webbs dropped the question mark in later editions.

At the time, no one saw the Soviet Union as a failure. Still poor compared to the West – but it had also been poor in Tsarist times. It suffered a lot more during both World Wars. It had been through the trauma of making a new way of life.

In the 1960s, the USSR was an impressive alternative. But then lost the race to the moon, and discredited itself with Western radicals by invading Czechoslovakia in 1968. Confused and frustrated its own radicals. And damaged its once-powerful economy by bizarre economic reforms that might be called 'capitalism without capitalists'. You can find a detailed account of this at our website: Brendan Clifford's *Marxism and Market Socialism*.¹ He predicting in the 1960s that it would fail.

None of these errors were errors made because the Soviet system was socialist. It was down to bad leadership. They bungled a policy-shift after Stalin's death, whereas China was much defter and less damaging in its retreat from the very radical aims and policies of Mao.

The pre-industrial world consisted of a number of alternative versions of an Advanced Agricultural Civilisation. Some of these were empires that successfully stamped their way of life on a wider region. And often the fall of an empire would lead to a decline of cities and a general decline in the advanced arts of civilisation.

Marx looked just at the history of Western Europe, and saw this as a linear advance: slave states to feudal to commercial. This was an older idea, also found in Adam Smith. And he was less willing than Adam Smith to see states like India and China as valid alternatives. He

¹ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/the-soviet-past/marxism-and-market-socialism/>

elaborated the schema, finding good evidence of an earlier age of Primitive Communism, and a divergence into an 'Asiatic Mode of Production'. And of course he expected progress after commerce or capitalism, with the future emergence of first Socialism and then Communism. First rewards for work rather than ownership, and then a society with such abundance that people could work as they pleased and consume as they wished.

There was enough truth in Marx's schema to transform marginal movements in Marx's own lifetime into a Global Leninism that nearly captured the entire world. Came close to making a World State in line with the visions of H G Wells.

Also enough complications to derail the movement. Stalin had to compromise with those complications, and did so successfully. Denying this and denouncing him as willfully wicked was both damaging and untrue. And I see it as no accident that the main survivals of the once-dominant Global Leninist Movement are those movements and countries that refused to do this.

I also see no possibility of China reviving Global Leninism, or gaining the sort of global hegemony that the USA had in the 1990s. Imperial China imposed a standard way of life on its core, but always preferred peaceful coexistence with lands on its fringes. And they largely ignored the wider world.

Imperial China also considered itself *the* civilisation: something that everyone should eventually follow, though there was no need to rush the process. Chinese since the Opium Wars have merely struggled to get accepted as *a* civilisation, not inherently better or worse than anyone else's version. It is the USA that keeps up the imperial notion that they champion *the* civilisation, with a right and even a duty to impose it on everyone else.

Existing human diversity should be safe enough with the growing power of People's China.

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This article is about China, but People's China could not have existed without the Soviet success from the 1920s to 1940s. Even

the failed Kuomintang regime needed massive Soviet aid to get as far as it did. Without the Soviet victory in the Russian Civil War, China might never have lifted itself out of the morass of feuding warlords. Imperial Japan might have taken it over piece by piece, perhaps locking the world into a system of rival dictatorial empires.

The Soviet challenge helped turn the West into a significantly different civilisation. A massive role for the state became the norm: something borrowed from both Fascism and Leninism. And the long slow march towards racial equality and sexual equality was denounced as ‘Communist inspired’ for as long as it was a live issue. But as each reform became solidly part of mainstream Western values, any link with Communism would be denied.

This falsifying of history was helped by the way in which the West overtook Global Leninism in the 1960s and 1970s. The West accepted homosexuality as first legal and then as socially acceptable. Almost equal, these days, with the Hard Right fighting a ‘rearguard action’. And there was gradual movement on racial equality and rights of women, where the Soviets had once been pioneers.

European Leninism weakly collapsed into the arms of the USA and European Union, when many of the reasons for staying different had mostly vanished. Russia was then mugged and robbed: punished for being foolish enough to be so trusting. But most Western writers find it surprising that most Russians backed Putin. That they still share his values, even if some of them are now losing faith in the man himself.

China as Foe, Friend, Failure, Friend, Foe Again

It has been a different story with China. Leninism in China remains strong. On sexual matters it remains less permissive. Homosexuals are no longer viewed as criminals, but they have to keep a low profile. Women are not scared to walk alone at night, though it helps that a death penalty for rape gets often applied. And they remain a minority in the top political leadership. But when it comes to curbing the rich, China sets a good example.

An example hated and feared by the West’s millionaire elite. So they use their dominance of the media to talk up real or imagined faults in People’s China. Mostly things that are downplayed or ignored in places that the millionaire elite wish to stay on good terms with. Traditionalist autocrats in the Middle East are the most blatant example, but it is part of an old pattern, and not just applying to China. Saddam Hussein was rescued from his failed war against Iran in 1987.² But he was redefined as part of an Axis of Evil after the Soviet Union lost its superpower status.

2 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-004-october-1987/why-the-west-saved-saddam-hussein-in-1987/>

China itself got a lot of positive reporting when it was a useful ally against a fading Soviet Union. That lasted from the Nixon-Mao peace till 1989, and was resumed when Islamic Extremism became an alarming global rival. And when Xi became President back in 2012, there was some hope among Western experts that he would move China more towards the economic pattern of the US or European Union. All that was definitely known by outsiders was that his main rival had been Bo Xilai, who had sounded leftist and even revived Maoist culture.³

What actually happened was that Xi moved by stages to the sort of policies that the West had feared Bo Xilai would have tried. And probably did them better. My own judgement of Bo Xilai was that he was irrelevant after one of his main supporters sought refuge with the US consulate. And I had no idea what Xi would do: but increasingly I found him positive.

And the millionaire elite that dominates Western politics found him negative. And managed to turn around Western views, even among Western leftists.

A pattern of powerful kingdoms and empires switching alliances is known from the oldest records. It is probably much older. But in the modern world, it is centred on the elites in Britain and the USA. Those elites have repeatedly played on the feelings of the common people. Both the good feelings and the bad:

In 1878, a popular song gave Jingoism its modern meaning:

“We’ve fought the Bear before, and while we’re Britons true,

“The Russians shall not have Constantinople.”⁴

The British Empire had spent decades defending the Ottoman Empire against Tsarist Russia. It did so at the expense of Christians in the Balkans and Anatolia – Anatolia used to have Christian communities that had been there since the time of Saint Paul. They were safe enough for as long as the enemy was Russia and not Britain also. Just as Christians in Iraq were safe until the West became a bungling conquering power.

No real principles were applied, at any stage of the imperial venture. The British Empire chose to wage war on the Ottomans from 1914. In 1915, Britain and France explicitly gave them Istanbul / Constantinople.⁵

Still ‘Britons true’?

During World War One, most ordinary Britons believed wartime propaganda that Britain was being defensive. Also tales about German atrocities in Belgium: stories that were wildly exaggerated and often later admitted as untrue.

Untruths that had a horrible come-back later in World War Two, with the entirely genuine facts about the Nazi death camps widely believed to be false,

3 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bo_Xilai

4 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/By_Jingo

5 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constantinople_Agreement

even by soldiers in the front line of the war against Germany. This must also have fed into the refusal to bomb the railway lines that took Jews and others to the death-camps till almost the end.

Bombing the camps themselves might have harmed the inmates. But where was the problem with bombing those railway lines specifically used for sending millions to their deaths? It makes sense, only if you assume that the ruling elite in Britain and the USA did not want vast numbers of additional Jews beyond those they had already accepted. Jews who were often viewed very negatively, despite all of the good work they had done.

Hitler was only an extreme of a widespread prejudice found in the Anglo centre-right. Hitler was viewed as part of normal politics, until he became the Great Enemy in World War Two. I've done a detailed study: *Hitler – the 13th Chancellor*.⁶ Detailing how the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was treated seriously in respectable British newspapers, before much of its texts was found to be taken from a French pamphlet written against Napoleon III, and entirely unconcerned with Jews.

We are embarrassed today by the fascist sympathies of Henry Williamson, author of the much-loved novel *Tarka the Otter*.⁷ Awkwardly, he continued to express admiration for aspects of Nazi Germany during and after the war. Otters in jackboots don't fit our image of the period. But in fact the entire centre-right was sympathetic to fascism in the 1920s and 1930s, switching only when it became a power-political struggle between the British Empire and Nazi Germany.

The Poland for which Britain started the war was a military autocracy had a lot in common with fascism. This included hostility to Jews, though they would accept converts.

G. K. Chesterton, author of the much-loved *Father Brown* stories, was pushing antisemitism well before Hitler got going.⁸ Hilaire Belloc, now mostly viewed as part of a charming vanished world, gushed with enthusiasm over Mussolini.⁹

To be more exact, these links to British heroes are embarrassing if known. They are less well-known than they should be. Useful facts to mention when faced with right-wing protests over 'woke culture'.

Regarding the carve-up of the Ottoman Empire, Pat Walsh has written an excellent book on the topic: *Britain's Great War on Turkey*.¹⁰ He details evidence suggesting it was all planned and the British public

fooled: you can find more on his website.¹¹

Britain might have chosen to stay out of the extra war that Russia waged on the Ottomans, while also fighting Germany and Austria-Hungary. The Soviet Union and Japan kept peace with each other till almost the end of World War Two. But actual events showed that the Ottoman Empire in 1914 was scheduled for dismemberment. The British Empire's elite launched a disastrous invasion of Mesopotamia: the land they later redefined as Iraq, with no concern for the rights of Kurds.¹² They did the disastrous Gallipoli landings. They encouraged an Arab revolt based largely on false promises, relayed by T. E. Lawrence who had thought the promises honest. And they did get control of Jerusalem and other places important in the Christian bible. Not originally intended for Jews, and there were then still considerable Arab Christian populations. But later with the war going badly, it was found expedient to sort-of promise it as a dumping-ground for displaced East European Jews who were not wanted in either Britain or the USA.

Current policies towards China are probably no wiser than the British elite's decision to team up with France and Tsarist Russia to break Germany. But it is something that ordinary people could stop, before anything too bad happens.

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In the 20th century, both the pro-Western Kuomintang and the rising Chinese Communists had been shaped by Soviet influence. By their aid from 1920 to 1927. Even if you think that the Kuomintang might have raised up Mainland China in the 1940s after years of failure, you'd still have to credit the Soviets for making it possible.

The Chinese Communists learned modern politics from the Soviets. Learned it well enough to make changes, and to avoid Soviet errors. But China had been a sophisticated civilisation for more than 2000 years: from the Han Dynasty. They showed no signs of producing such a thing for themselves. When Imperial China encountered Western ways in the shape of visiting European empires, they disliked what they saw. And when the Opium Wars made them accept in principle that they must adjust, they were entirely unable to do so.¹³ And did no better when they tried copying European liberalism with the pre-Communist Republic of China.¹⁴

Non-Communist Chinese efforts at imitating Europe make me think of the old Chinese saying about *an ape dressed up as a philosopher-king*. A saying more commonly translated as '*dressed as the*

6 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/hitler-the-13th-chancellor/>

7 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Williamson

8 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/G._K._Chesterton#Charges_of_antisemitism

9 <https://mrgwydionwilliams.quora.com/Why-Hilaire-Belloc-Reverenced-Mussolini>

10 https://www.atholbooks-sales.org/searches/author_search.php

11 <https://drpatwalsh.com/category/turkey-and-ottoman-empire/>

12 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamian_campaign

13 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/traditional-china-resisted-modernisation/>

14 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/why-chinas-blue-republic-achived-nothing/>

Duke of Zhou: but most people outside China would not know Zhou Wen Gong Dan from Zhu Bajie: 'Piggy' from *Journey to the West / Monkey*.¹⁵

Plato's idea of a philosopher-king (basilio) resembled the Chinese traditions consolidated by Confucius. And I'd also say that Plato's scheme was unworkable, whereas ideas credited to the Duke of Zhou were used to make a stable long-lasting state.¹⁶ A state that was much the most successful pre-industrial state. A state that made inventions that Europe needed for its rise, as I detail later.

Leninism described European realities and scientific realities with enough realism for the Chinese to make their own version. Not without misunderstandings and dogmatism, most of which were straightened out by Mao.

*

Fascism and Global Leninism were viable, at a time when Western governments hung on like limpets to 19th century ideas. Methods that no longer worked. Ideas that were discarded in the World War, when the Nazi version of Fascism turned out to be an unexpectedly dangerous foe. And when there was no choice except to accept Global Leninism as an ally.

But it was never the case that '*there is no alternative*'.

Fascism was an efficient social system. But one that denied human equality. One that was taking the world in a direction that most of us would find abhorrent.

Most of us **now**.

At the time, many on the centre-right and even centre were much more positive. It was only when Hitler and Mussolini became clear enemies of British and US interests that they became abominable foes. And with the Soviet Union as a useful ally, Western social values moved towards Soviet values. Away from older Western values that were embarrassingly similar to fascism.

That was the usefulness of the Soviet example.

The Webbs didn't want a Soviet Britain. But they recognised that Stalin had successfully established a whole new way of life. Such shifts fitted Arnold Toynbee's notion of a great number of alternative civilisations, not graded as 'higher' or 'lower' as most Western historians did at the time. There was a lot wrong with Toynbee's viewpoint, but his basic insight has become the norm. And it is an improvement on Marx, who saw the sequence in Western Europe as an evolution, and largely ignored the advanced civilisations found elsewhere.

Leninism was more genuinely global, with Lenin writing *Backward Europe and Advanced Asia*. It helped the wider world get some confidence in their own cultures. Just add socialism to the best of your older values, and you'd be ahead of the world!

China has actually achieved this.

The Republic of India had some success with Moderate Socialism, but then ran out of good ideas. Hindu extremism is taking over: much more alien to Western values. And it's not the only example of well-meant moderation producing very unwelcome results

Meantime the Soviets under Khrushchev and Brezhnev blundered their way out of a very strong position. Gorbachev moved much too late, and foolishly thought

15 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zhu_Bajie

16 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Duke_of_Zhou

that the West was friendly. He trusted a vague verbal assurance that NATO would not advance to the borders of Russia if the Soviets withdrew. He could have got a binding agreement: he saw no need.

Yeltsin was worse: he shrank the economy after trusting Western advice.

Putin stopped the rot. And now a shrunken Russia leans on China for support.

Deng moved away from Mao's hard-line radicalism, but insisted that the goal was still socialism. And showed this in practice, by always keeping strict controls on foreign capitalists. Putting limits on the new rich who were allowed to emerge within China.

By never allowing the free flows of borrowing that damaged the Asian Tigers in 1997.

By allowing family farms, but keeping ownership collective.

From Deng to Xi, Chinese leaders have correctly guessed that each individual global corporation would care mostly about itself. In the abstract, they might like to see Chinese socialism trashed. But their own fortunes come first. And this is something which most Western journalists avoid noticing.

I say more about this later on. And put it all in a wider context.

Adapting Kipling, one could say '*they know not China, who only China know.*'

China is part of world history, with some surprising similarities to things in other civilisations. This I will detail later. But first, the basics of what the British Empire did to China.

The Making of Nemesis

Western media tell us that China is both dangerous and likely to fall apart economically. And a bad place to invest.

It is presented as a global struggle between capitalism / democracy and socialism / dictatorship, with capitalism / democracy hyped as the inevitable victor.

This is a re-hash of Cold War propaganda against the Soviet Union. Which was itself a re-hash of propaganda against Nazi Germany. But it was true that the Soviet Union before Gorbachev did genuinely hope to reshape the rest of the world in its own image.

Yet plans to reshape the rest of the world in their own image were always there with the British Empire. And more intense and less responsible in the US Hegemony that took over from it.

More exactly, this was always the intention of the elite. Most of the public didn't feel an urgent need. Foreigners becoming more British might be nice, but why spend or suffer for it? Aggression had to be sold as self-defence.

There was a zeal inherited from Puritanism. This was felt in a more moderate way by Anglicans and skeptics. The elite felt they had a right and a duty to stop anyone else being different.

Many of the methods were dirty and profitable, but the belief in 'normalising' foreign countries helped justify the process.

It was very profitable for the East India Company to force Indian farmers to grow opium, and then sell much of it to independent traders who would smuggle it into China. But it was also a matter of policy, carried on when the British government took over. George Orwell's father had a career in the Opium Department of the Indian Civil Service: he dishonestly covered this by just calling him a 'colonial civil servant'.

The First Opium War was very much a Public-Private Partnership. The East India Company built the first significant steam-and-iron warship, the *Nemesis*.¹⁷ Named for a Greek goddess who enacts retribution against those who succumb to hubris, arrogance before the gods. No doubt they saw Imperial China as guilty, and never thought that they themselves might meet a nemesis later on.

Like the later and better-known Monitors of the US Civil War, the *Nemesis* was designed for coastal warfare. It could enter shallow waters, and sail up rivers. But it was also ocean-going, able to sail round Cape Horn. Built in Britain and obviously designed for aggression against China. For the protection of opium smugglers, since it was foreseeable that Imperial China would eventually react against the destructiveness of imported Indian opium. Turkish opium had been an older Chinese habit, but a minor one. It could be foreseen that the new opium would indeed be a nemesis for a civilisation that the ruling elite in Britain very much wanted to crack open.

Some Britons protested, as did other Europeans and US citizens. Britons ensured that the Opium Wars remain known as such, with the bland alternative 'Anglo-Chinese War' seldom used. But the opposition failed to stop it happening.

The British elite also found itself over-extended after cracking open China. Both the Roman Empire and the Chinese Empire had accepted people from any background if they could absorb the culture. Most empires did that. But the British Empire was always run on strictly racist lines, and even lower-class Britons and the Catholic Irish were viewed with suspicion. So cracking open Japan was left to the USA, with Commodore Perry in the 1850s.

Since the Anglo elite was mostly racist in both counties, they saw nothing dangerous in forcing Japan to copy them. It was assumed that they'd always be inferior copies. They kept this view of Japan, right up until World War Two showed otherwise.

They made a 'Nemesis' to crack open China. But confidently gave all sorts of favours to Japan, which was to be the British Empire's nemesis in World War Two.

Why a British Empire that was explicitly racist believed it sensible to build up a people outside of the Superior White Race is a puzzle. The British Empire chose to treat Japan as an equal with the Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902. Britain was helpful in their massive defeat of Russia in 1905. They seem not to have asked whether one Asian nation defeating one nation of the White Race would encourage other Asians to think that they were biological equals. To think that they just needed to change and modernise their culture. It assuredly happened, but somehow the elite failed to expect it.

One notable Asian to celebrate Japan's 1905 victory was a schoolboy called Mao. You can find details in his 1930s

17 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_\(1839\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nemesis_(1839))

autobiography. A remarkable work dictated to Edgar Snow, who then translated it and published it in *Red Star Over China*. For my suspicion that more happened than Edgar Snow apparently realised, see *China: Nurturing Red Stars*.¹⁸

The elite had always included a non-racist minority, who might have kept the British Empire alive for longer if they had been stronger. Most of these were cultural chauvinists. And so are most of their modern heirs. For them, Anglo values are Truth. Foreigners who tried to be different would find that Truth compelled them to conform.

With regard to People's China, this view used to dominate. It remains widespread.

Western politicians almost all push the line that People's China is inferior-but-dangerous. This was actually true for the Soviet Union in its years of decline. The years after it botched modernisation by crushing Czechoslovakia in 1968. But China has made far fewer blunders than Western leaders since the 1970s. China remains vigorous.

The Soviet Union began in 1917. It lost its status as a global alternative when it lost Middle-Europe in 1989. Curiously, the death of Stalin sits mid-way: 1953 is 36 years after and 36 years before. Of course you could just as well date the state from its formal creation in 1922, or its clear survival after the last White Russians died or fled in 1923. Its formal end came in 1991, when the Russian Soviet Republic exercised its constitutional right to withdraw. Still, I thought it worth mentioning.

I am much more definite that Khrushchev and Brezhnev bungling the post-Stalin era. That their mistakes doomed what was an entirely viable system.

Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin is praised by most Western thinkers. Deng is criticised for not doing the same to Mao. But it is Deng's heritage that goes from strength to strength.

I have most Western experts against me on this, and the entire Trotskyist movement. But I also have the facts on my side.

Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Isn't

People of all outlooks get confused by treating 'capitalists' and 'socialists' as mirror images. Socialists are normally people who believe in socialism as an abstract principle, though in socialist states they can be insincere. But people living in societies where capitalism is free-flowing may not believe in it as a *good* thing. Many will see it just as a way to get the money to live as they wish to live.

When working capitalists believe New Right doctrine, they must also turn a blind eye to the intensely social and corporatist values of modern corporations.¹⁹ The way in which you need to fit the culture of whatever group you do business with²⁰ There must be quite a lot of double-

18 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/china-nurturing-red-stars/>

19 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/before-2018/labour-affairs-before-2014/the-usefulness-of-group-thinking/>

20 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/48-economics/economics-is-about-people-not-money-2/1146-2/>

think. And perhaps a lot of them no longer believe the New Right: they just support people who favour business interests at the expense of everyone else.

Nor is belief the main point, in most cases. You don't need to be a Marxist to expect working capitalists to follow the money, much more often than they follow whatever principles they have, or claim to have. Indeed, you'll probably know it if you are almost anything other than a New Right fantasist. Or one of the more abstract Libertarians who can't understand why real businessmen act as they do.

From comrades in what is now the Ernest Bevin Society, I learned to read the papers and magazines that working capitalist rely on to tell them what's really happening. Notably the *Financial Times* and *The Economist*. And I've repeatedly found that much of it contradicts what is said elsewhere. Not just populist nonsense, but what's said by the BBC and by quality newspapers and magazines.

The 'quality' media peddle propaganda to educated people who don't have to run a business in the real world. For those who do, the story is often very different.

The following are just a selection:

"Don't believe the deglobalisation narrative. Data show trade balances are not shrinking and foreign investment continues to pour into China..."

"Foreign direct investment flows into China should be shrinking if companies are pulling out. But China overtook the US as the top destination for new FDI last year..."

"Why hasn't deglobalisation taken hold? Companies make decisions about production based on hard calculations about their bottom line over the medium- to long-term. Building a new supply infrastructure takes considerable time and resources. Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co is building a semiconductor factory in Arizona that won't be operational until 2024, for example. Most supply chains don't repattern at the push of a button."²¹

This applies even to Xinjiang, when serious money is involved. Sources sympathetic to Beijing are pleased to point this out:

"A rare form of quartz is key to Xinjiang's solar boom..."

"The US has cracked down on the Chinese region's solar industry, citing human rights, but hasn't tried to leverage its own near monopoly in high-purity quartz

"The raw material is vital to the low-cost mass production of polysilicon, the prime ingredient in solar panels"²²

"Xinjiang's exports to the EU boom, despite political concerns over forced labour

"The bloc's imports of products from the region rise 131 per cent in the first six months, according to an assessment of Chinese customs data

"Debate on labour appears to be having little impact, analysts say."²³

21 <https://www.ft.com/content/a0683e4f-dde6-4164-b4a3-5f5062c73825> (pay site)

22 <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/3153656/rare-form-quartz-key-xinjiangs-solar-boom-and-almost-all-it-us>

23

The West's official narrative about Uighur protestors flipped during the 2010s. At one time, these were clearly identified as violent separatists. Some guilty of terrorism. Many moved to West Asia and joined Islamic extremists there. Many Uighur exiles helped oppress both Mainstream Muslims and non-Muslim minorities that had traditionally been tolerated.

Then came the 'flip', which somehow happened very smoothly in what is always called a Free Press.²⁴ But is a press dominated by its owners, and with journalists mostly respectful of the elite even beyond the money they get paid. So suddenly Uighur separatist were presented as poor little innocents picked on for no good reason.²⁵ And China as a whole was so tainted that perhaps you should not do business there. But as I said, the norm in business is '*Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth Isn't*'.

"Global holdings of Chinese stocks and bonds have surged about 40 per cent to more than \$800bn over the past year as investors bought assets at a record pace in spite of souring relations between Beijing and the international community."²⁶

I did find a few writers who spoke freely about the oddity:

"Foreigners rush inside the Great Wall

"Globalisation was meant to change China. Instead, China is changing globalisation

"Early last year, as covid-19 brought China to a near-halt for several weeks, multinational corporations caught a glimpse of a different kind of globalisation: one without a dynamic Chinese economy at its heart. Panic ensued.

"Foreign businesses confessed that they had grown too dependent on China as the easiest and best place to make and sell their wares, whether for export or in domestic markets. The new virus, coming on top of a trade war with America, was declared a salutary shock that would drive big changes. Foreign firms pledged to build more resilient supply chains by diversifying into other countries, while noting that they would keep production sites 'in China, for China', to serve Chinese demand when it returned.

"A year on, the mood is very different. Nearly 600 companies responded to an annual survey of business confidence conducted by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China, which was published on June 8th. They described surging optimism about China, with economic growth having resumed far more quickly than expected. Three-quarters of European firms said that they were profitable in China in 2020, allowing them to send revenues back to headquarters suffering from dismal results elsewhere.

"Strikingly, however, the same companies remain as sceptical as before that China will open markets

<https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3142389/xinjiangs-exports-eu-boom-despite-political-concerns-over>

24 <https://www.quora.com/q/pwqwxusqvnzrzlm/>

Xinjiang-and-the-Invention-of-Uyghurs

25 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/West-Reports-Only-Propaganda-on-Xinjiang>

26 <https://www.ft.com/content/f0c71c66-b386-4f3c-8796-4384e7378a56> (pay site)

or enforce regulations in the same way for local and foreign firms. The same share as ever, one-sixth, report being compelled to transfer technologies in order to maintain market access. Two-fifths say that the business environment in China is more politicised than before. That share would surely have been higher had the survey been conducted after recent Chinese sanctions on European politicians and the whipping up by state media of consumer boycotts against H&M and other clothing brands, in response to European criticism of abuses in the far-western region of Xinjiang.

“European companies report losing business opportunities because of laws that demand that sensitive technologies used in China must be secure and controllable by Chinese authorities. Those laws are buttressed by rules banning many data transfers across China’s borders. That is forcing multinationals to build duplicate databases, cloud services and software systems just for China, and to hire all-Chinese research and development teams. Increasingly, says the EU chamber’s president, Joerg Wuttke, firms must build one operation for China and another for the rest of the world...

“In private, European bosses concede that they have less and less leverage when trying to persuade China that it is in the country’s self-interest to open up. Some are growing keener to use sticks against Chinese business in Europe, such as investment-screening mechanisms or rules that would impose new costs on carbon-intensive projects or firms that are heavily subsidised by the Chinese state.

“The China led by Xi Jinping is selective in its welcome to foreign firms. The most favoured sell things that China cannot make for itself, such as high-tech chemicals and industrial machinery, and whose presence attracts specialist suppliers. Such firms enjoy red-carpet treatment: they are allowed to create Chinese subsidiaries which they own fully, helping them to protect trade secrets, and are spared red tape that entangles lesser rivals. A lower tier of foreign firms makes products that Chinese consumers like, such as fancy European cars. The state tolerates their presence as long as they make those things in China, using Chinese workers and components, and pay local taxes. That can be profitable: some multinationals earn almost half their revenues in China. But that is because they are operating entirely within the Chinese wall. China is not especially important as a market for Western-made exports: the EU sells more to Britain than to China, for instance.

“It is getting harder to bring foreign staff into China, particularly during the pandemic. Localising many jobs is a good idea: mediocre expatriates enjoyed unearned privileges for too long. But in a China steeped in angry nationalism, localisation also carries risks. Some Chinese executives take their government’s side over stalled reforms, or over political issues like repression in Hong Kong and Xinjiang. Others have a tin ear for politics in

the West.”²⁷

It makes no sense to them. It makes perfect sense to me.

“Wall Street and the Chinese military industrial complex...

“The commissioners are chosen by both Republican and Democratic leaders, and there was unusual consensus around this year’s report, which lays out the ways in which the Chinese Communist party (CCP) is building up global economic, political and military power to push forward a **‘new model for human advancement’**. The party is doing so with plenty of help from Wall Street, as FT readers will know. The question is, how long will this divide last? Is it possible to have American financial institutions indefinitely funnelling capital in and out of a country that supports forced labour; has low environmental, social and governance standards; and is the US’s chief strategic adversary?

“I think the answer is no, but I must say I’m gob smacked that the hypocrisy of American banks and asset managers pouring money into companies that might endanger US security isn’t getting more attention...

“In plain language, US investment banks and institutional investors can still buy, sell and profit off of Chinese military related companies as long as they are not doing so in the United States and only involve non-US citizens. If we are really interested in protecting US national security rather than simply appearing to, this loophole should be closed, as the commission recommends.”²⁸

I see things differently. My belief is that ‘insiders’ know that China is never going to attack the USA, which has a vastly larger military machine. And China has never yet invaded a foreign country with a view to changing its social order. They use military force only in places like Tibet, which never ceased to be part of China under International Law. And in waters that the West has always called the South China Sea, and where the USA at one time supported modern claims that Imperial China had also made

There is no aggression.

All that the Chinese have done is to put themselves in a position where they can be confident that the USA will never attack them.

The reason for the sudden increasing hostility to China is the wish of the West’s millionaire elite to limit the influence of the **‘new model for human advancement’**. Which is in many ways a variant on the West’s own Mixed Economy. A system that worked very nicely in the 1950s and 1960s, and needed just minor reforms in the 1970s.

Western society as a whole has got nothing extra from the New Right ‘reforms’ of the 1980s. I detailed this in the last issue, *Multi-Millionaires as a Blight on Civilization*.²⁹

But powerful people don’t follow delusions. Western society isn’t really a whole. It is a consensus between

27 <https://www.economist.com/china/2021/06/10/foreigners-rush-inside-the-great-wall> (pay site)

28 <https://www.ft.com/content/09efa1c8-6bb8-4855-a63e-e26c3afa3eb0> (pay site). Emphasis added

29 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/problem-labour-47-millionaires-c.pdf>

many different interest groups. And from the 1980s, the fading of older socially-based definitions of class allowed a millionaire elite to fool the public into giving much too much power to this elite.

The libertarian hope for lower taxes and a smaller state has not happened. Centre-right hopes of saving their social values have not really happened: they have been fobbed off with hostility to immigrants in Britain and the USA. Also with gun-enthusiasm and hostility to abortion in the USA. But now many of these are out of control, with Brexit in Britain. With the Trump movement in the USA rejecting elections in which the 'White Race' is now outvoted by supporters of multi-racialism.

To defend their privileges, the millionaire elite have to push the line that alternatives are worse. But they hardly ever let such claims get in the way of their own drive to own more.

I've collected many more instances of trust in China – far too many for one magazine. So I have made a blog of them. Those with the time and interest can learn more of what business experts will say to each other.³⁰

'Glad To Be Corporatist' – the Fascist Influence

From the 1980s and into the 2010s, the West's elite thought that China was going to surrender to their values. Or at least their business values. Whatever they say in public, it has always been business values that count. From the 1950s to 1970s, where Hard Leftists and Communists had great electoral strength, the USA sponsored plenty of coups. Freely worked with dictatorships, and propped up Franco's Spain. And down to the present, hereditary rulers in Arabia remain friends of the West.

The hope of adding China to their system was strong. And it was certainly true that People's China under Deng was allowing freedom to foreign capital. Freedoms that the Soviet Union never allowed even under the 1920s *New Economic Policy*. Surely it would soon 'normalise'?

But there was nothing normal about what was being urged on China. The Mixed Economy that had run successfully from the 1940s to 1960s borrowed heavily from Mussolini's idea of a Corporate State. And from Hitler's much more successful implementation of such ideas after Market Forces had crippled Germany's inherently strong industry after the Wall Street Crash. The USA had done similar things with Roosevelt's New Deal, but in the run-up to World War Two it had been damaged by hostile decisions by the US Supreme Court. Without the war, he might not have got an unprecedented third term in 1940.

In modern times, there are New Rightist who are *absolutely certain* that the New Deal prevented a free-market recovery that would otherwise have happened. The continuing failure of other economies that stuck to pre-1914 values is not seen as relevant. They continue to show brilliance at arguing away all off-message facts. I even saw arguments about 'rational bubbles', though I've not encountered any since the bursting of the actual bubbles in 2007 /2008.

The raw facts suggest that the New Deal allowed a more state-dominated economy to succeed. Allowed it to keep

30 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/China-Putting-Your-Money-Where-Your-Mouth-Isn-t>

a lot of capitalism, and to have pluralist politics.

The war allowed the USA to have its all-time optimum in the 1950s and 1960s. Without being forced to fight World War Two, this would probably not have happened.

Hitler could probably have cut short the war after his unexpectedly swift conquest of Poland. Would Britain and France have refused, had he offered to restore a reduced version of Poland? Maybe something based on the landlocked Duchy of Warsaw that Napoleon created?

Hitler could also have had a victorious peace after the Fall of France, had he made it clear that he had no wish to invade Britain or dismantle the British Empire. At that time, Churchill's position was weak. There were serious thoughts about giving up Gibraltar, Malta and the former German colonies. And all experts on the period agree that Hitler had no wish to rule Britain or destroy the British Empire. Nor was he particularly keen on getting back the former colonies. What he wanted was probably less than what Britain would have given. But Churchill managed to persuade his colleagues that for Britain to make an offer of peace with concessions would make them look weak. And for no clear reason, Hitler never went public with just how modest his demands would be. I have imagined what he might have said:³¹ but in the real world he never said it.

The era of the Mixed Economy was an oddity. The West accepted 'corporatist' economics, without changing its open electoral system or its lightly-regulated press. A press that had rich owners and which has always been more right-wing than the British electorate. But until the 1970s, the Mixed Economy was tolerated by the centre-right. It was seen as unavoidable, because no one could deny that both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan had been unexpectedly strong after defying the older Western consensus on politics and economics. Nor could they deny the strength and success of the Soviet Union as Lenin and Stalin had made it.

The Soviet system was damaged by Khrushchev's irrational pretence that Stalin had been something different from Lenin. Stalin in early 1917 had kept the Bolshevik Party to the conventional Marxist view that Russia after the Tsars should have a long period of capitalism and 'bourgeois democracy' before socialism would be possible. When Lenin returned and argued that peaceful progress was no longer possible, Stalin did no more than go along with this. There was anyway no prospect of ending the disastrous war with Germany except by a Bolshevik take-over. Kerenski remained committed to the war till the very end. And many Russians still dreamt of capturing Constantinople: the city they called Tsargrad and saw as the basis of their Christian faith.

The Bolsheviks had rejected Christianity, and tried to be friendly to the new state made by Ataturk.

Our Unknown Habits

How is it that some people see capitalism as freedom, and others see it as a denial of freedom? And likewise for socialism. For the world's various religions. For the sexual norms overturned in the West in the 1960s. For a whole host of other things.

31 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/44-fascism-and-world-war-2/how-hitler-might-have-had-a-victorious-peace/>

One recent case. How could Taliban fighters impose a harsh Islamic order, and believe they had finally delivered freedom after years of oppression?

But a lot of confusion can be avoided by asking the right question. Not *'why don't they like Freedom?'* Ask instead *'why don't they like my sort of Freedom?'*

I had long decided that *my sort of freedom* is just that: what I am used to. I'd prefer to think it is also closer to truth than the alternatives: but obviously that could be disagreed with. And since part of it is atheism, I'm not expecting Afghan tribalists to share many of my feelings or aims.

I was not at all surprised that hard-line versions of Islam became much stronger after the West's leaders made several foolish attempt to dump our entire social system onto an alien society.³² When they attacked the authoritarian and independent-minded regimes that had been keeping control of people with much more alien beliefs and habits.

Individuals from almost any society can sometimes be assimilated into almost any other sort of society. Colonialists called it 'going native'. But people from a poorer or less powerful country may also 'go metropolitan'. Identify with the new society, and perhaps give honest and foolish advice on how to change the society they came from.

You also get people who make a big act of adapting, but have kept their core values. And sometimes give intentionally dishonest advice. It seems that a lot of this happened with the US bungles in Afghanistan and Iraq.

What's natural to you may seem very unnatural to people from other cultures. This is what the West's liberal-left have almost always failed to understand. Why they keep repeating almost exactly the same errors, and keep being surprised.

What I realised, after much pondering, was that most of our thinking has been decided for us by others in the wider society. Decided for us with the input of past generations. I realised how much it was true for me, living in the core of Britishness, which laid down the main lines of modern globalisation. For others it is harder, and sometimes now rejected.

When the controls are unfamiliar, you call it Mind Control. You mostly don't notice it in your own society. But when you do, you may get unreasonably offended.

Our 'Inherent Freedoms' and 'Unique Individualism' are concepts we get given and then mostly assert loudly. Mostly without noticing their social origin.

US Individualists will be offended when I point out that one US Individualist is much like another. Even if they paint their faces and wear horned helmets of a sort never worn by the actual Scandinavians who sometimes sallied forth as Vikings.

I plan to offend them further, if they ever read me. They are currently ruining all of the good work that the USA did in the past.

*

We live in a society where most things are measured in money. We take this to be the norm. And even accept the

32 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Afghanistan-Taliban-and-Nothingists>

silly story that a society is like a household, needing to cut back in hard times.

But human life is much more variable than that.

Until the last few decades, a majority of the human race were subsistence farmers, eating what they grew. Some tribes didn't use money at all. For most ordinary farmers, it was secondary.

Cities were mostly the core of a large farming community, with specialist trades. Larger cities might also house a large government, or be a vital trade link between other cities. Or both, as London was. Or they might be intellectual centres, as Paris is for France, but England had Oxford and Cambridge and separate weaker influences from Glasgow, Edinburgh and other cities. The USA had trade and culture in New York, but also in Los Angeles and San Francisco, and not much from Washington DC as their political core.

Cities had specialist functions, and people with distinct ideas might gather in the city that best suited them. But only in the 19th century did you have large numbers of cities detached from rural life. And only now are such cities becoming the global majority.

Then there's democracy. Mostly seen as identical with multi-party elections.

Our pundits and politicians assume that everyone should have the Westminster system of multi-party competition. And should like it.³³

They should be given it even if it killed them. And sadly, it often has killed many of them.

But even in Britain, the right of all adults to vote for their choice of political party is new.

It was only in the 1880s that a majority of British men got the vote. Most hadn't been that concerned. And it needed a lot of work by a militant minority to get votes for women in 1918.

The 'laws' of economics are also based on human habits and beliefs. So they can never be like the laws of physics.

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Seeking to prove this, I looked at a clear example – language.

The New Right love to spread fog and darkness over all the facts that might expose their shallowness. But the grammar of the various human languages is **both an objective fact and a subjective choice**.

The rules of the language your own, you might to break choose. But often do it, and easily understood you will not be. Irritate your readers or listeners, you will.

And most of the time, you don't notice that the collective will of other speakers of your native tongue has been imposed on you.

You ought to notice if you adapt from another society. But a Russian Jew called Alisa Zinovyevna Rosenbaum was able to become Alice O'Connor and then publish as Ayn Rand, without learning any sort of wisdom. She became instead a brilliant publicist for the USA's core misunderstandings. She spent much of her life working as a Hollywood screenwriter, which must have helped. She worked for what was aptly called the Dream Factory, **and most of the products intentionally avoiding unpopular**

33 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Parliaments-the-Least-Bad-System>

truths.

One example: high-speed car chases are routine, and *innocents are never killed or badly hurt in them*.

Most of us live within assumptions that we don't question. Our use of language is one clear case.

I've not seen any book or popular account that fully explains just how arbitrary our English grammar is. Or says much about the differences without using the specialist language that linguists have evolved to talk meaningfully to each other.

One simple example from our complex English grammar. A native English speaker would always say *a large blue lorry* rather than *a blue large lorry*. *A beautiful old Chinese vase* rather than *a Chinese old beautiful vase*. But while applying the rules without error, we mostly could not explain what the rules are. I've looked it up, and can give you a web page to check if you want to know.³⁴ But it would take considerable effort for me to memorise rules that I nevertheless know internally.

And that's just English. French often has the adjective after the noun, and not randomly. It seems that age and size normally go before the noun, but colour, shape etc. come after. But there is also some flexibility:

"Quantity would always go first, as in English, but the latter 3 (opinion, size, and age) are more flexible. Also in general the French would limit their phrase to one adjective before the noun (besides quantity)."³⁵

A further complication: sometimes position changes the meaning. I wrote about this in a general study of human-defined laws and unavoidable natural laws:

"Thus *un hôpital ancien* is an old hospital, but *un ancien hôpital* is a former hospital. And *un grand homme* is a great man, but *un homme grand* is a tall man." (**The Muon and the Green Great Dragon**.)³⁶

I later asked about it on Quora,³⁷ to get further details. And was rewarded with a brief account of the logic behind it:

"If an adjective is usually placed before the noun, putting it after the noun emphasizes it and changes something in the essence of the noun..."

"If you say 'une nouvelle voiture', it just means a new car. If you say 'une voiture nouvelle', it's a car that has something groundbreakingly new about it."³⁸

But these are members of the same language family. In other language families – Chinese, for instance – rules that seem *natural* to a speaker can confuse people from another culture. The same sound can become a completely different word if you use the wrong tone, which foreigners

34 <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/grammar/british-grammar/adjectives-order>

35 <https://www.quora.com/What-are-the-rules-for-order-of-adjectives-in-French>, answer by Stephen Walker.

36 <https://gwydionmadawc.com/75-other-science/physics-and-the-nature-of-reality/>

37 Quora is much the best question-and-answer site on the web. There is some silliness, but also many very intelligent answers. You can find it at <https://www.quora.com/>, and membership is free.

38 <https://www.quora.com/Is-it-true-that-in-French-un-h%C3%B4pital-ancien-is-an-old-hospital-but-un-ancien-h%C3%B4pital-is-a-former-hospital-And-are-there-other-similar-shifts-in-French>, answer from Claire Delavallée.

mostly get confused by.

One lady learning Chinese confessed to having sex with cats, when she was only trying to say she had a cold. Apparently easy if you get your tones wrong.

Another case – a Chinese lady I knew from my last paid employment was asked *how were your daughters' exam results*, and answered *I have twin*. Chinese does not have our built-in plurals. She was clever and her English was clear, but she did not fully understand our rules.

There can also be foreigners slightly garbling one of our phrases. Like a Finnish lady speaking of *cutting down corners*, and of a father and son fighting *like cat and mouse*. Neither of them much like those animals, and I am glad to report that the relationship was later harmonised.

Standard English can also be ambiguous. The BBC reported the outcome of a much-watched recent trial as follows: *Ghislaine Maxwell was found guilty of procuring teenage girls for abuse by a jury in New York*. We need to check the words against our knowledge of the world to decide that the jury did the convicting rather than the abuse.

Lawyers can and do produce unfair results by using such ambiguities in normal language.

*

Humans generate rules for themselves, and these can be changed by persuading other humans that these are wrong. We also bump up against fixed realities of the physical world. Water on Earth naturally flows downhill: we need to hold our water mains at high pressure so that an upstairs tap will work.

I have written much more on such matters in my essay *The Muon and the Green Great Dragon*. Plus an explanation of why it does *not* apply to the classical issue of Schrodinger's Cat. Much comment on it superficial, and I seem to be the first to notice that he said it while taking refuge from the Nazis in Oxford. Probably influenced by the Cheshire Cat in *Alice in Wonderland*.

The basic point is that pioneering right-wing economist Adam Smith believed that his notion of 'the natural order' would be easily accepted by the educated.

He didn't at all understand why Britain's North American colonies would not be content to be governed by a Westminster Parliament that gave them no official voice. To him, this was bafflingly irrational behaviour.

Different ideas of 'the natural' always exist. And they collide in revolutions.

The American and French Revolutions define what we are, though the French version was several times rolled back and restored. And it is not what Adam Smith supposed to be natural.

Calling the Soviet Union a failure is common among today's leftists. And it is flatly wrong.

It failed as the core of a World State – the sort of thing many had imagined, and which H G Wells popularised in his books. But every other attempt also failed.

On the positive side, the world as it is in 2022 is much closer to what the Bolsheviks were seeking in 1922 than what any other government wanted in 1922. Rights for women had advanced by 1922, but an inherent right to equality was widely denied. Likewise racial equality, and

Woodrow Wilson had actually strengthened separation in the Federal Government during his time as President. Empires that combined several European nationalities were broken up after World War One, but Imperialism of Europeans over non-white peoples actually expanded with the destruction of the Ottoman Empire.

Inherited class privilege was the norm in 1922, and there were rigid separations of social habit. Separations that made it easier for working-class people to realise that they had distinct interests. That they needed Trade Unions to defend those interests.

Stalin: Negotiating With Necessity

People get very confused by the phrase *Freedom is the Recognition of Necessity*. Attributed to Hegel. But is he saying you have free will? Or is he denying it?

To me, the whole thing is a muddle. I'm not sure that Hegel even used that exact phrase. But Engels seems to me to get it right when he said:

"Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity..."

"Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends."³⁹

Let's take a simple case. A trivial case, and within most people's experience. I plan to shop at both a greengrocers and a supermarket, but it is raining heavily. But the weather is also rather hot, and the greengrocers will close soon. So I have several options:

- a) Go out anyway, accepting I will get wet.
- b) Go out wearing a heavy raincoat, accepting I will get less wet but will be uncomfortably hot.
- c) Wait in the hope the rain will ease soon, and intending to rush to get to the greengrocers.
- d) Wait for the rain to ease, but do not rush, since there are several busy roads to cross. If necessary, get slightly inferior fruit and vegetables from the supermarket.
- e) Wait till the rain has eased. Plan to go again tomorrow for fruit and vegetables.
- f) Abandon plans to shop today, hoping that tomorrow will be better weather.

What I can't do is decide to go out in the rain but not get wet. *Willing* it does no good. But my inability to wish away the rain does not mean that I lack free will. I set out six options, and more might be added. And it also assumes I have the freedom to leave my house, and the money to spend in shops.

There is a more complex situation when we face a human law. In theory, the option to defy it always exists. It is partly a matter of will – the determination to break normal habits, for someone who does not habitually break laws or defy customs. And some estimate of the risk of punishment, which may extend to losing a lot more freedom of choice if you end up in prison.

³⁹ https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Friedrich_Engels: both from Anti-Duhring.

Likewise for human customs. You may lose friendship and risk social exclusion. Even vandalism and violence.

Thinking about this, I came up with the phrase *Freedom is a Negotiation With Necessity*. 'Negotiate' originally applied to making an agreement with some other human, or seeking to do so. But from the 19th century it could apply to a human trying to get what they wanted in the face of natural laws:

"4. a. (Orig. Hunting.) To clear (a hedge or fence); to succeed in crossing, getting over, round, or through (an obstacle, etc.) by skill or dexterity."⁴⁰

*

Critics of Stalin seem to think that he willfully willed the wrong things as Soviet realities, when he might easily have willed something better.

That was what Trotsky claimed. And a lot of Western thinkers have passed through Trotskyism before noticing that it has been futile.⁴¹ Many more let it shape their thinking.

And not just in the West. I was fascinated by a stray mention of Khrushchev having briefly been close to Trotskyism and being forgiven. Everyone else seems to have ignored this. It fitted what I already felt, and I managed to track it down and get solid sources. Available on-line as *Khrushchev Had a Little-Known Trotskyist Past*.⁴²

None of the swarm of global Trotskyist movements have ever come close to being functional revolutionaries. And whatever Khrushchev may have remembered from Trotsky was not a useful guide to action.

Stalin had made an economic success of the Soviet Union, which hadn't been doing well in the 1920s. His ruthless industrialisation was based on a sensible belief that the Soviet Union would be attacked within a few years, whatever he did.

He gets blamed for making a non-aggression pact with Nazi Germany. This was after France and Britain repeatedly failed to make an agreement that would commit them to war with Germany if the Soviet Union were attacked. They later made such a promise to Poland, which angered Hitler. And unexpectedly and perhaps foolishly, he decided to make a temporary bargain with Stalin. That give him freedom to wage war on Poland – but would anyone argue that he'd have spent the rest of his life as a peace-loving German dictator had Stalin acted otherwise?

By making his bargain, Stalin gained time to further strengthen his industrial base. Also time to replace military officers who had been suspected of plotting to overthrow him.

Tukhachevsky was officially declared innocent by Khrushchev, and this has become dogma. But I find it remarkable that no one at all has done a full biography in English.

In known history, the former hero Marshall Petain
⁴⁰ *Oxford English Dictionary* Second Edition on CD-ROM (v. 4.0.0.3). Oxford University Press 2009
⁴¹ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/labour-affairs-before-2014/why-trotsky-politics-achieved-nothing-solid/>
⁴² <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/history-and-philosophy/khrushchev-influenced-by-trotskyism/>

made a compromise with Hitler widely seen as treason, though it can be argued it was not. But no one disputes that Benedict Arnold began as a hero of the new USA, and ended as a traitor. Wang Jingwei in 1927 tried to keep a balance between Chiang Kai-shek and the Chinese Communists, but from 1940 he led a puppet government for the Japanese invaders of China. Soviet General Andrey Vlasov was heroic in several battles, before being captured and forming a pro-Nazi Russian army.

Had any of these been arrested and shot before their betrayals became historic facts, there would certainly be many insisting on their innocence.

Stalin also gets blamed for the early success of the Nazi invasion. But no one has yet found a way to blame him for the equally swift collapse of Norway and France. Or the astonishing advance of the Japanese against both the USA and the European empires in East and South-East Asia. And even Poland had lost almost everything west of the Vistula, when the Soviets invaded from the east. It is unlikely Poland would have lasted much longer had Stalin done nothing.

Nazi Germany build a formidable war machine.

To me, these successes happened because Nazi Germany had made pragmatic adjustments to the failure of the pre-1914 world order. So too had the Soviet Union, and partly in the USA with the New Deal. Recovery and the defeat of fascism happened, because both the USA and Britain discarded much of this old detritus under the pressure of war. And because they needed the Soviet Union to destroy more than half of the total power of the German army. More than half of German casualties were on the Eastern Front.⁴³

Though no military expert would ever claim this, the Western media have successfully created a popular view that the USA did most of the work defeating Nazi Germany.⁴⁴ And most of the left fails to challenge this. Most of them insist on seeing Soviet success under Stalin as actually a betrayal and a disaster.

Stalin's actual policies were a **negotiation with necessity**. A successful compromise between what he wanted and what real live humans could be persuaded to do. Enabled to do.

It is notable that anti-Stalin Leninists have never yet had a successful 'negotiation with necessity'. They promise grand things, but achieve little or nothing. The only successes were Tito and Mao, formed within the main Leninist movement that Stalin led.

Tito repudiated Stalin when he wanted to run Yugoslavia separately. But failed to make a structure that could last after his death. While Mao never repudiated Stalin: he simply tried reforming the successful copy of Stalin's system that China had made in the 1950s.

Deng rejected the policies of Mao's last ten years, but not Mao as a whole. Nor was Stalin ever repudiated. And under Xi, the start of China's rise is definitely identified as being the 1950s and not the 1980s. And Soviet failure is identified as failures after Stalin's death:

"A mainstream view in China is that socialism is

correct, and that it was effective in helping the Soviet Union defeat fascism and build a superpower. The error lay in that leaders of the USSR after Joseph Stalin deviated from the path of socialism, and even betrayed the path and the people of Soviet Union, said Chinese experts, stressing that the success of China today has further strengthened the correctness of this view...

"In China, we have reached common ground after much research and many discussions that Stalinism is not the root cause, and the real reason is that, from Nikita Khrushchev to Mikhail Gorbachev, the leadership of the Soviet Union gradually deviated from and eventually betrayed Marxism, socialism and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people...

"To blame Stalin, or the socialist model built by Lenin and Stalin, for the collapse of the Soviet Union is irresponsible, Li said. 'Although the model was not perfect and needed reforming, the Soviet Union achieved great goals such as industrialization, victory in World War II and a successful post-war reconstruction under this model,' Li said."⁴⁵

All forms of anti-Lenin or anti-Stalin Marxism have proved useless.

Socialists who rejected the Webb's view of the Soviet Union as an alien but useful example have also done badly.

Western socialists have so far been very reluctant to see People's China as an alien but useful example. But I see this as the key to a revival.

Soviet Russian Success Led to Later Failure

Stalin built an authoritarian socialist system, at a time when many Europeans thought that the main alternative was fascism. And many saw fascism as a much better alternative.

If we accept that the Marxist notion of *inevitable* world socialism was wrong, then the actual failure of fascism was a rather unlikely outcome. And it depended on Britain and the USA borrowing the same semi-socialist economics that the fascists had applied successfully.

Fascism also rejected the notion of human equality. The Soviet system had it as the official ideology, and under Stalin they were way ahead of the rest of the world in undermining white male dominance. They were often the first with things that came only later to the nice liberal and tolerant West.

By the 1950s, the West had moved a long way towards the values that the Bolsheviks had asserted as wild radicalism in 1917. They had demanded an end to imperialism, an end to class privilege, state regulation of the economy, racial equality and sexual equality. Also tolerance of sex outside marriage, though an uncertain tolerance for out-of-sight homosexuality did not last long.

Fascism as a global response to Leninism accepted some of these values and sharply rejected others. Enabling the New Right to spread fog and darkness on the differences and assert they were much the same: so it goes.

And from the 1970s, there was a failure to remember how much the Western system had changed in response

43 <https://www.quora.com/q/mrgwydionmwilliams/Nazi-Germany-Was-Defeated-in-Russia>

44 <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Who-Gave-Victory-in-World-War-Two>

45 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202112/1243430.shtml>

to both Fascism and Leninism. The social values mostly came from Leninism. The economics borrowed a lot from Fascism.

More accurately, it was Broad Capitalism.

‘Broad Capitalism’ is any system where capitalism is permitted but does not dominate. Where the state machine can override the wishes of businesspeople, and often does so.

Up until the 1970s, the Western or Keynesian variant of Broad Capitalism was called the Mixed Economy. Vast efforts by the Hard Left convinced most people that it was actually just capitalism. The vast differences between Broad Capitalism, Classical Capitalism, and other versions of Narrow Capitalism got overlooked.

There is also **Imaginary Capitalism**, where everyone is a law-abiding sociopath whose needs and desires are perfectly expressed by cold cash. Where each unit of identical human individualist can perfectly calculate its financial best option, even when the top experts cannot do so reliably in the real world. It makes for some fine fancy maths, which intimidates most people. But such maths is lousy at predicting real-world events.

This is what the New Right call **Rational Economics**.

It is sometimes called physics-envy. But for physicists, even the best mathematic models are thrown out if they fail to match the real world. In economics, never.

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Thatcher and Reagan hoped to restore Narrow Capitalism as it existed before the Great Slump of the 1930s.

They failed.

They did not shrink the state. Nor did they lower taxes for the society as a whole. What they achieved was lower taxes for the rich. Slightly higher taxes for everyone else.

What exists is a new version of Broad Capitalism. One where private companies make huge profits from tax-funded franchises. Where rich individuals and gigantic corporation pay far less tax than the working mainstream; the 99% whose income comes from their own hard work.

There are many possible types of Broad Capitalism. 19th century Tories kept the booming British economy healthy by factory regulations that stopped industrialists from working to death the British workforce. They tried but failed to preserve large numbers of small farmers with the Corn Laws. Then from the late 19th century, the Liberals took over with the basics of welfare. Labour then replaced them. The system peaked in the 1950s to 1970s, which were also Britain’s best years for economic growth.

China’s own Broad Capitalism makes business people much more dependent on the state than has ever been true in the West. Foreign investors discover that you need ‘contacts’ at all levels to prosper. Most of the time, the central government must first *permit*, but you also need a friendly regional government to *enable*. No one can get away with ignoring or defying the authorities, as sometimes happens in the West.

The Soviet Union’s failure was caused by a peculiar attempt to create a state-run market that mimicked the outdated realities of Narrow Capitalism and the seductive notions of Imaginary Capitalism. When this failed, the displaced persons often brought their ‘wisdom’ to the New Right. Their best thinkers are very often ex-Marxists.

Khrushchev bungled the opportunity for change after Stalin’s death. Partly by being needlessly hostile to Stalin. But also by never saying he was moving on from Lenin’s original aims.

Lenin expected the revolution in Tsarist Russia to be the first stage of World Revolution. When various revolutions failed elsewhere, he dug in and supposed it would happen in a few years. Meantime he kept the Soviet base alive, even if it was very like Tsarist Russia reborn with elements of Hard Left socialism.

Khrushchev could have said that things had changed, and that it was quite possible for the West to move by stages to something more like the Soviet system. Some of his remarks suggested that. But he could also be needlessly rude, with remarks like ‘*we will bury you*’ when he was offended by the USA.

He tried an economic reform based on a pseudo-market that was under state control. This never did work well.

And he and Brezhnev continued a global struggle. One that was increasingly a power-political struggle between Russian culture and the British-derived culture of English-speakers in the United States of America. A struggle in which the USA had several vast advantages:

- 1) History had made the USA richer, mostly from excellent farming land seized by armed force from Native Americans.
- 2) In its first critical decades, it had large flows of cash from raw materials it supplied to Europe. Including wheat and timber, but also the cotton and tobacco that it produced cheaply through slave labour. And through heavily oppressed African-American labour after slavery ended.
- 3) Because of the British Empire, English was already widely spoken globally.
- 4) The various European empires had also spread the Latin alphabet. Russia used the Cyrillic alphabet, meaning most of humanity found it much harder to read.
- 5) Entertainment centred on Hollywood was brilliant at packaging sex and violence in forms that escaped censorship. Also covert homosexuality, for that very influential minority. Whereas Russian cinema was mostly serious, and never widely popular in other cultures.

The USA also had vast mineral wealth, but the Soviets with Siberia had as much or more.

Soviet Russia had only one balancing advantage. Like France, its traditional culture had a flexible sort of racism. Races were not seen as equal, but some dark-skinned individuals could be let in to higher social circles. France could celebrate Dumas and Russia celebrate Pushkin without concern for their Black-African heritage. Puskin’s great-grandfather Abram Petrovich Gannibal was pure Black African. Through favour from Peter the Great he rose high in Russia’s aristocracy, and had successively two noble-born white wives.⁴⁶ Someone should do a film about him.

The cultural advantages were separate from the conflict between political and economic systems. They would still have applied had the Tsarist Empire transformed into

46 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abram_Petrovich_Gannibal

a free-wheeling parliamentary and capitalist society, and if the USA had transformed into an authoritarian socialist state. Or if one or both had become varieties of fascism, which is rather more likely.

Leninism Transforming Its Rivals

What Lenin did in 1917 should be understood as a **negotiation with necessity**, just as Stalin's policies were. In 1917, it was not reasonable to expect Russia to move to a period of more vigorous capitalism and bourgeois democracy. Whatever might emerge in the absence of a Bolshevik takeover would be unlikely to peacefully allow socialism to grow within itself. Such growth had been happening up until 1914, but the World War had changed everything. And most socialists had let themselves be pulled into supporting their own governments.

And it's an historic fact that almost every government east of Berlin had lapsed into some sort of right-wing authoritarianism even before Hitler came to power. Italy and Portugal had done so earlier. Similar strong forces existed in Spain, and later won the Spanish Civil War.

For the entire period between the two World Wars, only Leninists scored significant victories for socialism. Roosevelt's New Deal borrowed elements of socialism, but avoided being seen as such. It depended heavily on Southern Democrats who upheld racism and were sympathetic to fascism until they found themselves at war with it,

During and after World War Two, the ruling elite were scared of losing everything. They conceded things that they had once denounced as socialism. And much of it was once again denounced as socialism, when they felt it safe to do so.

By the 1980s, the Soviet challenge had become weak. Attempts to seriously revive fascism within Europe had been a bad joke. Various military-authoritarian regimes had elements of fascism, but did not seriously challenge US hegemony. Nor did Far Right parties, which conveniently set ordinary or poor people in the existing population against some even poorer immigrants. So some of the elite thought it a good time to test the existing 'social contract'. To boost right-wing economists who wanted far fewer rules for the rich and for business interests.

Sweden's *Sveriges Riksbank*, their central bank and the 4th oldest bank still operating as a bank,⁴⁷ persuaded the administrators of the much-admired Nobel Prizes to run what's commonly known as the '*Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences*'. Or even as the *Nobel Prize for Economics*. But a proper translation of the official Swedish name would be the *Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel*, which sounds much less impressive.

Everyone knows the old saying: *he who pays the piper, calls the tune*. The prizes as awarded from 1969 boosted moves away from certain particular regulation that bankers were not fond of.

It was called 'Freedom' or Deregulation. But it has never been an abstract protest against rules as such. But left-wing protestors in the 1960s and 1970s had said 'Freedom', rather than admitting that they wanted a change to existing rules on what was allowed or not

47 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sveriges_riksbank

allowed. Only when it came to making or unmaking the rules did people have to think. Under-age sex was briefly considered for normalisation, but then sharply rejected. Tolerance for out-of-sight homosexuality was OK, but accepting social equality for homosexual relations was another matter. I admit to being slow on the matter, not being the sort of dedicated follower of fashion who'll be happy to agree that certain values have been eternal since last Tuesday. I had to think it out, and therefore came to a better understanding of the matter. Accepted that other people's feeling can be as valid as my own. Might even be closer to some basic truth: no one should assume they know.

1960s radicals mostly talked as if they were in touch with Absolute Truth, and that Freedom was what they said it was. This left them vulnerable.

The rich were able to use this ambiguity to change existing rules in ways that suited the selfish interests of the rich. But to call it Freedom, and maybe even believe it was Freedom.

Atlas's Arse

No one at all tried the Libertarian fantasy of 'no rules'. Ayn Rand believed it, but she believed many strange things. In her much-praised novel *Atlas Shrugged*, she has the crew of a train correctly protest that if they go into a long tunnel with the engine they have, they and all their passengers will suffocate. But when the order is repeated, they decide to do it anyway. Everyone dies. Ayn Rand then gives details of some of the passengers, and explains that they actually deserved this.⁴⁸

In the same book, she believed one of her heroes could blockade all of the world's oceans with just one ship. She clearly assumes that upholders of US Values will easily outfight all their foes. This happens in almost all Hollywood movies: her main paid employment was as a Hollywood scriptwriter.

To test Ayn Rand against reality, you might ask what actual US war veterans think of that. People who fought Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan. Then North Koreans and their Chinese helpers. Then the Vietnamese, where they greatly respected their foes and were justly furious when the second Rambo film pretended it should have been easy. And all through the Cold War, they worried a great deal about how they'd cope with a Soviet invasion of Western Europe. There was a widespread belief that there would soon be a choice between defeat and using nuclear weapons. And more recently and continuously they have done badly in fights against Sunni Islamists: 'Black Hawk Down' and many similar incidents.⁴⁹ And then over two decades against more traditional Extreme Muslims in Afghanistan, ending in humiliating failure.

A different sort of Islamist extremist in Hezbollah also forced Israel out of The Lebanon. Israel's earlier success and also the US success against Baathist Iraq had seemed to back the myth of Western superiority. But only showed that it was relatively easy to beat people who tried a simple copy of Western methods. Similar people on the US side in South Vietnam and more recently in Afghanistan were

48 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/50-new-right-ideas/ayn-rands-atlas-shrugged/>

49 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mogadishu_\(1993\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Mogadishu_(1993))

mostly despised by US military who had to deal with them directly. Likewise the non-Communist forces in China fighting Japan, though there were always people like General Sitwell who insisted that Chinese could be excellent soldiers with the proper leadership.

In real history, it was the Chinese Communists who made Chinese into modern soldiers, and also modern factory workers and technicians.

In the wider world, it was mostly socialists of various sorts who were able to make such transitions. Including Arab Socialism, which the USA went to great lengths to wipe out after the Soviet collapse.

The only exceptions I can think of are cases where a traditional elite used its authority to impose those changes they saw as fitting. Japan is the prime case. Japan remains impressive, and it remains resistant to many of the things that the West would like to impose on it. But its long stagnation and later poor performance after its first Economic Miracle can sensibly be blamed on them swallowing too much of the New Right medicine in the 1980s.

To return to Ayn Rand, you might also ask well-paid bankers and speculative traders whether they felt attracted by her idea in *Atlas Shrugged* that the privileged people should abandon all they had and go live in a small town **at mediocre small-town incomes**. Whether they would do this joyously, because they had been relieved of the horrible burden of taxation and regulation.

Wait for them to stop laughing, before getting scientifically reliable answers.

Their actual dreams are of dodges like sitting in vast luxury liners and avoiding all tax. Something partly realised by various tax havens. But that depends on the rest of the world letting them do business with very few checks.

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Pure libertarianism is pure nonsense. But ‘moderates’ are now claiming that the compromised New Right version achieved a lot. The ‘Washington Consensus’ is widely rejected.⁵⁰ But they’d still say that the pre-1980s system could not have been continued. That putting back some of the New Deal limits on the rich would be a bad idea.

Total global wealth has grown since the 1980s. But a lot of it has come from China, which never let capitalism run free.

We have many new types of consumer goods, with most of them welcomed by most people. But both the internet and microchips were developed by the US military, which would subsidise anything that looked interesting without concern for whether it might be profitable, or even possible. And the world-wide web, the most successful of several systems running on the internet, began as a personal venture by a scientist working at the gigantic pure-science research centre of CERN.⁵¹

The West has not improved its overall performance since it tried to move back to pre-1940s economics. Society as a whole has gained nothing that could not have been reasonably expected if voters and politicians had kept confidence in what is loosely called Keynesianism.

50 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Washington_Consensus

51 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_Berners-Lee

If there had been no privatisation and no removal of curbs on speculation. Curbs that the USA imposed after the Wall Street Crash of 1929 and the Great Depression it helped trigger.

Society *as a whole* has gained nothing. But society is not a whole: it is a consensus between rival social groups. The weakening of the old visible differences of accent and habit between most people and the ruling elite tricked many into forgetting that they were indeed an elite.

The new consensus that emerged from 1960s radicalism was absorbed and controlled by the New Right, with many former leftist flipping.

People had demanded freedom for their own bodies, and freedom to publish sexually explicit writings that had been banned. They got this. But as they got more money and power, they were persuaded that ‘freedom of money’ would also be a good idea.

Most of the propaganda did not put it like that. People were led to believe that an abstract right called Freedom was being harassed by the big bad state. So they voted centre-right. They put their trust in people who were close to the Millionaire Elite, or actual members of it.

They were told that they’d get Freedom. But the next generation found that they had less functional freedom than their parent’s generation had possessed.

In the USA, more unemployment and lower incomes for ordinary workers.

But they remain terrified of state power.

People’s China as an Alarming Success

There is nothing at all natural about what Western politicians and pundits are currently asking China to move towards.

There was also nothing natural about what Mao in 1949 decided that China should be moving towards. Don’t confuse ‘natural’ with ‘desirable’. And never forget that what you think of as desirable might not seem so to others.

Never forget that every reform program has a social cost, unless those who might have resisted it are utterly demoralised. But in 1949, most Chinese accepted that some sort of drastic change was needed.

The modernised socialism developed by Mao was all very new and strange to most Chinese. But Chinese also knew that they were behind much of the rest of the world. And the Kuomintang made a mess of what should have been its best period. With the Japanese gone, it offended people who’d known the harsh but efficient rule of the Japanese in Manchuria and Taiwan. Many soon said that their new rulers were worse than the Japanese.

And there was no Land Reform. The USA after 1945 could probably have bought out Chinese landlords, most of whom were poor by global standards. The British state did successfully buy out Irish landlords in the late 19th century:

“The success of the [Irish] Land Acts in reducing the concentration of land ownership is indicated by the fact that in 1870, only 3% of Irish farmers owned their own land while 97% were tenants. By 1929, this ratio had been reversed with 97.4% of

farmers holding their farms in freehold.”⁵²

From a British ruling-class viewpoint, this wasn't a grand triumph. Balfour's hope that this would 'kill Home Rule with kindness' proved false.⁵³ When the Catholic Irish had their own land to farm, they still felt they'd like to govern themselves and be seen as equal to the Irish Protestant minority. But it probably killed any prospect of Ireland's small socialist movement having a grand expansion, as did happen elsewhere.

To the best of my knowledge, no one thought of this at the time. Nor mentioned it later as the real reason the USA failed to shape China's future. There was a lot of anger at how the USA had 'lost' China, which for a long time had been seen as a little Asian brother that would help the US rise to being the world's Top Nation. US politicians punished everyone who'd told them the truth about how bad the Kuomintang had been: Joe McCarthy took advantage of what others had begun.⁵⁴ But I've never seen anyone notice the missed opportunity after 1945, at a time when the USA was successfully pumping money into Western Europe.

After Mao's success, the USA did spend vast sums buying out landlords in the rest of Asia. People who were happy to have the money in a bank, or investable in business, without the hassle of collecting it from peasants who might turn radical. And in Taiwan, the exiled Kuomintang had no links to Taiwanese landlords who had flourished under Japanese rule. They were happy to make them reform. And could then flourish, with a lot of US aid,

⁵² [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Acts_\(Ireland\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Land_Acts_(Ireland))

⁵³ <https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/heritage/starting-out-on-the-road-to-partition-1.508371>

⁵⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_McCarthy

in a society that had been ruthlessly modernised under Japanese rule. Much as Korea was modernised, and able to be a flourishing society in its own right.

Regarding Korea, both halves were a success in the 1960s. North Korea made a good showing at the 1966 World Cup: the one held in England and won by England. They reached the quarter-finals in 1966, having beaten Italy.⁵⁵ They were the first Asian team in history to make it past the group stage. But that was almost their peak. They trusted the Soviet Union in its dispute with China. They shared the decline of all Moscow-orientated Leninism. History might have gone otherwise, but it didn't.

Starved By Mao?

The Western reading of the tragic events of 1989 is that the Chinese had finally seen sense. That now they wanted Western-style economics and Western-style politics.

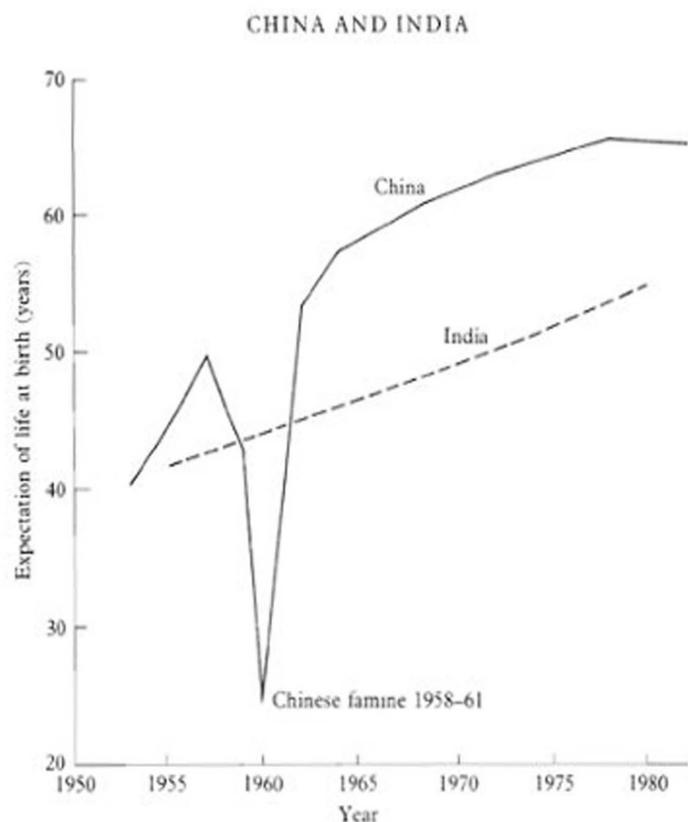
At the time, they were much less vehement about claiming that Mao's China had been a failure. Back then, there were plenty of Westerners still alive who'd seen

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_Korea_national_football_team

Hunger and Public Action (Wider Studies in Development Economics)

14 Mar 1991

by Jean Dreze (Author)



Sources: J. Banister, 'An Analysis of Recent Data on the Population of China', *Population and Development Review*, 10 (1984); S. Preston and P. N. Mari Bhat, 'New Evidence on Fertility and Mortality Trends in India', *Population and Development Review*, 10 (1984), for 1966-81 based on 'the low variant' procedure; *Statistical Pocket Book of India 1984* (New Delhi, 1985), for 1955 (as the 1951-61 decade average).

Fig. 11.1 Life expectancy at birth in China and India

China before 1949. If China in 1976 was still poor by global standards, it was vastly improved on what it had been.

There were also many journalists who had been in China in the Three Bad Years, 1959 to 1961. Those years were not years of disaster: the death-rate peaked at 25 per thousand, which would have been a normal year or even a good year in much of Asia at the time.⁵⁶ Had the mainstream media in the 1970s called it a famine or claimed the death of millions, it would have been much more strongly challenged. Western journalist who knew China might have said it had been just a period of strict rationing and people eating less than they'd have liked. Some of them would have seen authentic famine in India and Africa, and could have said that nothing like that had happened in China.

There were some wild claims from the right-wing media that China was about to vanish completely. They'd been saying similar things since 1949, and also claiming that there had been far more landlords killed during land-

⁵⁶ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/china-three-bitter-years-1959-to-1961/>

reform than anyone would now claim. Someone with access to newspaper archives should collect and publish such stuff, to expose what China was up against and why they got so defensively secretive. But most of the mainstream media talked sense at the time.

What you now get are remarks like ‘*millions of Chinese died under Mao*’. This is technically true, but it would be just as truthful to say *millions of Britons died during the years when Mrs Thatcher was Prime Minister*. Misleading, since more than half a million Britons die in a typical year. I’m not aware of any evidence that more died under her rule than might have been reasonably expected under some other Prime Minister. So though millions of Britons died, Thatcher cannot be blamed for that. She could be blamed for deaths in the Falklands War: I supported the war itself, but felt her earlier errors made it necessary. Perhaps for deaths cause

Mao cannot be blamed for deaths in China, where millions die out of a gigantic population regardless of who is leader. And where is the evidence that a less radical leader would have done a better job over the whole 28 years in which Mao successfully reshaped China?

1950-1955	Africa	26.65
	China	22.59
	India	26.43
	Indonesia	22.72
	Japan	9.10
1955-1960	Africa	24.25
	China	21.28
	India	23.55
	Indonesia	20.43
	Japan	7.83
1960-1965	Africa	22.14
	China	20.65
	India	20.88
	Indonesia	17.90
	Japan	7.25
1965-1970	Africa	20.36
	China	12.80
	India	18.37
	Indonesia	15.50
	Japan	6.79
1970-1975	Africa	18.71
	China	9.18
	India	16.08
	Indonesia	13.21
	Japan	6.46

We can’t visit an Alternate World to see what continuing rule by the Kuomintang would have meant. I haven’t got figures for Taiwan, but those should anyway be credited to the harsh but efficient rule of Japan before 1945. And most Westerners in China between 1945 and 1949 agreed that the Kuomintang were corrupt and ineffective.

For deaths in the real world, there are official UN figures

for many countries.⁵⁷ These confirm that 25 per thousand was normal for poor countries in that period:

This flatly contradicts claims that Mao’s rule caused millions of avoidable deaths.

And in case you think I’ve cherry-picked countries to make China look good, here is a comparison using the UN’s own groupings:

China	1950-1955	22.59
	1955-1960	21.28
	1960-1965	20.65
	1965-1970	12.80
	1970-1975	9.18
Less developed regions, excluding China	1950-1955	23.42
	1955-1960	20.66
	1960-1965	18.31
	1965-1970	16.22
	1970-1975	14.59
Less developed regions, excluding least developed countries	1950-1955	22.47
	1955-1960	20.20
	1960-1965	18.40
	1965-1970	14.29
	1970-1975	11.88

Both tables seem to show moderate Chinese success till 1965, and then dramatic progress for Mao’s last years. But that’s because it is grouped by five-year periods. What actually happened was continuous improvement for most years, but a bad spike when Mao got too radical:

But Mao got too radical after several years of surprising success for radical policies. Anyone’s rule can look bad if you just look at errors and ignore successes.

There was also bad weather, confirmed by many independent source. The books claiming blunders by Mao ignore most of the evidence. I’ve done a detailed study: *China’s ‘Three Bitter Years’, 1959 to 1961*.⁵⁸

China Stagnating Before Deng?

The other popular but false notion is that China’s economy was failing under crazy Maoist policies. That China’s success came only after Deng switched over to capitalism.

It is correctly noted that China was still poor in 1976. What you don’t see in Western sourced are figures for economic growth between 1949 and 1976. You don’t see them because the agreed figures show success for Mao in the years when China was largely shut out of the world market. Years when the USA did everything it could to hamper Chinese trade.

If you read them carefully, the experts seem aware that China did well economically under Mao, having been a Failed State before that. But they mostly avoid

⁵⁷ <https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=PopDiv&f=variableID:65>

⁵⁸ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/42-china/china-three-bitter-years-1959-to-1961/>

mentioning it, hiding behind the misleading truth that it still had a long way to go. I've done another detailed study, *Mao's Economic Success*, available on-line.⁵⁹ But writers and journalists have managed the neat trick of persuading most ordinary readers that under Mao, the economy stagnated and millions starved to death.

Had this been true, then Chinese in 1989 might indeed have been wanting Western-style economics and Western-style politics. This was indeed just what a majority want in European Leninist countries, which had comfortable stagnation. And Leninist states in Europe had a popular transformation between 1989 to 1991, even when not offended by Soviet troops still occupying them decades after their arrival in World War Two. Romania and Albania quickly abandoned Leninism, while Former Yugoslavia self-destructed. Only in Russia were there still large numbers who felt that a milder version of state planning and Leninist politics would be a good idea.

Yeltsin abolished the Soviet Union in 1991, after making himself dominant in what had been the Russian Soviet Republic. He successfully kept control of non-Russian minority regions within the Russia that Lenin and Stalin had specified. He ignored areas that had ethnic-Russian majorities but were in other Union Republics. Most notably and seriously, he missed the chance to re-attach Crimea, which Khrushchev had awarded to Ukraine in 1954 despite an ethnic-Russian majority.⁶⁰

Gorbachev had given the Soviet Union Western-style politics on top of the existing system, and was very surprised when the system fell apart.

Yeltsin had been elected President by a mixed bag of supporters. Some enthusiasts for Western-style economics, and also some enthusiast for the fantasy-economics that the New Right never dared try at home. But also a lot of Russian Nationalists who felt that the Soviet Union had never been Russian enough. Who believed that non-Russian Soviet territories were costing them money. You can find a good account of this in Vladislav M. Zubok's book *Collapse: The Fall of the Soviet Union*.

A lot of Russians elected Yeltsin because they felt he was just like them. Liked him as a person.

Liked. His popularity soon faded.

Yeltsin turned out to be a demagogue with no idea how to rule, as many had feared. Worse, he overrode Russian democracy to impose a Russian version of the fantasy-economics that the New Right never dared try at home:

"Between 21 and 24 September, Yeltsin was confronted by popular unrest. Demonstrators protested the terrible living conditions under Yeltsin. Since 1989, GDP had declined by half. Corruption was rampant, violent crime was skyrocketing, medical services were collapsing, food and fuel were increasingly scarce and life expectancy was falling for all but a tiny handful of the population; moreover, Yeltsin was increasingly getting the blame. By early-October, Yeltsin had secured the support of Russia's army and ministry of interior forces. In a massive show of force, Yeltsin called up tanks to shell the Russian White House (parliament

59 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/recent-issues/2019-11-magazine/2019-11/>

60 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea#Region_in_Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic_\(1945%E2%80%931954\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crimea#Region_in_Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic_(1945%E2%80%931954))

building). The attack killed 187 people and wounded almost 500 others.

"As the Supreme Soviet was dissolved, elections to the newly established parliament, the State Duma, were held in December 1993. Candidates associated with Yeltsin's economic policies were overwhelmed by a huge anti-Yeltsin vote, the bulk of which was divided between the Communist Party and ultra-nationalists. However, the referendum held at the same time approved the new constitution, which significantly expanded the powers of the president, giving Yeltsin the right to appoint the members of the government, to dismiss the Prime Minister and, in some cases, to dissolve the Duma."⁶¹

Both he and Gorbachev are now vastly unpopular with Russians, coming well below Brezhnev. Putin was for years very popular, though this has been fading.⁶² And Stalin remains hugely popular with Russians.⁶³ Russians, Moldovans, and Armenians mostly regret the breakup of the Soviet Union.⁶⁴

Yeltsin nearly lost the 1997 election to the candidate of the re-founded Russian Communists.⁶⁵ They remain much the most popular opposition party, while a mix of squabbling pro-Western parties get about 5% of the vote. Yeltsin survived and passed power to Putin, mostly because he went back on what he'd done.

Western commentators mostly dodge all of these off-message facts. They treat the current anti-US alliance of Russia and China as a baffling mystery.

1989: Chinese Leninism In Peril

The young Chinese radicals who protested in 1989 were very mixed in their views. Even more so than the Russians who thought that Yeltsin was competent and trustworthy when they elected him in 1991.

The Western media have been successful liars. But the big problem with lying is that it isn't true. The centre-right have been brilliant at getting ordinary people to vote against their own best interests. But those people still know that things have gone wrong. Brexit and Trump are foreseeable results of earlier dishonesty.

The liberal whine about a 'decline in democracy' ignores decades of liberals twisting the electoral system. Decades of them preventing the bulk of the electorate getting what they actually wanted.

Yeltsin failed to deliver a Russia friendly to the USA, because Russia was cheated after it trusted the West. They might perhaps have '*killed Leninism with kindness*', but only if they had they been willing to spend. Spend as they did spend in the 1950s and 1960s, successfully

61 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Yeltsin#Confrontation_with_parliament

62 <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2021/06/21/putin-plummets-stalin-stays-on-top-in-russians-ranking-of-remarkable-historical-figures-poll-a74280>

63 <https://www.usnews.com/news/best-countries/articles/2019-05-09/stalin-is-more-popular-than-ever-in-russia-survey-shows>

64 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/06/29/in-russia-nostalgia-for-soviet-union-and-positive-feelings-about-stalin/>

65 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/46-globalisation/1473-2/>

marginalising fascism and containing the spread of Global Leninism.

But for the New Right, actual events were a series of bizarre accidents. Following the New Right wisdom could not possibly fail. Or if it actually did fail, it was a mystery beyond human understanding.

Much fog and darkness has been heaped on all of the off-message facts. The notion that the West willfully attacked a successful economic system in the 1980s cannot possibly be accepted. Nor is it considered possible that Russia was lost because Russia was treated unfairly in the 1990s.

Or that Chinese Leninism recovered and strengthened because most intelligent young Chinese saw what was being done to Russia. Had never had a deep commitments to the abstractions of Western liberalism, and so abandoned it when it was visibly failing.

At the time of the Soviet collapse. George Soros made his first and last intelligent contribution to global politics, saying that a Marshall Plan for Russia would be a sensible idea. He was not the only one. But those in charge decided there was no need to spend much. No need to stop the mass theft of Russian wealth that was widely known to be happening.

And no sensible understanding of what this might do to their chances of making a pro-Western China.

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Back in 1987, I was partly deceived by the mainstream Western reporting of China. But only partly. I remembered 1960s realities, and said the following:

“Twenty years ago, China tried to break the mould of world politics, and failed. Mao made a serious attempt to build a society without the profit motive and without major inequalities. His plan was that the young ‘Red Guards’ should attack and then regenerate the apparatus of the Communist Party. He never doubted that effective power should be in the hands of the Communist Party (ruling ‘on behalf of the broad masses’, of course). But he suspected, quite correctly, that those in charge of the apparatus would be willing to allow private profit and inequality in the quest for economic growth. Therefore, he organised the Red Guards.

“The result was chaos. Red Guards fought each other in a mad factionalism that defies any simple explanation. Everything was disrupted. Leaders appeared, disappeared, and sometimes reappeared. Lin Piao [Lin Biao] went suddenly from hero to nonperson, and then from nonperson to arch-villain. (And this was before the fall of the ‘Gang of Four’.) Mao’s politics were visibly getting nowhere. After Mao’s death, Deng Xiaoping rose to supreme power, and duly took the ‘capitalist road’ that Mao had always been warning against.

“Chinese politics are made by those in charge of the Communist Party apparatus, and they tend to keep their reasons secret from everyone else. Deng has now declared that the leadership crisis is over – but says little about what the crisis involved.

“It seems that the economic changes will not be reversed. They have, after all, boosted production

greatly. On the other hand, it seems absolutely certain that the Party apparatus will remain the only place where real politics occurs – and occurs quite secretly from the rest of the society. How such a system will evolve – if indeed it can evolve – remains to be seen.” (*From Red Guard To Old Guard*⁶⁶)

It was only later that I got hold of reliable figures on Chinese growth and realised that the Chinese economy under Mao had actually done quite well. Had the left in Western Europe and the USA found a left-wing way forward from the 1970s crisis, China could have kept a lot of Mao’s ideas. Instead, there was a dispute among the leaders about how far China should accept Western economic advice at a time when the New Right dominated.

There’s an interesting book called *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*.⁶⁷ Written in 2021, I take it to be one of the specialist books that can talk about Chinese and Russian realities, because most of the public don’t read them. Because the people the public do read will ignore the off-message facts in such books, if they even take the time to read them.

The book is definite about the damage done in Russia and Eastern Europe by what Yeltsin did after trusting Western advice:

“Twice, China had everything in place for a ‘big bang’ in price reform. Twice, it ultimately abstained from implementing it...

“As a result of shock therapy, Russia experienced a rise in mortality beyond that of any peacetime experiences of an industrial country...

“Given China’s low level of development at the dawn of reform, shock therapy would likely have caused human suffering on an even more extraordinary scale. It would have undermined, if not destroyed, the foundations for China’s economic rise...

“China’s deviation from the neoliberal ideal primarily lies not in the size of the Chinese state but in the nature of its economic governance. The neoliberal state is neither small nor weak, but strong... Its purpose is to fortify the market... In contrast, the Chinese state uses the market as a tool in the pursuit of its larger development goals’.⁶⁸

This matches what I’ve said elsewhere– the promise of a small state by the New Right has never been met. They attack welfare and outsource state functions to profit-making companies. They do not attempt to run a modern society or economy with the sort of relatively small state that was the norm before 1914.

And which itself was much bigger than what had existed in 1814. In Britain, much bigger than what had existed in 1714. The poet Coleridge, admired in his own day as a moralist and thinker, warning in 1817 that a large state was necessary for future prosperity.⁶⁹

66 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-002-april-1987/la002-chinese-anti-party-protests-in-1987/>. A PDF scan of the whole magazine can be found at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2019/09/la-002-whole-magazine-1.pdf>.

67 *How China Escaped Shock Therapy: The Market Reform Debate*, by Isabella M. Weber. Routledge Studies on the Chinese Economy 2021.

68 How China Escaped Shock Therapy, pages 1 to 3.

69 <https://labouraffairsmagazine>.

But in 1991, the New Right dominated. Yeltsin chose to accept ‘shock therapy’ at a time when many other choices existed. He had a trust in Western advice that the Chinese leadership never shared. Just as Gorbachev accepted vague assurances that NATO would not be expanding eastwards, and did not get it as a binding agreement at a time when he could have demanded it.

Back in 1989, I missed all that. I’d given up on China after the fall of Lin Biao, which I interpreted as making nonsense of Mao’s politics. Naively – but I was in good company – I hoped that Leninism globally might evolve into Moderate Socialism. So I wrote as follows:

“I was saddened but not especially surprised when the remarkable student demonstrations in China ended in tragedy and repression...

“China has reached a dangerous political situation; those with political power have no moral authority with the rest of the society. I would like to say that it cannot last – but Czechoslovakia is still ruled by the people that Brezhnev imposed in 1968, even though the USSR no longer supports them.” (*For Mao and Liberty?*⁷⁰)

That was July 1989. I don’t remember anyone foreseeing that the Soviet-dominated governments of Eastern Europe would start collapsing later than year, with the Berlin Wall opened in November.

I never expected anything of the sort to happen in China. I called my article *For Mao and Liberty*, because many of the anti-Deng protestors believed just that:

“The Western media insist on seeing politics in Leninist and ex-Leninist states as a struggle between nice moderates and nasty hard-liners. This view of the matter requires some sudden shifts – Deng Xiaoping changed overnight from ‘nice’ to ‘nasty’ when the present round of demonstrations began. But it is the best model they have. They see the juxtaposition of a portrait of Mao and a copy of the American Statue of Liberty as absurd. But the student protestors did not see it so.

“The current repression is being compared to the Cultural Revolution. This ignores one very basic fact – the Cultural Revolution was a popular mass movement. When Mao carried through purges and waves of repression, he had the unquestioning support of the majority of the population.

“What is happening now is repression by a state apparatus that has no popular support at all.

“The student protestor’s attitude to Mao is an awkward point for the standard western model of events. A few of the protestors are anti-Mao; most notably those who threw paint on his portrait in Tiananmen Square on May 23. But most of them were outraged by this action, and a large number of them carried pictures of Mao. These never seemed to be visible in filmed reports from China. But plenty

com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/48-economics/037-adam-smith-misleading-coloridges-alternative-for-the-british-economy/
70 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-012/what-tiananmen-1989-was-really-about/>. A PDF scan of the whole magazine can be found at <https://labouraffairsmagazine.files.wordpress.com/2019/10/0-112-july-1989.pdf>

of Western correspondents mentioned them, and for a couple of days the *Evening Standard* and *The Independent* included them in a few of their photos. But they don’t fit the standard model of events. And journalists nowadays have a depressing habit of leaving out anything that does not fit their preconceptions.

“When the demonstrators were allowed to speak for themselves, one sometimes got a different and more complex view of the matter. For instance, during an interview with two student protestors in Shanghai, one said ‘I have a very strong resentment against Mao for what he did in the Cultural Revolution,’ but the other said ‘Personally I feel Mao was a very successful politician and poet. The breadth of his imagination was remarkable’ (*The Independent*, June 12). I suspect that a high proportion of the other protestors would have insisted on giving the ‘wrong’ answer when questioned about Mao, and that such opinions were mostly filtered out.” (*Ibid.*)

Such off-message facts were largely ignored at the time. And have been wholly ignored since then, in every account I’ve seen. Yet they remain facts.

It is also unsurprising that there haven’t been many Western books or television documentaries about it. Western journalists still have some inhibitions about outright lying. But those who want to keep their jobs become experts at evading off-message facts. They may even convince themselves.

The book I mentioned earlier, *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*, also sees positives in the Cultural Revolution:

“China’s development model in the Mao era was built on a strict urban-rural divide and the extraction of resources from the countryside for urban industrialisation... During the Cultural Revolution ... the far-reaching campaigns for reeducation of the urban elites by agricultural labour replaced the sense of superiority of urban cosmopolitanism with a rhetoric of learning from the peasants... As a historical irony, these Cultural Revolution campaigns also established new links between the urban and rural spheres that became instrumental for the breakthrough in the early years of reform.”⁷¹

Mao abolished the parasitic landlord class, so that most peasants gained a lot. And he managed collectivisation at a village level quite smoothly. It was only when suddenly he expanded them into gigantic communes with populations of tens of thousands that things went wrong. Few Chinese back then were used to organising on such a scale.

Regarding links made, I’ve found similar things in other books. Mao asked young people to think for themselves, and they did. And often ended up thinking things very different from what he’d hoped. But they did make a success of China within the Leninist structure he had helped create. And the ‘Township and Village Enterprises’ were a new name for things within the Great Leap Forward that had worked:

“The State Council of the People’s Republic of China first officially used the term ‘TVE’ in March, 1984. Previously ‘Commune and Brigade

71 *How China Escaped Shock Therapy*, 153-4.

Enterprises' dating from the Great Leap Forward of 1958 to 1961 had served the rural areas. During that time TVEs had a limited role and were restricted to the production of iron, steel, cement, chemical fertilizer, hydroelectric power, and farm tools."⁷²

Had the left won in the West in the 1970s they might have continued to be called Communes, though not Brigades.

The 1989 protests were incoherent. Some of them accepted sneering Western disapproval of the Chinese past. My article quoted what Britain's *Independent* newspaper had reported of the declaration by four hunger strikers:

"For thousands of years Chinese society has continued in the vicious circle of doing away with the old emperor and then crowning a new emperor. History proves that the exit of one leader who is no longer popular and the entry of another cannot solve the substantial questions of Chinese politics. What we need is not a perfect saviour but a perfect democratic system. So we appeal first, that society should use methods to establish legitimate, autonomous and unofficial organisations gradually to form a non-official political force as a check to government decision-making: that is the essence of democracy.

"Rather ten devils to check each other than one mandarin with absolute power."⁷³

Actual human experience has been that when you have several people trying to operate large-scale power politics with no clear leader, they mostly get caught up in power struggles and prevent anything useful being done. Groups without formal leaders mostly work when it is a matter of shared work, and they are not trying to change the lives of others.

The Imperial Chinese state with its network of appointed officials was much more successful at keeping the peace than any other pre-industrial state. Before the 19th century, almost all visitors were impressed by China's peace and sophisticated culture. In mediaeval Italy, Marco Polo's accurate reports of this very prosperous way of life were not believed.

Incidentally, suspicion of Marco Polo on account of him not mentioning the Great Wall is foolish. It was the Ming Dynasty that built the spectacular Great Wall we now see: that was well after his time. Older and less spectacular Great Walls existed, but they were probably neglected or removed on the main routes into China. There was no need for them, since Kublai Khan ruled both sides. And if Marco Polo perhaps exaggerated his own success, his general account matches what many others found.

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During the Cold War, two rival power-blocs each tried to reshape the world. And between the two were a group called the Third World. A mixed bag of states looking for their own solutions.

The Soviet Union under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

showed that it was not going to allow real independence to members of its own bloc. Khrushchev drove away People's China by demanding obedience. Enforced obedience on Hungary in 1956. And Brezhnev and his colleagues, most of them raised up by Khrushchev, undermined serious reform by enforcing obedience on Czechoslovakia in 1968.

The Czechoslovak Communists got 31.2% of the vote in 1946, the last reasonably free election before 1990. A further 6.9% went to a separate Communist Party of Slovakia that had been formed when Hitler made it a separate state in 1939. Other socialist parties also did well.⁷⁴

The Khrushchev / Brezhnev line did immense damage to European socialism. In 1968 Czechoslovakia still had a general belief in socialism. This belief survived only in the Slovak half of the state, and caused the peaceful division at the end of 1992.

Post-Stalin Moscow politics failed, not socialism in general. And Mao turned out to have been right in separating from it.

China under Mao tried to make a new Global Leninism. Unlike Trotskyism, which lacks any significant successes since setting up as a rival in the 1920s, it was taken very seriously in the 1960s. But Mao in his last years accepted there was no immediate prospect. And Mao's heirs accept that most foreign countries will go their own way.

What China now demands is that globalisation should be based on equality. Not the USA and Western Europe trying to bend the entire world to their values.

The Failure of Chinese Liberalism

Oliver Cromwell was the true father of British Liberalism.

Napoleon of the French variety.

Liberalism has never been the Creed of Niceness that it now pretends to be. Niceness could follow after a few decades of authoritarian rule had hammered into the populace the things that allowed a liberal society. It mostly applied just to members of the White Race, as they defined it, and with definite gradings of racism superiority among those classed as White. And almost always with women subordinate.

Tolerance was always within limits.

Tolerance had a way of vanishing when those limits came under serious threat.

You don't need much effort to limit the freedom of citizens that most citizens have no wish to do. And that's a general human condition. We have this well-recorded in the Hebrew Bible, where older sections are all about not worshipping other gods. Later that had become solid, and social justice became the main issue. And no one said much about cannibalism: no one they knew of would have considered trying it.⁷⁵

Yet an abhorrence of cannibalism is not inherent. It was widespread in Maori culture, among others.⁷⁶ And there

⁷² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Township_and_Village_Enterprises

⁷³ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/very-old-issues-images/magazine-001-to-010/magazine-012/what-tiananmen-1989-was-really-about/>

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1946_Czechoslovak_parliamentary_election

⁷⁵ <https://www.quora.com/Does-the-Bible-have-any-specific-prohibition-of-cannibalism>

⁷⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_cannibalism

is solid evidence of cannibalism among Britons living around the Cheddar Gorge some 15,000 years ago.⁷⁷ We who call ourselves true-born Britons probably have genes from those people. But not to worry: it is almost certain that *everyone* has cannibal ancestors, if you could go back far enough.

18th century liberals saw slavery as normal, and useful for Europe opening up the New World. Nor did they mostly believe in female equality or racial equality. And in the first half of the 19th century, it was the Tories who favoured basic welfare and the rights of Trade Unions.

Parnell as the leader of Irish Nationalism freely identified the late 19th century Liberals as heirs of Cromwell. Something they themselves would not have disputed at the time.

But when educated Chinese tried to learn what Western civilisation was all about, they were given a false history. The actual rise of liberalism was distorted.

The half-liberal and gangster-infested Kuomintang failed in Mainland China. They succeeded in Taiwan, because half a century of rule by Japan had hammered modern values into the Taiwanese. And the newly arrived Kuomintang politicians and military had no link with landlords who had flourished under Japanese rule, so they were willing to do a radical land reform. Though it helped to have massive subsidies thanks to the USA's fear of Mao's success being repeated elsewhere in Asia. All sorts of land reforms happened using US cash, though in South Vietnam it never went very far. And in the Indian Republic, there are lots of small farmers but also still a problem with oppressive landlords.

Meantime updating Mainland China so that it could handle the modern world was the task of Mao Zedong. Something he did very successfully, contrary to the normal Western picture given from the 1980s onwards.

China as an Old Civilisation

They know not China, who only China know.

I take this from Kipling:

“And what should they know of England who only England know?”⁷⁸

He was born in British India, as was George Orwell. A surprisingly large number of writers accepted as perceptive of Britain were born elsewhere. Edmund Burke's mother was an Irish Roman Catholic. His father may well have been a convert to the Anglicanism that was necessary to get a good job in that era.⁷⁹

So, I am confident I can understand a lot about China despite limited actual contact and no ability to read or speak Chinese. I can put China into a global context that most people don't know in depths or in detail. And without what I see as hopeless distortions by those who should know better. Even Martin Jacques as a sympathetic writer showed what I'd see as deep confusions when he wrote *When China Rules the World*. I've done a study:

77 <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2010/jun/20/ice-age-cannibals-britain-earliest-settlers>

78 https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Departmental_Ditties_and_Ballads_and_Barrack-Room_Ballads/The_English_Flag

79 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Burke#Early_life

*China Has No Wish To Rule, OK.*⁸⁰

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So let's begin at the beginning. The territories that became China, but were originally something else.

Creatures looking like modern humans emerged in Africa some 300,000 years ago. But what they left behind from their lives suggests that modern human behaviour came later. Maybe 50 to 100 thousand years ago.

Our immediate ancestors dispersed over most of the habitable globe, but only later to the more remote habitable islands. Most notably Madagascar, Hawaii, and New Zealand, all lacking humans until found and settled by the remarkable Austronesian culture.

Elsewhere, our ancestors absorbed various older humans and human relatives. Everyone outside of Africa has genes from Neanderthals. And though North Europeans certainly look more like Neanderthals than other humans do, genetic studies show that East Asians have kept more Neanderthal genes. Most experts think there was a single major mixing in West Asia, and not much thereafter in Europe.

There was also some mixing by a few Asian populations with the Denisovans. And perhaps elsewhere with several other near-human peoples.

All of them were hunter-gatherers: killing beasts and birds and fishes. And also gathering fruits and nuts and grains, and digging up tubers.

Over time, and with life easier after the end of the last Ice Age, many of these humans shifted to agriculture. Different populations did this in most places where agriculture would make life easier, but it's not certain how far they inspired each other. The various peoples of Eurasia and Africa show signs of always having been loosely in touch: probably by tribes talking to near neighbours and it passed on as a chain of contacts. But agriculture also happened in the New World, where pre-Columbian contact is unlikely at such an early date. And it is definite that many different crops were used, and only later exchanged with other cultures within Eurasia and Africa. Not at all with the New World, until West Europeans established regular links.

This should also dispose of the fringe belief in lost high civilisations before the agreed beginning in West Asia less than 12,000 years ago. We have clear records of the slow development and spread of food crops.

Exactly when did agriculture start? That is widely disputed, and new discoveries keep changing the picture. From the Wiki I got the following:

“Map of the world showing approximate centers of origin of agriculture and its spread in prehistory: the Fertile Crescent (11,000 BP), the Yangtze and Yellow River basins (9,000 BP) and the Papua New Guinea Highlands (9,000–6,000 BP), Central Mexico (5,000–4,000 BP), Northern South America (5,000–4,000 BP), sub-Saharan Africa (5,000–4,000 BP, exact location unknown), eastern North America (4,000–3,000 BP).”⁸¹

80 <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/m99-topic-menus-from-long-revolution-website/42-china/42-1-chinese-politics/>

81 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neolithic_Revolution

China as a distinct entity has a confirmed history of maybe 3600 years. The Shang Dynasty was once suspected of being legendary. But ancient written records called Oracle Bones confirm not just its existence, but the accuracy of many details kept alive in the written histories.

Before the Shang was an unconfirmed historic dynasty; the Xia. And before them, a proto-history with a lot of obvious myth in it. Traditionally known as the *Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors*, but Chinese traditions disagree about who these were and how far they were supernatural.⁸²

Traditions about the Xia Dynasty match the Erlitou culture found by archaeologists. This includes a palace and a walled city with 24,000 inhabitants at its peak.⁸³ But they may have been more alien in their politics than the Imperial Histories chose to record. And it was much smaller than the China of clear historic records. It extended across just four of the 23 provinces and 5 autonomous regions of today's China.

Within what's now the Han core of Chinese identity, there were once several civilisations with different values. Probably also different languages. Even if the wave of modern humans who settled East Asia had arrived with a single language, living in separate tribes would have separated them. One or two thousand years of separation will usually turn a single language into two languages that are so distinct that they don't understand each other.

Knowing English, you'd probably make no sense of the following:

“Us Heit, dy't yn de himelen is, jins namme wurde hillige. Jins keninkryk komme. Jins wollen barre, allyk yn 'e himel.”⁸⁴

That's the Christian *Lord's Prayer* in Frisian, the closest living relative of English.

Over several thousand years, peoples once speaking a single language might have changed so much you'd not even put their languages in the same language family. Or do so only speculatively – there are many rival notions and little agreement among experts about super-families linking them.

In Europe, we know that Latin was just one of a group of Italic languages. A branch as distinct as the Celtic or Germanic branches of the Indo-European language family. Most of them used a similar alphabet, so we know roughly what they sounded like. They also shared Italy with the Etruscans, whose language is one of many with no known relatives.

Since Latin was written down and documents survive, we know that it split into many dialects. And these in turn were consolidated into several modern languages: Spanish, French, Romanian, Rhaeto-Romance etc. But 'Spanish' is actually Castilian, and its rivals are still strong. Catalonia might well choose independence within the European Union, but an attempt to hold an unauthorised vote was treated as criminal.⁸⁵ And this was done with very little protest from Europe's liberals: the supposed belief in self-determination tends to be selective.

⁸² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Three_Sovereigns_and_Five_Emperors#Variations

⁸³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erlitou_culture#Erlitou_site

⁸⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frisian_languages

⁸⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catalan_independence_movement

Where people remain tribal, they mostly have lots of languages. Papua New Guinea has 839 living languages, grouped into 42 language families.⁸⁶ There are also a huge number of small languages and language families in Africa and among Native Americans, north and south.

It needs a successful empire to establish a common tongue that the various tribes or small kingdoms need to learn. Or people trading with each other may develop a *lingua franca*; a shared language flourishing without state support.

For China, experts agree that the Shang would have spoken Old Chinese. But Chinese ideograms are logograms: a written character represents a word. People with many different languages can use Chinese ideograms, even though the word or phrase is totally different. Japanese and Koreans did this, and Vietnamese did the same until the French imposed the Latin alphabet. Traditional diplomats from China, Japan and Korea could even hold 'conversations' by writing ideograms they all understood, despite entirely different spoken languages.

In East Asia, Japan seems to have had no written language before ideograms, despite having an advanced culture. But three distinct writing systems existed within the Ba-Shu culture in what is now Sichuan. They appear unrelated to Chinese characters; and so far, none of them have been deciphered.⁸⁷ Ba and Shu had distinct cultures: their difference from later norms is shown by recently discovered relics.⁸⁸ The Qin Kingdom conquered them before unifying China, and the Han Dynasty were also based there initially. A shared Chinese absorbed them entirely, with the lost cultures added things to the expanding mix.

Chinese ideograms can be used phonetically. One famous case is Coca-Cola, which Beijing shopkeepers in the early 20th century advertised with characters with various odd literal meanings, including *bite the wax tadpole*. And in Japanese, two entire alphabets were devised on this basis. The writing systems of West Asia and the 'hieroglyphs' of Egypt began as pictograms, but were sometimes used to indicate a similar sound that was a completely different word.

Chinese writing largely resisted this, or perhaps purged it when Shang culture consolidated itself. The system on the Oracle Bones is identified as a simplified version of what was originally a pictogram script, but the oldest reliable examples are clearly well developed. It needs some careful looking to deduce the original pictogram behind the neat lines of the ideogram. We can only guess at what it was like when used earlier on materials that have not survived. But if the Shang ruled a multi-lingual population, it would make sense to have a script that showed just ideas.

Old Chinese was part of a vast family of Sino-Tibetan languages, some of them surviving as languages of modern minority peoples in China. But it forms a distinct branch, with some 400 other Sino-Tibetan languages placed on a separate Tibeto-Burman branch, or sometimes given extra branches of their own. Just how this happened is uncertain. I mentioned how Latin eliminated its Italic

⁸⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_language_families

⁸⁷ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ba_\(state\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ba_(state))

⁸⁸ <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/archaeologists-uncover-3000-year-old-chinese-artifacts-180977294/>

relatives: this could sensibly have happened with the coherent civilisation of the Shang. But there are other ideas

“A striking fact about the Sinitic branch of Sino-Tibetan is that, while its lexicon, phonological structure and some reconstructible morphology clearly link it genetically to Tibeto-Burman, its basic morphosyntactic profile is the isolating SVO type characteristic of mainland Southeast Asia rather than the agglutinating SOV structure characteristic of Tibeto-Burman...

“The idea that many of the features of Old Chinese came about as a result of contact between the language of Shang (and/or possibly Zhou) conquerors and an indigenous population speaking a language or languages related to those currently spoken in mainland Southeast Asia is old (Terrien de la Couperie 1887).”⁸⁹

‘SOV’ is short for subject–object–verb. In English we say *the cat drank milk*, not *the cat milk drank* (SOV), or *milk drank the cat* (OVS), or *milk the cat drank* (OSV).

I’d add an extra idea – maybe there was an early unrecorded example of a warrior people conquering proto-Chinese farmers, but being absorbed by them. We do know that Chinese dialects used to have more tones than the four of Standard Chinese: tones in Chinese being used to distinguish entirely different words with different ideograms. It is assumed that the language was simplified to please the conquerors who took time to learn it.

When it comes to farming, the Shang mostly ruled farmers whose main crops were varieties of millet. Millet is well suited to the relatively cool and dry climate of North China, the people centred on the Yellow River. Wheat from West Asia arrived much later, and gradually replaced millet. But further south and centred on the Yangtze was a distinct body of farmers growing rice; probably the first to do so. For the warmer wetter south, rice was and remains the best crop.

The original language of the Yangtze rice farmers was probably not Old Chinese. It may have been a mix, but a good possibility is a language in the vast Austronesian family, or a close relative.

Austronesian began in Taiwan, and it is the language of the oldest known inhabitants, now largely swamped by settlers from Mainland China. But their culture and language went more than half way round the world: most notably Hawaii, Easter Island, New Zealand, and Madagascar,

Madagascar’s time zone is GMT +3. Easter Island is GMT -6, and it should really be in GMT -7. Fifteen time-zones span the most distant regions where their various Austronesian ancestors once travelled, as against 7 ‘as the crow flies’. And that would be a crow flying across South America, the South Atlantic and most of Africa. By sea, the route is hampered by two dangerous capes. Routes that no one is known to have taken until European sailors learned how to sail on all of the world’s oceans.

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The peoples of the Yellow River and the Yangtze were the fourth and youngest of the world’s four major river-

⁸⁹ <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.637.1357&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

valley civilisations. But modern Egypt and Mesopotamia (Iraq) both have completely different languages, religions and political systems than they had in their beginnings. Also different writing systems. As for the Indus Valley, most experts agree that there was continuity in culture and in aspects of religion with the later Sanskrit culture that defined Hindu identity. But apart from a few Hindu extremists, they’d insist that Sanskrit is the far end of one branch of Indo-European languages that started rather later and well to the west, probably in what is now South Russia. Symbols found from the Indus Valley culture were probably not a proper writing system that could record everything that was said, and look nothing like what came later. And the politics was definitely very different. There are signs of mild inequality in housing, but a notable lack of buildings resembling the palaces and temples that are found in almost all other advanced civilisations.

Egypt and the Indus Valley used many of the same food-crops and domestic animals that have been reliably traced back to West Asia. Most notably wheat.

The first three river-valley civilisations became part of what I’ve called *Civilisation Alley*.⁹⁰ A band of pre-industrial empires from Britain to Sri Lanka, with various empires moving up and down it. And there was much less military conquest between this and East or South-East Asia: what I call the ‘*Bamboo Zone*’. China sits as a giant at the centre of it, but both Japan and what became Korea maintained an independent existence. Vietnam achieved this after its Red River core had been part of Han-dynasty China. Most of the rest of South-East Asia was a mix of separate cultures fighting each other, and little influenced by China. They sometimes found it good to call the Chinese emperors their overlords, but most cultural influence came from Hindu India. Or later from Indian converts to first Buddhism and then Islam.

I hadn’t really followed the negotiations that created the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. I just noted that Western media were saying very little about a block that includes Japan and Australia and New Zealand, but does not include the USA.⁹¹ I saw it as another case of economics overriding politics in Western-style countries. But while writing this study, I did notice that it also covers almost exactly what I defined as the Bamboo Zone back in the year 2000. I never expected such a thing, but its existence fits my broad outlook.

There is a strong geographic separation between the two main areas of Eurasian civilisation. No one except the early Mongol khans managed to rule both West Asia and parts of China at the same time. Kublai Khan had lost control of Mongols to the west of him, before he became clear ruler of all China. And no one later repeated this, until several European powers intruded by sea in the modern era. Before that, Timur tried, but Timur failed.

Global Leninism briefly succeeded. Khrushchev threw it away by claiming far too much power for himself. Stalin had always kept his own power at a level that seemed reasonable to the vast majority of other Leninists. That outsiders hated it was irrelevant: they were not expected to like it.

⁹⁰ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/problems-magazine-past-issues/problems-magazine-older-issues/p1-62-civilisation-alley-a-band-of-pre-industrial-empires-from-britain-to-sri-lanka/>

⁹¹ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Western-media-mostly-ignoring-a-huge-China-centered-trade-block>

The Soviet failure means that China once again stands as a distinct entity. The USA has inherited the desire of several European Empires to make either a World State or a World Hegemony with themselves at the core. And the USA has failed. I'd suppose that China has more sense than to try.

China has unique continuity. Shang-dynasty China had a language, writing system, and religion that is the clear ancestor of what Chinese have now. Also much of the same religion and a political system that still existed before the revolution of 1911/12. Its main original crops were millet and rice, with wheat largely replacing millet only much later. And until the modern European intrusion, it never had invaders with different civilised values. Only nomads who found an uneasy balance between their older customs and Chinese ways that they had to borrow to rule.

But within Chinese civilisation, significant changes began when the Zhou Dynasty weakened and China became what they called the Warring States. A period ended by a brutal and effective unification by the short-lived Qin Dynasty, and then re-established after Qin politics self-destructed.

Modernism's Chinese Inspirations

The Qin Kingdom changed the culture that the Shang had made and the Zhou dynasty continued. None of them had any trace of electoral politics that existed elsewhere in the world, though never even for the entire male population, and mostly limited to a small elite. But the Qin did favour promotion by merit rather than ancestry. They favoured harsh rules, applied on a fairly equal basis to all subjects. They tried to impose uniformity on all they ruled.

The Qin Kingdom conquered its rivals and became the Qin Dynasty. But its politics were too harsh, and then there was a successful plot by some high officials to rule through a weak Emperor after the formidable First Emperor died. The dynasty collapsed, and for a time it seemed as if Chinese civilisation might revert to the disorder of the Warring States.

A fundamental shift happened because one particular man won the post-Qin civil wars. Liu Bang had served the Qin dynasty as a minor law enforcement officer in his home town Pei County, within the conquered state of Chu.⁹² Having failed in an official duty escorting some prisoners, he made the sensible decision to become a bandit or rebel rather than face the standard harsh punishment for such failures. He was one of several warlords, but took intelligent advantage of being given what's now Sichuan, the former Shu and Ba territories. He eventually conquered the whole country, and adopted many Qin customs. And after his death, his widow kept power by methods that were humanly appalling, but politically successful. And after her, there were a series of successful and powerful Han emperors in the blood-line of the founders. And it helped that succession could go to the son of one of the Emperor's concubines, or to some slightly more distant relative. There were fewer of the succession crises and fewer inept rulers than in Western kingdoms and empires.

The long-lasting Han Dynasty pioneered many things

92 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Emperor_Gaozu_of_Han

that the industrial civilisation of Western Europe later copied or developed. Religion was kept under the thumb of the state authorities, and most education was secular. For the Han core, the Emperor appointed the magistrates who ruled provinces, and also for smaller units roughly matching European counties. The military had a lesser role, and Emperors were mostly political leaders rather than generals or warriors. And educated men from humble beginnings could get the top jobs. Men only, and you had to pay for your education, but fairly humble people might club together to sponsor a child who showed unusual intelligence. The women of the elite were also well-educated, and had a lot of behind-the-scenes influence. And educated women also tend to raise sons who are much less burdened by old superstitions than the sons of uneducated mothers.

The Chinese system that lasted more than 2000 years was closer to modern norms than anything else that existed in actual history before the 18th century. 'Good birth' remained a big advantage, but it was much more meritocratic than the politics of almost all other advanced civilisations. Elsewhere, such social mobility based on intelligence and people-skills would be found only in organised religion, and not always there. Some popes had humble beginnings, but most came from powerful families.

It was also a society that encouraged improvement and invention, so long as the innovation could fit with what were seen as core cultural values. The rate of progress was slow compared to what Europe achieved after its scientific revolution. But it was fast compared to the rest of the world. And Europe's take-off depended on ideas that might not have been known to humans without China's slow advance during its frequent periods of Good Government.

Francis Bacon as an intellectual and courtier to Queen Elizabeth Tudor said that gunpowder, the magnetic compass and printing were three big advances that had been made since the days of the Classical Greeks and Romans. Later writers mostly added paper as one of the *Four Great Inventions*.⁹³

Writers keen to deny status to anyone outside European culture will usually concentrate on printing *with moveable type*, which was indeed independently made into a viable system by Guttenberg. I've even seen English writers shove him aside and credit Caxton. But it was a natural outgrowth of Block Printing, which unambiguously began in China and took centuries to defuse westward across Eurasia. China had even tried Moveable Type, but it was never popular there.⁹⁴ Block Printing was preferred, and had a big impact first in the Islamic world and then Europe.

Moveable Type is certainly easier with an alphabet: less than a hundred distinct forms to allow for upper and lower case and special characters. Ideograms are far more numerous. But I've not seen any discussion of why it failed to catch on in the Islamic world, since Arabic also has an alphabet.

There were a host of other things that began in China. The Wiki has a long list.⁹⁵ I'd include the Horse Collar

93 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Great_Inventions

94 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Movable_type#History

95 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Chinese_inventions

as a Great Fifth.⁹⁶ It does not excite most intellectuals, but the Chinese version allowed horses to use their full strength.

A big advantage in Christian Europe was that intellectuals mostly saw no need to distance themselves from manual work. This distancing was very strong in China, and I'd count it as a major reason why it never got beyond the slow but steady progress achieved from the Han Dynasty. But other cultures also had such inhibitions, with Hindu and Buddhist thinking questioning if the material world even existed.

Devout Buddhists are the ultimate drop-outs, hoping to drop out of the material world entirely. An idea recycled in the main *Star Wars* films.

Western Europe had several other advantages. There was hybridisation between ships suitable for the Mediterranean, the Baltic, and the Atlantic: regional innovations could spread if they succeeded. And when the Islamic World got a monopoly on shipping spices to Europe from South and South-East Asia, European sailors went where no single group of humans had ever gone before. Calling this 'discovery' was unfair: people lived in all those places and often had wider networks that could be quite sophisticated. But only when Captain Cook encountered New Zealand was there a shared common knowledge of where everyone else was.

Much more importantly, West Europeans discovered two entire continent that had been unknown to everyone else in Eurasia. The venturesome Norse had found Vinland beyond Iceland and Greenland, but it seems no one suspected that Vinland was more than another North Atlantic island. And of course Columbus always believed he'd reached East Asia. But the Spanish soon realised that these were new lands with unfamiliar plants and animals. And that there was another entire ocean beyond what we now call Central America.

The advanced civilisations of the Native Americans lacked the advanced steel weapons of Eurasia, and also lacked horses. And were hit by a range of diseases that had been brewing in Eurasia for millennia, and which Eurasian survivors were largely immune to. So the Spanish easily conquered them. And there was a flood of gold and silver, which allowed Europeans to trade the precious metal for goods from advanced Asia.

There was also a flood of knowledge. Marco Polo had not been believed when he accurately reported the size and wealth of China. But now many Europeans saw civilisations with different values, beyond their old rivals in the Islamic world. Alternative civilisations whose wealth that at the time was equal or greater. China in particular impressed them. Here was a society that was much more peaceful than Europe, and where civilised values flourished without priests having much power.

The papacy gets blamed for insisting on strictness for Jesuits who'd become influential in Ming-dynasty China. They had adapted to Chinese culture. They wanted to allow converts to carry on with some Chinese traditions, notably Ancestor Worship. The papal line is mostly seen as irrational narrow-mindedness. But as Brendan Clifford once pointed out to me, there was a real question about who was converting who.

⁹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Chinese_inventions

Since the papacy had limited influence in much of Catholic Europe, and none among Protestants, the example of China was a big influence on the European Enlightenment. The lack of either voting or democracy did not bother them. Europe at the time had votes only for the rich and privileged. Even Republican Rome before the Emperors had been an oligarchy that gave most of the voting power to the rich.⁹⁷ Most Enlighteners favoured Enlightened Despots. The new United States only gradually accepted democracy as one of its values: the Founding Fathers were suspicious of it. France had years of unstable electoral government before settling on Napoleon as Enlightened Despot.

The rise of civilisation was also the rise of the state. Ancient states were often arbitrary in their powers, but almost always small in terms of numbers employed. Also small in the proportion of the national wealth actually under state control.

During the Industrial Revolution, the British state was large, but was dominated by the gentry. It had had minimal controls for rich people or ambitious newcomers.

The march of what we now see as 'normal' was slow. Jefferson and Jackson confirmed a form of democracy for the USA, but for White Males only. Jackson's vice-President John C. Calhoun helped convert the US South to a belief that slavery for Afro-Americans was a good thing. A virtuous system that they should preserve and spread into the new lands the US gained to its west.⁹⁸ Meantime France cycled between a series of short-lived systems, and the longer-lived Third Republic was accurately called a *Republic Without Republicans* in its early years. Britain had established Parliamentary Power in 1688, but with huge powers for the Monarch. And without a vote even for a majority of white males until the 1880s.⁹⁹ And in the wider British Empire, genuine self-government was only allowed in places that were overwhelmingly dominated by settlers from Britain. Where there was a mix, as in Southern Africa, racism won out.

Europe's unstable and fast-evolving system bumped into the ancient cultures of China. China sensibly kept contacts limited, especially when the East India Company became a major producer of opium that was sold to merchants who then smuggled it into China.

Many Britons found the Opium War shameful, but they were a minority. And in as far as they and other Europeans wanted to help China, they had a false notion of how to do this.

Ending Social Globalisation

The global flow of goods suits the powerful. It will continue, in as far as they can keep it popular. And this is less than they like, as Brexit in Britain showed.

A global flow of people has always been controlled when it gets large enough to make a difference. Historically, there were few barriers because few people actually wished to move. Modern transport and communication have changed all that. If all borders were open, hundreds

⁹⁷ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Rome-s-Undemocratic-Republic>

⁹⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_C._Calhoun#Slavery

⁹⁹ <https://labouraffairsmagazine.com/m-articles-by-topic/40-britain/665-2/>

of millions of people would flow into the richer nations. No one actually in government in those nations could allow it. The Hard Left has mostly complained about existing unfair systems, without suggesting how to replace them.

A global flow of capital can be dangerous. Left-wing governments in Western countries face the threat of the rich elite moving out their money if they are not looked after. Or it can happen as a purely financial panic, as with the 1997 Asian financial crisis.¹⁰⁰

A global flow of ideas is something that many governments hate, believing that it will subvert everything they hold dear. This was once much more intense, with entire civilisations sealing themselves off in a belief that this was necessary for their survival.

They were entirely correct, of course. The ideas they defended before the 20th century have largely perished, with a lingering existence on the Hard Right, and inconsistent even there. Except in the cast of some tribal societies, I'm glad they were defeated. But I do not blame them for trying to defend themselves.

I also note that they did not always defend themselves by the methods most likely to work. But I think this is also true in the modern world.

If you don't share the current notion of cherished old values, you should at least notice the realities.

Latin-Christian Europe was the first civilisation to have substantial contact with the whole of the rest of the world. Its values were subverted, and became what we now view as the norm in 'The West'. Societies where the Latin-Christian faith is in steady decline. In decline even in the USA, where the absence of a state-backed religion allowed many popular sects to flourish.

Imperial China put strong limits on traders from Latin-Christian Europe, correctly guessing that they would subvert it. But it allowed in some, and they gave reliable reports of Chinas as a happy stable and prosperous society where religious belief was free, so long as it involved no political subversion.

I described earlier how China's example encouraged the European Enlightenment. That they did not want democracy, preferring Enlightened Despots. But they mostly understood that the rise of civilisation was also the rise of the state. And they saw both dangers and benefits.

Ancient states were often arbitrary in their powers. But they were almost always small in terms of numbers employed and in the proportion of the national wealth actually under state control. People became more concerned, once governments started changing the world in ways that the public noticed.

You get pundits who talk as if European Enlightenment and European Democracy were part of the same thing. Sheer ignorance. And it's almost as bad to think that Parliaments with an open-ended right to criticise the government are the same thing as democracy.

Parliaments were mediaeval bodies that were mostly split between Lords and Commons, though sometimes a third house for Clergy. Sometimes further splits. Regardless, the Commons gave voting power to maybe 5% or 10% of the richest men. They did not expect to do more than advise a government centred on the monarch. But on occasions they had to decide who was or was not

100 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1997_Asian_financial_crisis

monarch: the need to summon parliament to give weight to various drastic changes during the Wars of the Roses helped keep it powerful. As did shifts in religion under the Tudors. But it was a drastic innovation when the English Parliament decided to impose itself on the King. And in the event, Oliver Cromwell with the power of an army he helped raise was able to shove them aside.

An English parliament expanded to be a British parliament got a permanent role in government after 1688. And by degrees it expanded the number of voters till it became a democracy of sorts. And influenced the rest of Europe to try the same system, with mixed results. Both in Europe and in Latin America, there were many failures before a broadly stable system was established.

People's China does not see the need to copy the West's very imperfect system. And since both the USA and the European Union are determined to use what influence they have to subvert it, China chooses now to limit that influence.

Chinese Expansionism?

The USA inherited the desire of several European Empires to make either a World State or a World Hegemony with themselves at the core.

Now that the USA has failed. I'd suppose that China has more sense than to try.

Reports of Chinese aggression are unfair.

Nothing that China has done goes beyond the sovereignty that was claimed by the pro-Western Chinese Republic. And earlier by Imperial China, when it was humbled by the Opium Wars and forced into the European definitions of state power.

Noone outside of these claims should be worried about Chinese claims, or think them expansionist. And this would apply even if the claims were unjust, because it is simply one Chinese government asserting what almost all Chinese believe. Except in Taiwan and sometimes in Hong Kong, even vehement critics of Beijing see those claims as just and proper.

I've also investigate, and found that every single claim is valid under the actual norms of International Law.

I'm quite willing to go against Chinese nationalism when it seems wrong. Chinese might not like my description of the rather alien ancestry of many who are now solidly Han. And I'm not saying that the actual norms of International Law are ideal. Just that the USA missed whatever opportunity there was to improve those norms. Everything they did in the 1990s was selfish, and most of it was also foolish.

China did not invade either Tibet or Xinjiang. Both territories were universally recognised as part of the Chinese Republic. And of Imperial China when it was brought into the Western system.

In both cases, establishing central control was fairly peaceful. You find a thoroughly dishonest account in the popular film *Seven Years in Tibet*, featuring Heinrich Harrer as Hollywood's favourite SS man.

The Soviets are believed to have murdered the leaders of a Xinjiang separatist movement they had previously sponsored. Officially called an air crash.

Tibet's 1959 revolt was led by Tibetan nobles from an ethnically mixed area east of the Tibetan Autonomous Region. They objected to the abolition of slavery and serfdom, both of which were still legal in the main Tibetan region that the Dalai Lama ruled.

Xinjiang has been part of Imperial China, for much longer than it has been Muslim. And unlike Tibet, it didn't have an independent-minded government when central rule collapsed.

Neutral countries have mostly seen China's stand as reasonable:

"Nearly 100 countries voice support to China amid US and a few Western countries smearing at UN session

"Nearly countries voiced their support to China for developing its own pattern for human rights development and opposed politicizing human rights issues to suppress other countries at the 76th session of UN General Assembly on Thursday while the US and a few Western countries started a new round of attacks on China over topics of its Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Xizang (Tibet) regions.

"On behalf of 62 countries, Cuba made a joint statement on Thursday at the UN General Assembly to support China for developing its own pattern on human rights that fits its conditions and oppose other countries' interference in China's internal affairs under the banner of human rights...

"Kuwait, on behalf of three Gulf countries, also made a joint statement to support China and it said that to deal with human rights issues, countries should abide by principles of objectiveness without politicization and the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. They should also respect each country's sovereignty and not interfere in other countries' internal affairs.

"More than 30 countries also voiced their support for China at the meeting, which marked more fair and just comments made at the UN platform after the 48th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Wang Wenbin, Chinese FM spokesperson told a press conference on Friday...

"China has actively participated in all the topics of the Third Committee and offered China's approaches. On behalf of 31 countries, China made a joint statement to oppose unilateral sanctions; on behalf of 76 countries, it made a joint statement on promoting fair distribution of vaccines; together with African countries, China also released a joint statement opposing racial discrimination, winning support from 78 countries. All these showcase that China and the majority of developing countries insist

that communication is the right direction for promoting human rights and cooperation is the right pattern, Zhang noted."¹⁰¹

Western media tend not to mention this.

They do all they can to suppress alternative voices.

I used to be able to watch news from the China Global Television Network, one of many on Sky. This was banned for being under Communist Party control.

In terms of abstract freedom, it would seem odd that the ultra-rich can have their own cable news, but a government offering an alternative way of life shall be hampered as much as possible.

But suppressing alternatives is what it is all about.

Not many in the West would want to be ruled as China is ruled. But that doesn't mean they mind the Chinese opting for that way of life.

Mao: Negotiating with Necessity

Mao ruled China for 28 calendar years. To be exact, he could have sensibly set up his own government any time after 31st January 1949, when his armies marched peacefully into Beijing. And died on 9th September 1976.

For all of those years, he was keen on the idea of radical reform. And this was an absolute necessity in the early 1950s. And a considerable success, so he felt that more of the same was justified. And was quite often right – had he stuck with Moscow's 'realistic' policies, then China might have shared their collapse and ignominious decline.

But let's start with the interesting question of why he waited eight months, before officially setting up a new state on 1st October 1949.

His take-over of Beijing was peaceful, because the army defending the city belonged to a warlord called Fu Zuoyi.¹⁰² The man had tolerated Chiang Kai-shek's posture as China's ruler since Fu's side lost the Central Plains War of 1929-30.¹⁰³ That war was partly one of the squabbles between warlords that had crippled China since the Imperial government had been overthrown. But Fu and some of his allies were also much more serious Chinese nationalist than Chiang ever was. He was also the senior commander in the 1940 Battle of Wuyuan, one of the few outright Chinese victories during the Japanese invasion.¹⁰⁴

In 1949, his forces had been decisively defeated by those of Lin Biao in the Pingjin campaign.¹⁰⁵ He made the sort of deal that defeated warlords had been making for decades: he surrendered everything and got a job as Minister of Hydraulics. But it was also a sensible deal for a sincere Chinese nationalist. China

101 <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202110/1237004.shtml>

102 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fu_Zuoyi

103 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Plains_War

104 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Wuyuan

105 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pingjin_campaign

needed peace and reform, and the Communists were the most likely to give it.

Fu lived till 1974, protected by Mao in a safe hotel refuge during the Cultural Revolution. And was just one of many warlords who had never respected Chiang Kai-shek. Who would not have wished to follow him to a holdout in Sichuan or on to Taiwan.

Chiang is said to have been hoping to hold out for long enough to be saved by a Third World War. And seems to have shown no concern for how much China would be hurt, if this had happened.

The most substantial of those willing to work with Mao was Feng Yuxiang, known as the Christian General and the most plausible non-Communist moderniser of China. He was another loser from the Central Plains War, and was openly against Chiang after the Japanese surrender. Had the USA backed him, history might have gone differently. They didn't, and in 1948 he planned to return to the part of China under Mao's control. And mysteriously died while passing through the Soviet Union. My opinion is that the Soviets killed him as someone dangerously independent-minded. It is obviously also possible that Mao secretly asked them to dispose of a man strong enough to be a rival. But Mao had a lifetime pattern of trying to win over enemies and rivals, and did win many.

Beijing had for centuries been the main Chinese capital of the strongest ruler of the country. Ever since 1122, when it was made so by Chinese Emperors ruling just North China and of nomad origin. Its status was confirmed by the third Ming Emperor making it the capital after some bitter family quarrels.

Chiang ruling from Nanjing was a sign of weakness: he never had secure control of North China. He did try changing its name from Northern Capital to Northern Peace: *Peking* to *Peiping* in the older romanization that the Chinese used till 1979. And US sources would mostly speak of the actual government of China as the 'Peiping Regime',¹⁰⁶ until Nixon ended the nonsense in the early 1970s. Made a deal that gave China's privileged UN seat to Beijing, and ended various damaging boycotts of Chinese goods. Both governments were strengthened against the Soviet Union, powerful and aggressive at the time.

Back in 1949, it was also not strictly a Communist government, though it was functionally so. Mao delayed declaring himself ruler of all China, even as his armies advanced south, taking Chiang's capital Nanjing in April. Also proving to Britain's Royal Navy that they could not freely sail up Chinese rivers as they had been doing since the Opium Wars: Chiang had never dared try this.¹⁰⁷

Western writers should ask why Mao waited so

¹⁰⁶ <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/100149mao-communism.html>

¹⁰⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amethyst_Incident

long. What happened was the careful negotiation of a partnership with several weak centrist parties. And messages were sent to the USA saying he didn't want to be entirely dependent on the Soviet Union: there are a few books that note this as a grand lost opportunity.

You might find it surprising that none of the pro-Western Chinese complain about the USA's unreasonable attitude. Or at least none that I've seen, after reading a lot of their stuff.

I don't find it at all surprising: their world outlook is pro-Western but *not* Western. People involved in actual competitive politics know that no one is entirely your friend, and that not many are entirely your enemy. So though I was not expecting Japan and Australia to be part of the vast China-centred trade block of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, I was also not surprised by it.¹⁰⁸

It could all have happened in the 1950s, had the USA been wiser and more modest.

*

Mao died on September 9, 1976 – his 28th calendar year of rule. It was also one of five years of setbacks, and the only one that cannot possibly be blamed on Mao. Or not unless you take a superstitious view of the disturbance of the grave of the first Qin Emperor: the famous terracotta army that was brought to light from 1974. In the traditional Chinese view, disturbing the grave of someone powerful might be expected to bring bad luck quite soon. 1976 did indeed see a massive earthquake and the death of China's three most powerful leaders.

Taking a strictly materialist view, all three significant deaths in 1976 shaped the future. The standard account notes Zhou Enlai's death in January, the temporary fall of Deng Xiaoping in February and the suppressed pro-Zhou protests in April. But just as significant was the death in July of Zhu De, *Chu Teh* in older books. He had been senior to Mao in the original Liberated Area in South China, and helped Mao get back command during the Long March. While holding a variety of official positions, he would have remained second only to Mao as an authority among the generals. As far as we know, he always backed Mao.

Chinese civilisation has a tradition of Seniors, who are mostly obeyed for as long as they live. But their choice of heirs are not always respected. In the event, Deng was able to take over with an assurance that the Cultural Revolution would now be treated as an error. Hua Guofeng, Mao's chosen heir, had refused to do this.

It was also Hua Guofeng who chose to have the 'Gang of Four' violently denounced. Just as they had had Lin Biao violently denounced earlier on. But

¹⁰⁸ <https://mrgwydionmwilliams.quora.com/Western-media-mostly-ignoring-a-huge-China-centered-trade-block>

Deng chose to be more moderate.

Deng's line could be seen as returning to Mao's earlier and more correct policies. Deng was far more independent of Mao than Khrushchev had been independent of Stalin. But perhaps for that reason, he could see the logic in what Mao had been doing.

He also notices that non-Communist East Asia had been growing a lot faster. And that they had done this with a single dominant political party, even when they had open elections. He correctly decided that a more open economy was perfectly compatible with continuing Leninist politics

From Mao, he had inherited a educated population, with some trained to a high level of skills. And the collectivisation of agriculture meant that they were well prepared to be transformed into factory workers.

There was no intention of abandoning socialism. But the West could be re-assured while China's power grew.

Deng had said *some must grow rich first*. Inequality was seen as a necessary compromise, and one that need not be continued forever.

President Xi chooses to see both Mao and Deng as authors of China's rise. And most Chinese now treat New Right ideas with scorn.

A Better Global Future

The official Chinese line is now definite that Mao's work was necessary.

"In the period of the new-democratic revolution, Chinese communists, with Comrade Mao Zedong as their chief representative, adapting the basic tenets of Marxism-Leninism to China's specific realities, established Mao Zedong Thought, which charted the correct course for securing victory in the new-democratic revolution, according to the communique.

"In the period of socialist revolution and construction, Chinese communists, with Comrade Mao Zedong as their chief representative, put forward a series of important theories for socialist construction. China was

transformed from a poor and backward Eastern country with a large population to a socialist country, according to the communique.

"During the new period of reform, opening up, and socialist modernization, after the third plenary session of the 11th Central Committee, Chinese communists, with Comrade Deng Xiaoping as their chief representative, by focusing on the fundamental questions of what socialism is and how to build it, established Deng Xiaoping Theory. The reform and opening up drive was launched, and socialism with Chinese characteristics was successfully founded" (*CPC plenum passes landmark resolution*.¹⁰⁹)

The emphasis on Xi's work is an official rejection of older notions of being more like the West:

"Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era is the Marxism of contemporary China and of the 21st century. It embodies the best of the Chinese culture and ethos in our times and represents a new breakthrough in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context." (Ibid.)

It helps that the West is visibly failing, especially in the USA. It is not just that a majority of those viewed as the White Race still support Trump. The centrists for both Democrats and Republicans remained utterly determined that the rich will keep all of the advantages they gained in the 1980s. There is fierce resistance to asking the rich to pay the sort of taxes they used to pay. This means that Biden can not get many of his grand schemes done. He has a majority of the voters, but not a majority in the Senate, which was designed with the power to block almost anything. And most of his supporters refuse to consider removing the irrationalities in the existing system.

Prospects for a continued smooth rise by China remain excellent.

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109 <http://en.people.cn/n3/2021/1112/c90000-9918584.html>

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