

appeared to be a strategy of last resort for those whose families lacked social capital. The students largely found their way into precarious jobs at the lower end of Nanjing's service economy, which rarely offered upwards mobility. Horizontal mobility however was intense, and here the contract teachers had been role models for the students. Their position in the labour market was however increasingly exposed to pressures from growing numbers of unemployed university graduates from above, and the inflow of migrant workers from below.

Class Work interprets sleeping through class as a strategy of passive resistance (most notably against teachers), and a seemingly reasonable response to the dysfunctionalities of Chinese VE. Among its few drawbacks are avoidable errors such as misspelled *pinyin* (p. 56) or references missing in the bibliography (p. 144). Furthermore, the conceptual framework of "numeric capital" is not fully convincing in merging theoretical contributions of Marx and Foucault. Provided the commodity fetish were applicable to human beings rather than commodities only, it would still appear contradictory that numeric capital conceals the labour of the child (p. 14f), and at the same time blames the child and its supposedly insufficient dedication to studies for its entry into VE and the working classes (p. 149). Despite a certain conceptual fuzziness, *Class Work* remains a captivating and highly recommendable ethnography.

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The Cultural Revolution at the Margins: Chinese Socialism in Crisis

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In this excellent book, Yiching Wu examines the mass political activism of the Cultural Revolution conflict of 1966–68 by way of three important episodes. He devotes a chapter to each, as he believes each exemplified an interesting political and ideological current. The first, examined in chapter three, was the debate over the "bloodline theory" that erupted among young people early in the Cultural Revolution. The bloodline premise was that only those of pure "good class" origin – the children of Party cadres and of the working class – could be entrusted to push forward Mao's revolution. Opposition came, not surprisingly, from young people who were not from the favoured categories. The most cogent repudiation of the bloodline theory was an influential essay penned by Yu Luoke, a young man of bad-class background who was subsequently executed by the government for his views. The chapter includes a focus on Yu, as "Critics elsewhere in China would later expand this incipient current [Yu Luoke's essay] into more systematic critiques of social and political inequalities in Chinese society" (p. 93).

Chapter four explores Shanghai's January Power Seizure of 1967. Wu examines the establishment of workers' groups during the preceding autumn amid "economistic" demands by workers for higher wages and better living standards (what he correctly calls "for socioeconomic justice" [p. 96]). He also traces the zigzagging events that culminated in the city government's overthrow. But he goes against most interpretations of the January Power Seizure by stressing that its empowerment of a new Shanghai leadership (three of whom later led the Gang of Four) signalled the end

of autonomous mass politics and innovative thinking in Shanghai, and established a template for later demobilizations of mass politics elsewhere in China.

Chapter five examines mass politics in the city of Changsha, Hunan. There, a large coalition of disgruntled grassroots constituencies vainly sought to win power. New radical thinking emerged from this maelstrom, in the form of scathing egalitarian critiques of the Party officialdom. The most influential of these – indeed, the most influential in all of China – was penned by a high-school student, Yang Xiguang, in early 1968. Yang argued that the major conflict in China was between the proletariat and a new privileged “red capitalist class” composed of the Party officialdom and their families, and he called for “the overthrow of the new bureaucratic bourgeoisie, complete redistribution of power and property, and the establishment of a new society” (p. 181).

In these three chapters, Wu finds that the upsurge from below in 1966–67 had “empowered the discontented and the marginalized” (p. 11), who found themselves at odds with constituencies who had been favoured before the Cultural Revolution. For instance, “One of the most important divisions in Shanghai was that between regular, permanent workers and the vast semi-proletarian workforce consisting of temporary and contract workers” (p. 102). The clearest division in all of China between grassroots factional groups that had major grievances and those that didn’t occurred in Changsha, one of Wu’s three case studies, where poorly employed army veterans, youths who had been forced to the countryside, workers from small very low-salary factories, non-red-class students, and people who had fallen into political trouble in previous campaigns now formed “a coalition of the disaffected” (p. 159) that battled in 1967–68 to take over the city. On the other side of the factional fence, in Shanghai, “Claiming 800,000 members, the Scarlet Guards recruited mainly from skilled workers, party activists, and low-level cadres and had once enjoyed the support of the municipal leadership” (p. 111).

Wu notes that while participants of all stripes sincerely proclaimed themselves to be devout followers of Chairman Mao, “Mao’s ideas, ambiguous and fragmentary as they were, were interpreted in different ways by different agents” (p. 11). This led to the rise of radical heterodox ideas among “a number of young activists and critics ... at the margins of the movement who questioned the officially sanctioned discourse and practices of the Cultural Revolution” (p. 12). Their dissident thinking continued to evolve after the grassroots factional warfare was suppressed in 1968. Wu is particularly interested in this, and chapter six traces these trends of thought into the 1970s. He especially focuses on the Li Yizhe writing group in Guangzhou, which adopted Yang Xiguang’s critique of a privileged ruling bureaucratic class but turned it toward advocacy of an open democratic polity. The chapter’s narrative of this progression in dissident thought culminates in the Democracy Wall movement of the early 1980s.

In several respects, Wu’s interests and analyses are parallel to those of a number of Western researchers of the late 1970s and 1980s. Their interviews with former Cultural Revolution participants revealed grievances that predated the Cultural Revolution, which led many of the aggrieved to join grassroots groups in 1966–67 that were associated with the Rebel faction. The earlier researchers, like Wu, also took a great interest in the dissident ideologies that emerged.

In the last decade and a half, a newer school of researchers has relied on documentation in place of interviews, and has challenged the prior findings. They focus on the contingencies of the daily Cultural Revolution conflict, and believe that participants chose sides based on how they were affected by the vagaries of the politics of the moment. Without directly speaking to their writings, Wu’s book cogently challenges their findings on this point. But he also argues that as the Cultural Revolution conflict

wore on, the politics of the moment often shaped which *higher*-order alliance the small grassroots groups joined (e.g. p. 188).

The book's only failing is that it lacks a concluding chapter. As a result, Wu does not pull together his findings into an analysis of the urban grassroots Cultural Revolution of 1966–68. Instead he moves forward in time by way of an Epilogue about the current period. Overall, though, this is one of the best books on the Cultural Revolution in a long time.

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Deng Xiaoping's Long War: The Military Conflict between China and Vietnam, 1979–1991

XIAOMING ZHANG

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Conventional scholarly wisdom depicts China's late 20th-century conflict with Vietnam as being a short and limited but bloody punitive military offensive launched by Beijing in early 1979. Xiaoming Zhang's path-breaking book suggests that this is probably not the best way to contextualize the operation. Indeed, Zhang interprets the conflict as the most deadly and high profile campaign in what he calls a "long war" lasting more than a decade. As Zhang rightly notes, Sino-Vietnamese border hostilities persisted until the mid-1980s and tensions lingered even longer.

Prior treatments of the war have tended to focus on the operational and tactical aspects of the military campaign, exploring the reasons behind China's attack, and/or documenting China's road to war. Zhang adopts a big picture approach enabling the reader to put the brutal battles of February 1979 in proper context. He makes the convincing argument that the bilateral struggle between Beijing and Hanoi was a manifestation of a larger Cold War contest between Beijing and Moscow. Therefore, Zhang contends that the Sino-Vietnamese conflict could not be resolved without reconciliation between China and the Soviet Union.

But the author's attention to broader geostrategic context does not come at the expense of attention to detail. Zhang presents the most thorough and comprehensive battlefield account of the 1979 Sino-Vietnam conflict available anywhere. The three chapters examining the planning, execution and assessment of the 1979 campaign are bookended by three initial chapters detailing the lead up and four later chapters surveying rest of the "long war," the broader impact of the war on China, how the conflict was terminated, and overall reflections on the entire enterprise, respectively. One of the most fascinating dimensions of the war that Zhang addresses is its low profile in the annals of post-1949 Chinese military history. Other wars, notably the "Anti-Japanese War" – commemorated with a massive parade in September 2015 – and the Korean War are invariably the subject of considerable hype. By contrast, the conflict with Vietnam is – if not the forgotten war – then certainly the overlooked war.

Painstaking research was conducted over many years in multiple archives – including those of four different provinces – and the memoirs of generals and collections of official military documents were carefully scrutinized, as well as many online resources consulted. I am aware of the extensive and sustained research effort, having