Mao and Maoism

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Abstract and Keywords

Mao Zedong played a central role in leading the largest communist revolution in the world outside the Soviet Union and in the 'creative developments' or 'Sinification' of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy to suit Chinese conditions. He combined the roles of Lenin and Stalin. The essay traces his rise to power in the Chinese Communist Party between the 1920s and 1949 and his career as leader of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1976, looking at the part he played in key moments, including developments in the Yan'an base area from the late 1930s, the Great Leap Forward, and the Cultural Revolution. The essay examines the central ideas in Mao's philosophy, such as the primacy of practice, contradiction, rectification, and concern with bureaucracy. It goes on to explore key debates in the historiography and asks what 'Maoism' really means. The personality cult around Chairman Mao culminated in outrageous veneration in the 1960s and his memory today elicits strong feelings, both positive and negative. Despite his many mistakes and towering cruelty, he is still widely respected in China, as can be seen from his appropriation in popular culture. His ideas continue to be influential in parts of Asia and Latin America and his image is still invoked by contending interests in China.

Keywords: Sinification of Marxism, Maoism, Chinese Leninism, revolutionary nationalism, Yan'an, Great Leap Forward, Cultural Revolution, Mao's philosophy, rectification, historiography of Mao, popular culture, Maoism outside China

MAO Zedong lived from 1893 to 1976. He is remembered as China's paramount Marxist-Leninist leader and theorist, the author of Maoism. A junior Party member in the 1920s and controversial regional leader in the countryside in the late 1920s and early 1930s, by the mid-1940s Mao had become the supreme leader of China's Communist movement, and in 1949, of the new People's Republic of China (PRC). The personality cult around Chairman Mao culminated in outrageous popular veneration in the turbulent Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and his memory remains vibrant in China today. His writings continue to serve as the official doctrine of the still-ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and his memory elicits strong feelings (both positive and negative) among China's diverse population, as well as students of Marxism and revolution worldwide. In the international

history of communism Mao Zedong played a key role in leading the largest communist revolution in the world outside Russia and in his ‘creative development’ or ‘Sinification’ of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy to suit Chinese conditions, adaptations that have influenced revolutions in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. In all, Mao remains the pre-eminent representative of the successes and failures of Chinese revolutionary ideology and praxis.

Scholars of modern China have often noted that Mao’s role in the Chinese socialist revolution combined the individual roles of both Lenin and Stalin in the revolutionary era of the Soviet Union. Looking back from the perspective of the twenty-first century, a time in which considerably more of Mao’s misdeeds have now been documented, Mao’s legacy and memory seem even more complicated. Despite his many mistakes and towering cruelty, he is still widely respected in China. His ideas are still influential and his image is often invoked by contending interests in China. In many ways, it is more apt to describe Mao as the Marx, Lenin, Stalin, *and* Pol Pot of China’s tumultuous twentieth century. He systematized ideas and values that still animate public life in China, he provided the orthodoxy for the CCP, he was the harsh but effective state builder, and he was the tyrannical political purist responsible for tens of millions of deaths. This brutally incongruent heritage represents the unsettled business of China’s modern history and recent reforms. In all, Mao Zedong and Maoism are significant as representatives of (p. 91) both Marxist and state socialist practice in twentieth-century China *and* of the contributions of Chinese experience to communist ideology and practice worldwide.

Mao and China’s Revolutions

Mao was the continuous revolutionary. He joined and came to represent the efforts of many Chinese to find revolutionary solutions to the challenges of nationalism, socialism, and economic development confronting China from the early twentieth century. Mao’s career and writings can be viewed in three major stages: as a junior member of the new CCP who led the shift from an urban to a rural revolutionary strategy (1920s–mid-1930s); as the primary leader of the revolutionary Party and army from the late 1930s to the mid-1950s; and as the undisputed charismatic supreme leader of the CCP and PRC from the 1950s until his death in 1976.

Mao was but the foremost of a generation of Chinese intellectuals and activists known as the May Fourth generation (for the patriotic anti-imperialist movement centring on the demonstrations in Beijing on 4 May 1919 that protested against the transfer of some Chinese territory to the Japanese in the Treaty of Versailles). This generation wrestled with a confusing array of Western ideas—from anarchism to pragmatism to social Darwinism and finally, after 1917, Marxism—as a way to explain the failures of the Chinese government to resist the inroads of European and Japanese imperialism. May Fourth intellectuals were vigorously iconoclastic. They were also a diverse generation that came, in the 1920s, to divide across the political spectrum from neo-conservatives seeking a Confucian revival, to political liberals hoping for democracy, to militarists seeking order, to communists seeking revolution.

Mao entered the May Fourth world from a rural community in central China. He was born and raised in Shaoxing, in Hunan province. His father was a prosperous farmer and was able to pay to send Mao to school. Thus, Mao was not a peasant in the simple sense, but was most emphatically a rural person who believed that the heart of China lay in the villages, not in the cities. Mao soaked up the rich array of May Fourth translations from European and Japanese sources, including socialist and soon Russian Marxist writings (Mao never learned a foreign language). He chose to be a revolutionary and set off—first to Changsha (the capital of Hunan) and then Beijing and Shanghai—to find that revolution.

The CCP was officially founded in Shanghai in July 1921, and Mao attended the First Congress as a regional delegate from Hunan. The new party was small and under the strong influence of Comintern advisers. In accordance with Comintern policy, the CCP entered into a 'bloc within' United Front with the stronger Nationalist Party (Guomindang, GMD) led by Sun Yat-sen. In the mid-1920s, Mao participated in this United Front, joining the GMD (while maintaining his CCP membership) and teaching at the GMD's Peasant Training Institute at the Whampoa Military School, in the southern province of Guangdong. The GMD, with CCP members participating particularly (p. 92) in agitprop roles, set out to reunify China by attacking militarist regimes in central and northern China. This Northern Expedition (1926–7) brought Mao back to Hunan where he researched and wrote his seminal call for rural revolution, 'Report on the Peasant Movement in Hunan' (1927).[1] This text defined peasants as revolutionary and as key allies in the proletarian revolution. After the counter-revolution of April 1927, in which GMD forces under General Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) decimated Union and Communist ranks in Shanghai and other major cities, Mao and colleagues repaired to the countryside, setting up rural soviets in south-east China. This lasted until 1934, when GMD military forces crushed the Reds and forced them on the retreat that came to be known as the Long March.

Mao had not only not been a top leader during this period, but also had fallen out of favour with the Moscow-appointed Chinese leadership of the Party. In fact, his highest Party positions in the mid-1920s were in the GMD—at the Peasant Training Institute—before the 1927 split. However, the debacle of the 1927 GMD White Terror and then the collapse of the rural Jiangxi Soviet in 1934—in which urban orientation and positional warfare were shown to fail while rural orientation and guerrilla warfare at least provided survival—catapulted Mao to some top positions. Over the next few years he skilfully built a coalition of colleagues, sensible military and social policies, and a persuasive ideological corpus that confirmed him as the leader of the Chinese revolution.

The winning policies were built, or at least expressed, in terms of Mao's understanding of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Between 1936 and 1938, Mao returned to reading (translations of) Marxist-Leninist texts and produced his own writings outlining his basic philosophy. His core texts are 'On Contradiction' and 'On Practice' (1937)—which privilege social praxis over doctrine and declared that the superstructure (that is, human will) could in certain circumstances play the 'leading and decisive role' in revolutionary praxis. Mao's 'Introducing *The Communist*' (1939) named the 'three magic weapons' for defeating the enemy in China's revolution: the United Front, armed struggle, and Party building. This

was the beginning of Mao's application of the Bolshevik model to China, or the 'Sinification of Marxism'. It produced effective policies that contributed to the CCP's national victory within a decade.

These policies were implemented in the 1940s when the CCP's capital was in the dusty Shaanxi province market town of Yan'an in north-west China. Internally, Mao ruthlessly eliminated his rivals for leadership and effectively streamlined and energized Party rank and file. This was accomplished most clearly in the 1942–4 Rectification Campaign. Here, Mao's writings from 1936 to 1942 became the core of the Party's ideology and policy. At the heart of Mao's approach was the 'mass line' (*qunzhong luxian*)—a broadly participatory mode of political administration that brought in the views, interests, and experiences of common working people in a fashion never stressed by Lenin or Stalin. This was not democracy. Indeed, Mao and the party stressed 'democratic centralism' and were ruthless in suppressing dissent.

Yet, this repression of dissent inside the Party—which foreshadowed disastrously expanded versions of this tyranny in 1957 and 1966—parallelled effective organizational and public policy reforms, including simplified administration, armies that not only did (p. 93) not rape and pillage but actually paid for the food they used, and a powerful ideology that mobilized a generation of cadres to 'serve the people'. This revolutionary praxis was summarized in the 1 June 1943 'Resolution of the Central Committee of the CCP on Methods of Leadership' written by Mao and included in his *Selected Works*.[2] The lessons of coordinated but flexible organizing outlined in the resolution have been applied to social movements elsewhere, from the Vietcong in Vietnam, to Che Guevara in Latin America, to Naxalite insurgents in India. The key points are (1) a version of 'think globally, act locally' but with a strong Leninist chain of command, (2) a hard-headed assessment of the 'masses' one wants to mobilize (usually 10 per cent activists, 80 per cent average, and 10 per cent backward or reactionary), (3) a focus on nurturing that activist 10 per cent to get the movement going, and (4) the importance of coordinated propaganda to guide leadership and motivate the rank and file. The philosophical method of this approach to revolution privileges praxis in a process of 'theory-practice-theory', in which an ideology (Marxism) is tested by actual efforts to do something and then modified on the bases of the practical results of one's efforts. The mechanism for this social learning is the superstructure: the human will of the 'thought-reformed' cadre.

Externally, Mao led his colleagues in making the CCP and their programme for China look better than the only likely alternative: the increasingly corrupt Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. By 1939, Chiang Kai-shek as the hero of war-torn China and the GMD began a leadership cult to establish Chiang as China's charismatic revolutionary leader. The publication of Chiang's book, *China's Destiny*, in 1943 brought Chiang's leadership cult to a crescendo. Thus, the Mao cult of the 1940s responded to this practical challenge, as well as drawing from the example of Stalin.[3] Mao adroitly cast his public utterances in moderate terms. His January 1940 essay, 'On New Democracy', became widely popular among urban readers, especially youth. While clearly a Marxist-Leninist document, Mao's programme promised a long period of democratic transition on the road to

eventual socialism and communism. Additionally, he provided a public history of China's humiliating confrontation with European and Japanese imperialism that, using Lenin's ideas on imperialism as the highest form of capitalism, made sense of China's history, and more importantly, gave Chinese readers as sense of purpose and hope and meaning.[4]

His peers certified Mao Zedong as the charismatic supreme leader at the Seventh Congress of the CCP in Yan'an in April 1945. From that time on, he was known as Chairman Mao. In the ranks of the Party leadership he was, at first, restrained and practical, but all deferred to him. Externally, he was the great father of the revolution who could publicly proclaim in September 1949, 'The Chinese People Have Stood Up!'[5] Mao's work in the new People's Republic was largely practical in the early 1950s, as this rural movement adjusted to the profound tasks of administering not only major cities but also a territory the size of Europe. The new socialist government 'leant to one side'—taking on the Soviet model of a centralized command economy and joining the Soviet Union in the emerging Cold War. Russian advisers guided the modern sector and Stalin lent (but did not give) funds to help rebuild the war-torn nation. The Korean War came upon the new government almost immediately—in June 1950. This confrontation (p. 94) with the US heightened the already brutal land reform and would cast a pall over the anti-intellectual political movements beginning the next year, as well as anti-corruption campaigns, during the early 1950s.[6] Yet, life for most Chinese was better than it had been in living memory.

By 1956 the new PRC government was feeling the pains of office.[7] Bureaucratism, the limits of the Stalinist economic model, and restiveness among the working peoples and, of course, the intelligentsia, bedevilled the CCP administration. Mao at first sought moderate application of his dialectical approach. In 1956 he gave speeches that have been redacted as 'On the Ten Great Relationships' which sought a practical and balanced mixed economy, somewhat in the mould of Lenin's New Economic Policy (NEP).[8] In 1957 Mao revived the Rectification Movement approach of self-and-mutual criticism but extended it beyond the Party to the educated public, inviting intellectuals and professionals to 'let a hundred flowers bloom' and to criticize the ruling CCP. This was an unprecedented act for a ruling communist party and was vigorously opposed by Mao's senior colleagues, yet as supreme leader Mao prevailed.

This was Mao's last great public ideological effort that had some promise of success. In 'On the Correct Handling of Contradictions among the People' (original text, February 1957) Mao sought to lay the theoretical basis for limited—but real—public criticism and dissent under a ruling communist party.[9] By defending loyal opposition to Party bureaucratism and abuses of power as 'contradictions among the people' in contrast to 'contradictions with the enemy', Mao went further than even the most daring of Eastern European regimes in the de-Stalinization of 1956. This promising opening to socialism with a human face was ruined by Mao's own dictatorial style and petulance. When the invited criticisms arrived in the spring of 1957 they were not to Mao's liking, and so he turned about-face and declared the critics to be counter-revolutionary rightists. The text of 'Correct Handling' was significantly rewritten before official publication in June 1957 to make Mao look good and to ratchet back permissible discussion to the restricted scope familiar

to other state socialist societies. It was a failed experiment that cost the lives and careers of half a million intellectuals and Party members.

The next decade was a grim one for China and for Mao's legacy. The 'Hundred Flowers' rectification of 1957 was followed by a harsh nationwide purge, the Anti-Rightist Movement. Next, Mao promoted an ambitious economic development strategy, the Great Leap Forward (1958–60) that was disastrously flawed and ruthlessly implemented. It contributed to at least 30 million deaths—mostly attributable to famine—by 1961. This has to be the single greatest crime of Mao's rule of China. After a retrenchment in the early 1960s (administered by his number two, Liu Shaoqi) brought an end to the famine and began the economic recovery, Mao initiated a final effort at total revolution: the Cultural Revolution. It was designed to protect China from the dire threat of revisionism that Mao saw in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev (which had fuelled a bitter anti-Soviet polemic by Mao in the early 1960s). China and the Soviet Union fell into an ideological split that culminated in national confrontation and fighting on the Manchurian border in 1969. Now, at Mao's behest, the Party revived the thought-reform and rural orientation of the Yan'an period. Mindless adulation of every utterance by Mao (p. 95) was represented in the 'Little Red Book', *Quotations from Chairman Mao Zedong*. In all, some 4.4 billion books and pamphlets of Mao material were published in the ten years 1966–76.[10] The social results were catastrophic—Red Guard youth gangs terrorized communities under the slogan 'to rebel is justified' (a Mao quote), colleagues denounced each other, universities were closed to send students and faculty to the countryside 'to learn from the masses', and individuals were subject to endless 'thought investigations'.[11] To the degree that the populace in China participated in this self-subjugation, the Cultural Revolution even outpaced Stalin's Russia as the closest realization of Orwellian dystopia.[12] Mao clearly allowed this to happen and saw the suffering as a necessary cost of resisting 'revisionism'.[13]

Mao's final revolution was, after decades of angry confrontation with American imperialism, to spring a rapprochement with Nixon and the US in 1972 in order to outmanoeuvre the Soviet Union. This external pragmatism softened the already faltering chiliastic rituals of the Cultural Revolution and left China, and China's ideological leaders, tired and dispirited, but still standing at the time of Mao's death in September 1976.

The post-Mao period saw a brief effort to deify him further, in order to secure the new leadership of Chairman Hua Guofeng. This produced the controversial volume v of Mao's *Selected Works* in 1977 (which has since been repudiated and withdrawn from circulation in China). The survivors of the pragmatic Thermidor leadership of the early 1960s regrouped under Deng Xiaoping, who took control from late 1978 until his death in 1997. Under this reform leadership, Mao was demoted from his godlike status but has been maintained as the leader of the revolution and the font of ideological legitimacy. The 1981 CCP Central Committee resolution on 'Some Questions in the History of Our Party' codified this assessment with the famous formula: Mao's contributions were 70 per cent; his errors 30 per cent.[14]

Maoism: Revolutionary Ideology and Praxis

The ideological contributions of Mao Zedong are systematized in Mao Zedong Thought (*Mao Zedong sixiang*), which is the official ideology of the Chinese Communist Party. Post-Mao CCP authorities have made it clear that Mao Zedong Thought is the 'crystallization' of the revolutionary experience of the Party *and* the contributions of numerous other Chinese Marxists. Mao Zedong Thought is Sinified Marxism, according to this official view. Thus, it is reasonable to consider the ideological contributions of Mao as the key, but not the only, representative of Chinese contributions to Marxist thought and praxis worldwide.

In terms of philosophy, Mao's approach to Marxist analysis of society makes practice primary. It is the resolution of contradictions in material life *as experienced by individuals* that drives Maoist dialectics. By the 1960s, Mao clearly stated what had been (p. 96) implied in his earlier work: the law of the unity of opposites trumps either the negation of negation or the transformation of quantity into quality (both of which he saw as subsets of the first law). The mechanism for Maoist practical dialectics, however, is human will—individual and collective. Thus, Mao is in both the humanist and idealist wings of Marxist thought, placing the superstructure over the base as the location of the motor of history (he first articulated this in 1937 in 'On Contradiction', apparently before Stalin made the same point in 1938).[15] This can be seen in Mao's transformation of 'proletarian' character from a description of a social class into a virtue that can be learned by any class through personality transforming praxis and ideological education (that is, through rectification). If Lenin thought only the Bolshevik party could push forward the wheel of history, Mao held that Bolshevization could be radically internalized in the individual (albeit under the dominating guidance of a charismatic party and its correct leader).

In terms of revolutionary praxis and political policy, the experience of the CCP under Mao's leadership created a variant of the Russian model. First, Mao instituted the *mass line*, an organized form of 'democratic centralism' that could be very responsive to local needs and which included the broadest actual popular consultation and participation in any communist movement. The dark side of the mass line was a propensity from the start to find numerous 'enemies' and scapegoats amongst the population. Second, the CCP applied Dimitrov's call in the Comintern for Party education far more thoroughly than any communist movement. The *Rectification Movement* of 1942–4 implemented the mass line by providing noble goals of public service, the means to inculcate those goals among administrators (Party and government cadres), and mechanisms to test the level of success in their implementation. Used well, rectification provides one way to inform, guide, and control a revolutionary regime; used badly it has led to the excesses of the Cultural Revolution. Third, Mao and the CCP consistently returned to the idea of the *United Front*, an ideological tool that allows a Bolshevik regime to share power with other social forces. The United Front is institutionalized in the PRC government and has operated ever since the 1940s (with the exception of some years in the Cultural Revolution). As with Dimitrov's proposals on Party education, the CCP's United Front takes a Soviet example—the popular front idea of Second World War years—much further and has made it a tool

that has contributed to the longevity of the CCP in power. Fourth, Mao consistently attacked *bureaucratism*, even though his flawed efforts (and personal faults) ultimately failed to address the issue successfully. Nonetheless, the corpus of Mao Zedong Thought provides a trenchant analysis of what Djilas called the New Class (though not with that phrase) and justifications for using the mass line and rectification to combat the abuse of political privilege. Fifth, Mao stressed *rural issues* and the peasantry. Integrating a primary focus on the countryside into the programme of a communist party has, perhaps, been the single most influential contribution of Chinese revolutionary praxis worldwide (and this despite Mao's effective abandonment of peasant interests from the mid-1950s). Finally, Mao was straightforward about politics and favoured *armed struggle*. He was a violent revolutionary, and a pragmatic military leader. While it was Sun Yat-sen who had first concluded that China's modern revolution had to have its own army, Mao took this lesson to heart more than other Chinese (p. 97) revolutionaries. His writings contain hundreds and hundreds of pages of practical analysis and examples of guerrilla warfare and other forms of popular violent struggle. Those who have found themselves in intolerable social circumstances where local governments violently repress opposition have found Maoist military strategy compelling—from the Vietcong to the Naxalites.[16]

There are also negative contributions, or negatives to each of these six developments, which are most poignantly embodied in the ideological repression of the 1957 Anti-Rightist Campaign, the massive deaths of the Great Leap Forward, and the social terror of the Cultural Revolution. All were generated by the self-same Mao Zedong Thought and the CCP. Additionally, Maoism has become a stultifying orthodoxy in China, both during his later life and since his death. Thus, the legacy of Mao Zedong and his Thought is deeply mixed—having led China to 'stand up' in 1949 he needlessly struck China down in over a decade of avoidable human suffering, and Maoism remains as an ideological straitjacket in China today.

Historiography and Legacies

Scholarly studies, as well as popular images, of Mao and Maoism have been contentious since Mao first appeared in the press in the 1930s. Similarly, the memories today of Mao, his ideas, and the system built around them vary widely, both inside China and out. Improved scholarship on Mao and Mao's writings helps ground these debates more firmly in scholarly knowledge but cannot hope to resolve them. Finally, the meanings of Mao and Maoism in China live on unconsciously today as habitual social and mental practices.

Mao's own writings continue to be a resource not only for his ideas but also on his life. A wide range of Mao's writings are now available in China, and a substantial number of these for the years up to 1958 have been published in careful scholarly translations in English.[17] In the case of Mao Zedong's writings the general issues of interpretation are further complicated by his stature as the Great Helmsman, the Saviour of the Chinese People, and the author of 'Marxism-Leninism Mao Zedong Thought'. The problems in tex-

tual transmission and editing of Mao's writings most nearly resemble those of theological texts, such as biblical writings and commentaries.

Recent scholarship, especially in China, helps us to know which sort of Mao, or Mao text, we are reading.[18] First, beginning in 1944, volumes of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* (*Mao Zedong xuanji*) began to appear by the order of one or another high-level CCP institution. They were edited by committee according to a 'collective wisdom' criterion: the belief that Mao 'represented' the summation of Sinified Marxism-Leninism and thus should reflect the consensus of the Party leadership. Both Mao himself and advisers from the Soviet Union were active in this process during the early 1950s when the authoritative *Selected Works* were compiled. Second, during the Cultural Revolution and particularly at the height of the Red Guard movement in 1967, Mao writings (p. 98) were published by a confusing array of unnamed editors based on the belief that the Chairman was a lone genius not subject to revision by any collective leadership, least of all by a Party riddled with 'capitalist roaders'. Finally, since Mao's death, Party historiographers have published both restricted circulation and publicly available collections of Mao writings that reflect in varying degrees a historicist urge to understand the past as it really was and to place Mao and his individual writings more firmly in historical context.

While it makes sense to read the scholarly translations of the original versions of Mao's writings in order to understand Mao in his time and place, the official (or 'collective wisdom') editions are still useful. Even though they have been more or less heavily edited from the original, these are the versions that were studied by hundreds of millions of Chinese since the 1950s—as well as by readers around the world—as the authoritative word of Mao and doctrine of the CCP.[19]

Both the academic study of Mao and popular images of Mao in Western societies have been tied to other interests, most usually the war of the day.[20] Edgar Snow's glowing account in 1936 gave readers 'a Lincolnesque figure' who promised to lead China in the worldwide fight against fascism in what became the Second World War. Dire accounts of atrocities by 'Chi-Coms' and 'Reds' in the 1950s and 1960s spoke to the experience of US-led UN forces in the Korean War (1950–3), America's own fight in Vietnam, and more broadly the US–Soviet struggle for dominance in the Cold War. Since the 1960s, China has been presented in scholarship and popular media in a roller coaster of ideal images (beginning with anti-Vietnam War activists in the 1960s) and dystopian tales (such as reports of forced abortions in the 1980s).[21]

Scholarly treatments of Mao during his life assumed that Mao was absolutely critical for understanding 'China today'.[22] Whether they thought Mao a saviour or a tyrant, or a bit of both, these studies tended to neglect other actors and other forces in explaining the rise and current operation of 'China's revolution'. By the 1980s, scholarship was looking not at revolution but at modernization, not exclusively at Mao (or other leaders) but at the experience of wider groups of peoples, especially individuals who had to live through Mao's policies.[23]

Writings on Mao today can be distinguished by their attitude towards Mao: bad Mao, good Mao, and historical Mao. Since Li Zhisui's influential reminiscence of his years as Mao's personal doctor was published in the 1990s there has been a steady stream of scholarship and popular writing depicting Mao as fundamentally evil. Significantly, these writings have featured Chinese émigrés who understandably have strong feelings about their experiences under Mao's rule.[24] They echo an emerging literature in Chinese from PRC authors (but published in Hong Kong) that is similarly critical.[25] These works tend to explain the excesses of CCP leadership, notably the terrible famine of the Great Leap Forward and the social chaos of the Cultural Revolution, in terms of Mao's personal character. The influence of the bad Mao approach is widespread and is reflected in most scholarly studies, even those seeking a more nuanced and contextual understanding.

There is also a body of scholarship that seeks to recover or redeem a good Mao. Nick Knight has been a consistent advocate of taking Mao's ideas seriously and in a body of (p. 99) sound scholarship over the past few decades has made a good case for the significance of Mao's thought beyond the man himself. Similarly, Rebecca Karl seeks to rescue the sense of revolutionary agency for ordinary people that can be found both in Mao's writing and some of his life. Maurice Meisner, noted throughout his career as an academic Marxist but one who applied Mao's ideas to a harsh criticism of the Cultural Revolution, produced a recent biography seeking to distinguish Mao's contributions from his failings.[26] Like the scholarship in Chinese coming from scholars associated with the 'New Left', these authors seek in Mao's writings and life tools for fighting injustice today.[27]

The majority of scholarship follows the historical Mao approach. Most biographies have focused on making sense of Mao in his context over judging his character. Stuart Schram's early biography of Mao came out in 1966. It remains a reliable story based on a careful reading of Mao's writings in historical context. There are literally dozens of scholarly biographies of Mao, most dating from the 1960s and early 1970s or from the last ten years. Among the more recent are grand tales by Philip Short or Ross Terrill and brief introductions by Delia Davin or Jonathan Spence.[28] A collective effort to assess Mao in his historical context, as well as to assess current views of Mao inside China, in the developing world, and in Western societies from a historical perspective is offered in *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (2010).[29]

The most important legacies of Mao and Maoism are in China itself. Mao Zedong remains an enduringly manifold figure in China today, loved and hated; used for political leverage, celebrity value, and even religious efficacy. There is, however, a shared theme in all the multiple Maos embraced (or excoriated) among China's diverse population: *nationalism*. As we saw, Mao's 1940 essay, 'On New Democracy' told 'the China story', a story repeated by China's leadership today as the story of rising China: China was great, China was put down, China shall rise again.[30]

This China story and Mao's role in it are used differently by the CCP leadership, PRC scholars, workers and farmers (what we might call interest groups), in commercial culture, and, finally, in the personal memories of individuals. Politically, Maoism is the CCP's

orthodoxy. It has been ‘enriched’ by doctrinal additions from Mao’s successors at the top of the CCP: Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and more recently, Hu Jintao. Hu’s emphasis on ‘Harmonious society’ will remind those familiar with Latin American history of other forms of authoritarian populism. On the one hand it draws attention to questions of social equity, but on the other hand, it also signals intolerance of dissent or ‘disturbances’ by protesters.[31]

Scholars now use Mao in most cases strategically (to hammer home a point or to shield themselves from political criticism), but more importantly, Mao is often not used at all in intellectual debate and discussion of public issues. It is the constituent parts of Mao’s thought—the nationalism, pragmatism, calls for social equity—that animate debates and serve as legitimizing themes rather than the invocation of Mao’s ‘wisdom’ per se.[32] Indeed, it is now possible to criticize Mao in limited focus (particular policies in the past) and even to poke fun at him in the arts.[33] There are a few scholars who invoke Mao’s ideals in claiming that Maoism should be restored, but these calls are a distinct minority among scholars.[34]

(p. 100) China’s workers and farmers are increasingly outspoken as the social consequences of reform create winners and losers. In the fight over resources that deregulation, privatization, and uncoordinated development have created, farmers, workers, and urban residents have protested and struck back. In such resistance they often invoke Mao’s ideas and image to support their claims.[35] These are ‘weapons of the weak’ in which farmers and rural workers use Mao as they seek to protect their homes, their farmland, and their air and water from expropriation by developers and pollution by new rural industries.[36] Meanwhile, Mao, Maoism, and Mao Quotes rebound across the Chinese Internet supporting everything from today’s Party policy to commemorations of Jiang Qing (Madame Mao) to rabid anti-foreignism.[37]

Mao has become a feature of popular culture. As Geremie Barmé notes, for many older Chinese, ‘Mao was representative of an age of certainty and confidence, of cultural and political unity, and above all, of economic equality and probity’.[38] Not so for the youth of the 1990s who had not experienced life in Mao’s China. Rather, as Barmé gleefully notes, youth found in this new Mao Cult ‘a politically safe idol that could be used to annoy the authorities, upset parents, and irritate teachers’.[39] With this market in place, Mao’s image has become a commodity item in street markets across China. T-shirts, cigarette lighters, art pieces, and bric-a-brac of all sorts sport the image of the Chairman (both as young revolutionary and older national leader). While for some these images are heartfelt, for others they are symbols of youth rebelliousness, and for many these commodified Maos signify celebrity interest rather than ideological commitment.

Mao now joins the host of popular tutelary gods in popular religious temples across China. This is an astonishing syncretism of twentieth-century ideological politics and longstanding Chinese religious folkways. Mao’s image hangs from the rear-view mirrors of taxi drivers to ward off accidents; Mao’s image has been put on ceremonial gold cash (used for the purposes of popular religion) with the words ‘May This Attract Wealth’ or

with the traditional Eight hexagrams; and Mao's full image appears in these temples—both rural and in working-class urban neighbourhoods—not as a political figure but as a religious figure.[40]

One set of personal memories of Mao is becoming publicly important: the suffering of the 'sent down generation', the *zhiqing* (or 'educated youth'). While some still honour Mao and blame local despots and cheats for ruining Mao's vision, there are many who lay the blame squarely at Mao's feet.[41] These stories are explosive. They cannot cohabit a public space with the glorified Mao that gives legitimacy to the CCP. Thus, we rarely see the expression of these tales of suffering blamed on Mao himself published in China. We do, however, see them published abroad, and they are increasing. Jung Chang's controversial and critical biography of Mao, published in English in 2005 is, if nothing else, the tip of this iceberg of pain and suffering that will have to come out at some point.[42] Maoist China has yet to face its truth and reconciliation process.

In all, Mao's memory in China today is a two-edged sword of legitimacy for the CCP: an ambivalent symbol of national pride for educated Chinese, a cool brand for middle-class youth, a talisman of self-worth for China's dispossessed who have suffered under reform and globalization. Behind these meanings reside wider historical (p. 101) meanings of hope and despair analysed by scholars in Western countries, as well as the inspiration Maoism provides for rural revolutions in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

What is Maoism?

The essay in this *Handbook* on 'Stalin and Stalinism' concludes with a similar question, stressing the 'dynamic shifting nature of Stalinism'. This essay stresses the different Maos of different historical moments but more so suggests that the important Mao and Maoism has been in the eye of the beholder, in the communities that chose Maoism, had it foisted upon them, or seek to draw from it today. Nonetheless, there is a core to Maoism, usually referred to as revolutionary nationalism, the commitment to save China and then build up China and to do it radically, quickly, comprehensively. This also came with a world view: modern in the sense of teleology and faith in science and technology, internationalist in the sense of an identity of interests among peoples subordinated to the imperial powers of the day, self-confident in the hearts and minds of various revolutionary elites who were sure they had the truth and were competent to save China.

Stuart Schram, the doyen of Mao studies in the West, has long held that 'the soberer elements in Mao's thought' from 1935 to 1965 constitute 'a vehicle of Westernization' for China.[43] This is true if we think in terms of helping China to come to terms with the new power of the West since the mid-nineteenth century and the imperialism associated with it. The comparative perspective of Kenneth Jowitt on 'the Leninist response to national dependency' helps us see this 'Westernization' not as conformity but as an active engagement with the Western world order of the twentieth century. The Chinese case is in this sense a variant of the Leninist model. Jowitt argues, based on the case of Romania but with an eye to Soviet experience, that when a polity found itself under economic and cul-

tural domination of Western powers in the early twentieth century, the Bolshevik model as articulated by Lenin and developed by Stalin worked in some countries as a way to throw off that dependency and achieve some degree of national independence.[44] Mao's revolution in China makes sense in Jowitt's model.[45]

This perspective echoes recent work on the Chinese revolution which tends to see a greater continuity and connection between the revolution of the 1920s led by Sun Yat-sen, the Nationalist Revolution led from 1926 by Chiang Kai-shek, and the socialist revolution led by the CCP and, by the 1940s, Mao. John Fitzgerald has persuasively argued that the key components of China's revolutionary order—including the charismatic party, integrated ideology, party control of the army, popular mobilization, and the leadership cult—all begin with Sun Yat-sen's reorganization of the Nationalist Party (GMD) in the early 1920s with Soviet and Commintern support.[46] This Sunism was then promoted by the GMD's next leader, Chiang Kai-shek. The difference between the Leninist GMD and the CCP were matters of degree, not kind, in this view. Other research on the social experience of the Chinese revolution in the 1920s confirms the fluid identities of Chinese revolutionaries across these two main parties, and other smaller parties.[47] (p. 102) The harsh competition between the GMD and the CCP that broke out in April 1927 and which has been written into the historiographies on both sides of the Taiwan straits turns out to be much more 'dynamic and shifting in nature'. Not only in the 1920s but also into the decades ahead individual Chinese and families moved between the revolutionary parties. In the 1930s and 1940s, the difference between the GMD and the CCP was the relative failure of Chiang Kai-shek's 'New Life Movement' to create modernized adherents to Sunism and his inability to bring fractious warlords to heel or to withstand the Japanese invasion. The CCP, on the other hand, achieved a stunning success in their Rectification Campaign of 1942–4 which did produce a coherent Maoist force and was merely lucky to avoid the brunt of the Japanese invasion in the late 1930s.

Mao and Mao Zedong Thought have had an impact around the world. From Cambodia to Peru, and now in Nepal and among the Naxalites in India, Maoism is a living ideology, albeit one often as 'adapted' or localized as Mao's own efforts at 'Sinified' Leninism-Stalinism. The core influence, however is pretty clear: political revolution on behalf of the working, largely agricultural or peasant, poor pursued through violent conflict under the direction of a unified ideology, party, and supreme leader. Much less influential, but nonetheless present, is the continuing attractiveness to Left-leaning intellectuals in the West of Mao's revolutionary writings.[48] Together, these constitute the contributions of Chinese experience—both good and bad—to Marxist-Leninist praxis.

Despite the capitalist economic policies and ideological lassitude of the current Chinese government, Maoism lives on in China. This is mostly a social fact—structural and mental habits from High Maoism that continue to shape public and political behaviour in China today. The Maoist orthodoxy set up important social institutions that shaped life on the ground and continue to do so today. The three most important are the local Party committee (at each and every level of government and most large economic and residential orga-

nizations); the *danwei* work unit organization of employment, residence, and social insurance; and the *hukou* system of internal residential passports.[49]

These artefacts of living Maoism continue to shape social life in China even as they have changed under the post-reform forces of market and international contact. The Party committee system embodies the CCP's claim that the legitimate forum for public policy debate and policy formation is the Party itself, not the press, pubic square, coffee house, classroom, or proverbial kitchen debates. This has produced a cautious reluctance to get involved in public affairs because to do so is dangerous. Daily life in the work units and communes of Mao's China helped to create this political passivity and dependency on the state. Those who lived through the Maoist system carry with them the habits of thought and expectations that made sense under Mao's rule. This population, long corralled by the rules of non-democratic participation in *danwei* and commune life, does not have the habits of mind suitable for a liberal or tolerant society. These same habits and expectations even shape those who reject official Maoism and embrace alternate political ideas and social practices. Inevitably, some part of these values and expectations has been passed along—by parents and teachers—to younger generations. Naturally, they change with time and new experiences, but these mental models still shape the experiences and reactions of people across China. Central among these (p. 103) hegemonic values are respect for intellectuals, intolerant modes of argument and illiberal public demonstrations, and the expectation that suggestions should be addressed to the state. It is this mental furniture from Maoism that will shape the lives of people in China long after the *hukou* passports and *danwei* work units are a thing of the past.

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(2) . *Xuanji*, iii. 897–902; *Selected Works*, iii. 117–22; Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power*, viii (forthcoming).

(3) . Lyman Van Slyke, in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. xiii. *Republican China, 1912–1949*, pt. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 692.

(4) . *Xuanji*, ii. 662–711; *Selected Works*, ii. 339–84; Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power*, vii. 330–69.

(5) . Mao Zedong, 'Zhongguoren congci zhanli qilaide', in *Mao Zedong wenji* [Writings of Mao Zedong] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1999), v. 342–6.

(6) . Jeremy Brown and Paul Pickowicz (eds.), *Dilemmas of Victory: The Early Years of the People's Republic of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

(7) . While some still view the early 1950s as a 'golden age' of CCP rule, there were profound tensions. See Brown and Pickowicz (eds.), *Dilemmas of Victory*.

(8) . *Xuanji*, v. 267–88; *Selected Works*, v. 284–307; John K. Leung and Y. M. Kao (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), ii. 43–65.

(9) . See Mao's 'speaking notes (*jianghua gao*)' version translated in Roderick MacFarquhar, Timothy Cheek, and Eugene Wu (eds.), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Council on East Asian Studies, 1989), 131–89.

(10) . Daniel Leese, 'Mao the Icon', in Timothy Cheek (ed.), *A Critical Introduction to Mao* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 219–39.

(11) . Roderick MacFarquhar and Michael Schoenhals, *Mao's Last Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005).

(12) . This self-subjugation is poignantly portrayed in post-Mao PRC films, such as Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* (1993), Tian Zhuangzhuang's *The Blue Kite* (1993), and Zhang Yimou's *To Live* (1994)—all widely available internationally with English subtitles.

(13) . See Joseph Esherick, Paul Pickowicz, and Andrew Walder (eds.), *The Chinese Cultural Revolution as History* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006).

(14) . *Beijing Review*, 27 (6 July 1981), 10–39; Helmut Martin, *Cult & Canon: The Origins and Development of State Maoism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1983), 180–231.

(15) . See Nick Knight, *Mao Zedong on Dialectical Materialism* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1990).

(16) . See, for example, Arif Dirlik, Paul Healy, and Nick Knight (eds.), *Critical Perspectives on Mao Zedong's Thought* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1997), and Alexander C. Cook, 'Third World Maoism', in Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*, 288–312.

(17) . The standard references for translations of Mao's collected works are Schram (ed.), *Mao's Road to Power* (10 vols. planned with 7 published as of 2013); and for September 1949 to December 1957, Kau and Leung (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong, 1949–1976*; and for 1957 and 1958 MacFarquhar, Cheek, and Wu (eds.), *The Secret Speeches of Chairman Mao*. The official, or 'collected wisdom', edition of *Selected Works of Mao Zedong* in Chinese and English as edited by the CCP and published in Beijing is widely available with a corrected edition released for Mao's centenary in 1991. Finally, full texts of the official English version of *Selected Works* are available on the Web at Mao Zedong Internet Archive: <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/index.htm>.

(18) . Based on Timothy Cheek, 'Textually Speaking: An Assessment of Newly Available Mao Texts', in MacFarquhar, Cheek, and Wu (eds.), *Secret Speeches*, 75–103.

(19) . As many as 236 million copies of the first four volumes alone were published during Mao's life. Kau and Leung (eds.), *The Writings of Mao Zedong*, p. xxvi.

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(23) . Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, 'Mao Matters: A Review Essay', *China Review International*, 3/1 (1996), 1–21 documents this shift in scholarship in a thoughtful review of recent studies. Good examples are Anita Chan, *Children of Mao: Personality Development and Political Activism in the Red Guard Generation* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985) and Rae Yang, *Spider Eaters: A Memoirs* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

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(27) . The notable Chinese example is Wang Hui, many of whose works have been translated: Wang Hui, *China's New Order* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003) and Wang Hui, *The End of Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (London: Verso, 2011).

(28) . Stuart R. Schram, *Mao Tse-tung* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966); Philip Short, *Mao: A Life* (New York: Henry Hold & Co., 1999); Ross Terrill, *Mao: A Biography* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999); Delia Davin, *Mao Zedong* (Stroud: Sutton, 1997); Jonathan Spence, *Mao Zedong* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999); Michael Lynch, *Mao* (London: Routledge, 2004) also provides a fine annotated guide to writings on, about, or by Mao for the general reader, 249–54.

(29) . Cheek (ed.), *Critical Introduction to Mao*.

(30) . Geremie Barmé, 'Red Allure and the Crimson Blindfold', *China Perspectives*, 2012:2, 29–40, part of an excellent special issue of the journal on 'Mao Today'.

(31) . Peronism—the economic, political, and social ideology called *Justicialismo* (social justice) associated with the rule of Juan Domingo Peron in Argentina at mid-century—is the obvious point of comparison. See Steven Levitsky, *Transforming Labor-Based Parties in Latin America: Argentine Peronism in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

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(36) . See Kevin J. O'Brien and Li Lianjiang, *Rightful Resistance in Rural China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

(37) . Guobin Yang, '"A Portrait of Martyr Jiang Qing": The Chinese Cultural Revolution on the Internet', in Lee and Yang (ed.), *Re-envisioning the Chinese Revolution*, 287–316.

(38) . See Geremie R. Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 19.

(39) . Barmé, *Shades of Mao*, 48.

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(44) . See Kenneth Jowitt, 'The Leninist Response to National Dependency', in Jowitt (ed.), *New World Disorder: The Leninist Extinction* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 1–50.

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