

Socialism with Chinese Characteristics: A Guide for Foreigners

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Synopsis

This book makes available to non-Chinese speakers the sophisticated debates and conclusions in China concerning socialism with Chinese characteristics. Thus, the book relies on and has copious references to the most important Chinese-language material. It presents this material in a way that is both accessible and thorough, so as to enable non-Chinese speakers to understand a topic that is of increasing global importance.

Why undertake such a study? It arises from the awareness of a significant ignorance, leading to misconceptions and mistakes by those outside China concerning socialism with Chinese characteristics. A major reason is that many non-Chinese scholars do not have access to the sophisticated debates that have gone on in China since they are unable to read Chinese sources. Other reasons may be proposed, but the purpose here is not polemical and I am not trying to show why foreign observers have by and large misunderstood China's socialist project. Instead, my focus is constructive and comprehensive, predicated on the need to understand first and gain trust before engaging in serious debate.

Chapter 1. Introduction: Marxism as China's Special Skill

The first chapter is introductory, dealing with the reasons why Marxism is China's 'special skill [*kanjia benling*]'. Marxism is defined in China as dialectical materialism for the overall method for scientific inquiry, and historical materialism as its application to human societies. To explain further, I delve into an important speech by Xi Jinping on philosophy and the social sciences. Here Xi urges scholars and CPC members to lift their game in terms of Marxist philosophy and to take the lead internationally. I also point out why the general secretary's thought in the Communist tradition is important. And I explore why observers of China from the few countries that make up the 'West' (14

percent of the global population) fail to understand socialism with Chinese characteristics. In China, this is known as historical nihilism, in which the role of Marxism, the Communist Party, the proletarian revolution, and the construction of socialism is denied. This leads onto considerations concerning method, some observations on sources used, and suggestions for further reading of reliable and objective sources in English.

Chapter 2. Reading Deng Xiaoping

The second chapter deals with Deng Xiaoping Theory (*lilun*), since this is a major key to understanding socialism with Chinese characteristics. However, much like Engels in relation to Marx, Deng's distinct contributions are often overshadowed by those of Mao Zedong. Or at least this is mostly true outside China. Inside China it is a different story, for Deng Xiaoping is deeply appreciated for launching the Reform and Opening-Up. Deng's approach is often called an 'applied philosophy [*yingyong zhexue*]', focusing on practice from which theory arises (as Mao already advised). Above all, Deng was through and through a Marxist, and the tradition – Marxism-Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought – was the horizon of his thought and action. In this chapter I focus on what is regarded in China as the foundation of Deng Xiaoping theory: liberating thought (*jiefang sixiang*) and seeking truth from facts (*shishi qiushi*), articulated above all in a key speech delivered at the beginning of the Reform and Opening-Up. The topics that arise from the speech run like a 'red line [*hongxian*]' throughout Deng's works: liberation of thought from its enslavement; liberation for socialism (in terms of the correct theoretical line), the healthy exercise of democratic centralism; seeking truth from facts as an inescapable dimension of liberating thought; and the close connection with liberating the forces of production.

Chapter 3. Contradiction Analysis: History, Meaning, and Application

While Deng Xiaoping Theory is crucial for understanding socialism with Chinese characteristics, contradiction analysis (*maodun fenxi fangfa*) provides the philosophical basis for this approach. Thus, the third chapter entails a step back in order to present the development of contradiction analysis – as a concrete articulation of Marxist dialectical analysis – from Lenin through to the present. I begin with Lenin's concise and insightful 'On the Question of Dialectics' (1915) and follow the development of dialectical materialism in the Soviet Union of the 1930s. As the most mature and thoroughly developed form of Marxist philosophy at the time, it was to this material that Mao Zedong and his comrades turned (in Yan'an in 1936-1938) so as to develop the philosophical basis for socialism with Chinese characteristics. In Mao's reading notes, lectures, and published works we find a creative and active engagement with the material, drawing from it and developing his own unique emphases: non-antagonistic contradictions under socialism; primary and secondary contradictions, along with the primary and secondary aspects of a contradiction; and the importance of qualitative change through self-movement and the qualitative difference of contradictions in distinct contexts. It is especially this final category that enables Mao to develop what he already called in 1938 the 'sinification of Marxism': the universal principles of Marxism need to become concrete in a specific situation, enabling analysis and providing a guide to action. The material that arose from this time provided the core materials that would set in train a consistent concern with philosophical matters in the CPC, the revolutionary path to Liberation in 1949, and the

subsequent long and arduous task of constructing socialism. In this way, contradiction analysis – forged from Lenin in 1915 to Mao in 1937 – became and remains a centrepiece for the many stages of the Chinese socialist project.

Chapter 4. The Marxist Basis of the Reform and Opening-Up

The fourth chapter maps the unfolding of contradiction analysis across key components of the Reform and Opening-Up. The chapter is structured in terms of the two terms, reform and then opening up, and book-ended by the two related topics of collective-individual and one country-two systems. The chapter opens with the dialectical relation between collective and individual, as it was manifested in the contrast between ‘eating from one big pot [*daguofan*]’ of the collective farms and the ‘household responsibility system [*lianchandaohu*]’ of the reform period. Historically, the latter began in the countryside (Xiaogang village in Anhui Province), but it provided the foundation for unleashing initiative and liberating the agricultural forces of production. In many respects, it was a rediscovery of the socialist principle of ‘from each according to ability, to each according to work’.

The bulk of the chapter concerns the two parts of reform and opening up. In regard to reform, I begin with the question of revolution and reform, which was already answered by Lenin: both are absolutely necessary, but reform should always be seen in light of revolution. For Chinese scholars, this path of reform should always be deepened, since it is precisely through the dialectic of reform that problems can be solved. Here I deal with the ‘wild 90s’ and the profound problems in relation to working conditions, unbalanced income distribution, environmental problems, corruption, and mistrust of the CPC. Were these problems systemic or incidental, inherent or cyclical? While some foreigners saw them as systemic (and thus a sign of the ‘capitalist road’), the Chinese answer draws directly from Marxist dialectical analysis: the problems were incidental and could be overcome not by retreating from but by deepening reform in a socialist direction. Today, these contradictions at least are well on the way to being solved, although one should always expect new contradictions.

In terms of ‘opening up’, the contradiction takes the form of opening up to developed capitalist countries while maintaining self-reliance, sovereignty and thus China’s socialist project. This reality leads to a recalibration of class analysis, of which there are two dimensions: internally, the focus is on non-antagonistic relations between classes under socialism. These include the rural and urban working class, who have been the prime beneficiaries of the comprehensive poverty alleviation program. More than 800 million have been lifted out of poverty, of whom almost 500 million have become a massive middle-income group (and not a ‘middle class’). Externally, class conflict is clear: some capitalist states still attempt to ‘scold’ or even ‘contain’ the ‘threat’ of socialist countries like China. Nothing new here, for China has a long experience in dealing with such international class conflict. The chapter concludes with a final example of contradiction analysis: Deng Xiaoping’s breakthrough policy of ‘one country, two systems’. This policy is often misunderstood outside China as two political systems in one country. Instead, the two systems are socialism on the mainland and capitalism in Hong Kong, Macao, and Taiwan – all of them contained within one country where the socialist system dominates.

Chapter 5. China's Socialist Market Economy and Planned Economy

Chapter Five asks the question: what are the economic features of the overall socialist system on the mainland? Two key components are planned and market economies, both of which are parts of the whole. This chapter primarily concerns the socialist market economy, since many outside China remains noticeably ignorant concerning its nature. Chinese debates concerning the socialist market economy were settled 25 years ago, with the following seen as the solution. One must begin with the need to de-link a 'market economy' from a capitalist system, as also a 'planned economy' from a socialist system. Even though such a de-linking had already been proposed in the 1930s in Eastern Europe and was largely accepted in that part of the world by the 1960s, it still needs to be reiterated today: a socialist economy is not equivalent to a planned economy, and a capitalist economy is not equivalent to a market economy. Both logical and historical reasons aplenty indicate the reality of such a de-linking. Second, one must deploy contradiction analysis, which enables the identification of the primary contradiction in the context of socialism. Here we find a shift from over-emphasising the ownership of the means of production and restoring an oft-neglected emphasis on the liberation of productive forces. Further, Chinese scholars distinguish between an overall economic system (*zhidu*) and specific institutional forms or components (*tizhi*), such as planned and market economies. It follows that one can have both institutional forms as components within the socialist system. Third, one must also deploy contradiction analysis at another level, now in terms of universality and particularity. The question now concerns what is common about a market economy and how the particular features of a socio-economic system determine the nature of a market economy. Thus, each component (*tizhi*) is shaped and determined by the system (*zhidu*) in question. Not only does the overall system determines the nature of its components – economic, political and social – but also its purpose, whether profit (capitalist system) or social benefit and meeting the needs of all people (*gongtongti fuwu*) as in a socialist system. Finally, this chapter deals with more recent arguments concerning the dialectical transcendence or sublation (*Aufhebung – yangqi*) of planned and market economies.

Chapter 6. Seeking a *Xiaokang* Society, or, Socialist Modernisation

The sixth chapter concerns socialist modernisation and a *xiaokang* (moderately well-off) society. Since Mao Zedong and Zhou Enlai, 'socialist modernisation [*shehuizhuyi xiandaihua*]' has been a major feature of government policy and action. But what does it mean? The initial answer was given by Deng Xiaoping in 1979: 'By achieving the four modernisations, we mean achieving a "moderately well-off family [*xiaokang zhi jia*]" ... a moderately well-off country [*xiaokang de guojia*]'. For Deng, this is modernisation with Chinese characteristics. To understand this statement, we need to go back and forward in the Chinese tradition. This task entails what may initially seem like a detour: an examination of the Confucian tradition's notion of *datong*, or 'great harmony', via the *Book of Rites*, He Xiu (129-82 CE), and Kang Youwei (1858-1927). As the highest stage of social development, it would come to be reinterpreted – through Mao Zedong – in light of communism. Lower than the level of *datong* is *xiaokang*, a more moderate and achievable goal, above chaos and disorder but not at the same level as the great harmony. *Xiaokang* bears the senses of being moderately well-off, healthy and peaceful. It was specifically Deng Xiaoping who reclaimed the term *xiaokang*. After tracing the development of the concept of *xiaokang*

through key moments in the Chinese tradition, the analysis focuses on how Deng Xiaoping claimed and reinterpreted the term, seeing it as a uniquely Chinese Marxist way of speaking about socialism itself. Deng Xiaoping's emphasis was both economic and cultural, on both improving the socio-economic well-being of China's vast population and developing a robust socialist culture. The concept of *xiaokang* subsequently became central to the Chinese socialist project, developing into a 'moderately prosperous society in all respects' that would be achieved by 2021 (through Jiang Zemin, Hu Jintao and especially Xi Jinping). What are the benchmarks? Three core ones are identified: managing profound risks (such as COVID-19), poverty alleviation, and environmental health.

Chapter 7. The Chinese Marxist Approach to Sovereignty and Human Rights

Thus far, I have been concerned with various aspects of the socio-economic base or foundation (*jingjijichu*). Chapter Seven begins the move to superstructural (*shangceng jianzhu*) questions, focusing in this case on human rights. The question of human rights is considered in China as a component of the overall socialist democratic system. However, due to an inordinate amount of Western interest – since the 1990s – in human rights in relation to China, I deal with the topic in this separate chapter. While there was in China an earlier dismissal of Western liberal human rights, which were seen as another imperialist effort to intervene in Chinese affairs, the material presented in this chapter focuses on the development of a distinct Chinese Marxist approach to human rights. The first part introduces the distinction between false and rooted universals. A false universal forgets the conditions of its emergence and asserts that its assumptions apply to all irrespective of context, while a rooted universal is always conscious of and factors into analysis contextual origins, with their possibilities and limitations. With this distinction in mind, I seek to understand the Western European approach to human rights as a rooted universal. It begins by tracing the way 'right' was – from the twelfth century onward – gradually connected with 'mastery', so that a right became an individual's mastery or power over his or her property. This 'mastery [*dominium*]' was seen as inescapably connected with the power of a 'master [*dominus*]' over a slave as a 'thing [*res*]', and thus as a piece of private property. But it also came to be extended to other property, such as life, freedom, speech, political opinion, religion, and so on. The result was an emphasis on civil and political rights. Obviously, this approach has often run the risk of being promoted as a false universal: the assertion that this specific tradition applies to all, irrespective of context.

The bulk of the chapter concerns the development of a Marxist, and especially a Chinese Marxist, approach to human rights. In this case, the prerequisite is anti-hegemonic sovereignty, which differs from Western European emphases. In that part of the world, the standard narrative of the development of sovereignty has two main phases: the initial Westphalian definition (1648) and its significant restriction after the Second World War. The main problem with this narrative is that it largely neglects what drove the shift: the success of anti-colonial struggles in the first half of the twentieth century (the last phase through the United Nations at the initiative of the Soviet Union). In light of this global perspective, it becomes clear that in formerly colonised and semi-colonised countries the very definition of sovereignty is far from a Westphalian position, since it is transformed into an anti-colonial or – the preferred terminology today – an anti-hegemonic definition of self-determination and non-interference by former colonial powers. With the clarification of anti-hegemonic sovereignty as a prerequisite for the Chinese

Marxist approach to human rights, the final part of the chapter focuses on the development of the core human right to socio-economic well-being. While we may find precursors in Hegel's arguments for material rights and in the Soviet Union's proactive approach to rights, the Chinese approach emphasises the many dimensions of the right to socio-economic well-being. Crucially, it means that no-one should be left behind, that the well-being in question should be a right exercised by all. From this core human right flow a range of other rights, such as civil, political, cultural and environmental rights. The chapter closes by considering what the implications of this Chinese Marxist approach to human rights are for the universal category of human rights as such.

Chapter 8. Socialist Democracy in Practice

Chapter Eight broadens the scope and deals with socialist democracy in practice. According to Chinese scholars, socialist democracy has seven integrated components: electoral democracy; consultative democracy; grassroots democracy; minority nationalities policy; rule of law; leadership of the Communist Party; and human rights. Since I deal with human rights Chapter Six, this chapter focuses on the remaining six components.

Electoral democracy involves the many layers of people's congresses, which date back to the Red Areas before Liberation in 1949. Every eligible citizen may stand for election and be elected. At the level of local people's congresses, elections are direct, but at higher levels representatives are elected from lower-level people's congresses. However, electoral democracy – which is so often assumed to be 'democracy' in Western countries – is only one component. Another is consultative democracy, which has its roots in the 'mass line' developed during the revolutionary struggle. Consultative democracy is institutionalised in the levels of consultative people's congresses, which include representatives from the eight other political parties, minority nationalities, religious groups, and mass organisations. It is also seen as a crucial feature of the supervision of political power. But consultative democracy is much wider than such institutionalisation, for it takes place in many ways, all the way from formulating five-year plans to grassroots democracy. This grassroots – or base-level – democracy has a long history in the communist movement, being already found in Engels's works of the 1880s. In China, it also has long history from before Liberation, but in the last two decades it has taken on a new life, with multiple targeted practices in local areas (with much research focused on assessing developments and proposing improvements).

The 'preferential policies' for minorities is both a subset of socialist democracy and a topic in its own right (especially in light of foreign efforts to break up China by stirring up separatism, extremism, and terrorism in some minority areas). The treatment here covers the policy's inheritance from the Soviet Union and subsequent revisions in the 1990s, with a focus on enhanced autonomy for the sake of unity. Policies include fostering local languages, education, culture, governance, and – especially – economic improvement. Indeed, economic development (most recently through the BRI) reveals the Marxist basis of the minority nationalities policy, since most minorities live in remote and border areas that have lagged behind until recently.

The final two topics of this long chapter concern rule of law and leadership of the Communist Party, which are closely related. The presentation of the development of rule of law deals with three pairs

of terms: rule by law and rule of law; rule of law and rule of virtue (a conjunction of the Legalist and Confucian traditions); rule of a person and rule of law. It was the latter – especially in the wake of the ‘rule of a person’ during the Cultural Revolution – that was the prime cause for an emphasis on rule of law, which was written into the Constitutional amendments of 2018. However, it is a socialist rule of law in the sense that it arises from a socialist system and serves to reinforce that system. At this point, rule of law connects with the leadership of the Communist Party, which marks the most significant difference from capitalist rule of law. This leadership does not operate by asserting its will directly over the people and the country. Scholars distinguish between historical and practical legitimacy of the Communist Party. Historical legitimacy depends on the core role of the CPC in founding the New China; practical legitimacy involves the statutory and rule-of-law process whereby the will of the CPC becomes the decision of the people. In relation to rule of law, this practical legitimacy takes place through what is known as ‘governing the country according to law [yifazhiguo]’. However, the CPC’s leadership relies not merely on rule of law, but rather on the whole structure of socialist democracy outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 9. Socialist Democracy in Theory

Whereas the previous two chapters concerned the actual practice of the components of China’s socialist democratic system, the ninth chapter focuses on the development of the theory that has arisen from and informs the practice. This task entails returning initially to Marx and especially Engels, then outlining the theoretical developments by Lenin and Stalin in relation to the challenges of developing socialist democracy on the ground, and finally to the Chinese situation. The chapter begins with a focus on what Engels (and Marx to a lesser extent) had to say about what democracy in a socialist system might look like, with the caveat that they always emphasised that the content could be determined only scientifically and from actual experience. Engels in particular developed a series of propositions in light of his research into European history in the 1880s and early 1890s, which may be summarised as: 1) public power (*Gewalt*) continues but loses its ‘political character’; 2) governance entails the administration of things and the management of the processes of production for the sake of the true interests of society; 3) the many organs of governance would not be separated from society but stand in the midst of society; 4) this reality may be seen as a dialectical transformation, an *Aufhebung* of baseline communism. All of this would be prepared by the proletarian dictatorship, which was one and the same with the commune.

When we come to Lenin and Stalin and experience on the ground, we find the following developments. Lenin’s texts straddle the period before and after the October Revolution. He distinguished between bourgeois democracy, the ‘united-front’ version of democracy in the inter-revolutionary period that involved all revolutionary-democratic parties, and socialist democracy itself. My interest is in the final category, where we find that the proletarian dictatorship is qualitatively the highest form of democracy, which is found in the ‘proletarian state’ characteristic of the socialist stage that precedes communism. Crucial for the later tradition is the term ‘democratic centralism’, which from 1905 was applied primarily to the workings of the Communist Party and then belatedly to governmental structures. However, for Lenin democracy in any form is determined by classes and is thus a form of the state, so he looked forward to the eventual withering away of democracy as a necessary feature for it becoming a habit of everyday life. As for Stalin, he assumed Lenin’s initial positions and added an

emphasis on the leadership of the Communist Party as intimately linked with the vast masses of urban and rural workers (which entailed an absence of other political parties), a proactive approach to developing a Marxist tradition of human rights, and socialist democracy as the ‘most all-embracing and most democratic state organisation of all possible state organisations’.

In light of these developments, the chapter moves to China. This part begins with Mao Zedong and his three categories of new democracy, democratic dictatorship, and democratic centralism. New democracy was seen as multi-party United Front that transformed the bourgeois-democratic revolution in light of the anti-colonial struggle. While still a distinct revolutionary stage, it was also a part of the overall socialist revolutionary process led by the Communist Party. Multi-party cooperation would continue into the structures of the New China, with its nine political parties. Democratic dictatorship concerned dictatorship against counter-revolutionaries and democracy for the masses. In the latter category is democratic centralism, which Mao raised to a new level for the Communist Party and sought to extend to the structures of country-wide governance. The final part of the chapter concerns developments from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping. It does by focusing on a particular problem: how can democratic centralism be extended from its genesis in intra-Party practices to governing the country as a whole? The answer begins to emerge with Deng Xiaoping’s urging to separate the roles of the Communist Party and the government. This emphasis becomes stronger with Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, with the latter identifying the ‘statutory processes [*fading chengxu*]’ by which the will of the Communist Party becomes governmental law. But it was not until Xi Jinping’s tenure that all of this was clearly identified as democratic centralism for the sake of country-wide governance.

Chapter 10. Xi Jinping on Marx and Engels

Much could be written concerning Xi Jinping’s ongoing publications, and there are many scholars and research centres in China devoted to such research, but my focus is quite specific: Xi Jinping’s engagement with Marx and Engels. I do so through a close study of a major but as yet untranslated speech delivered on the fifth of May, 2018, which was the 200th anniversary of Marx’s birth. The speech deals with Marx’s biography (as an engaged intellectual), the basic premises of Marxism, its history as a living tradition and its emergence as the over-arching framework for China’s socialist path. However, the main part of the speech elaborates on nine topics of relevance to China’s situation. Calling on all to ‘study Marx’ once again, Xi Jinping begins each sub-section with quotations from Marx and Engels and then elaborates on what they mean for the long-term construction of socialism.

1) The development of human society, in terms of a step-by-step process with careful planning and implementation, so as to attain the level of a society that is – in the words of the ‘Communist Manifesto’ – ‘an association [*lianheti*], in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all’.

2) Sticking to the people’s standpoint, which not only invokes the observation by Marx and Engels that ‘historical activity is the activity of the masses’ (*The Holy Family*), but also that the ‘people are masters of the country [*renmin dangjia zuozhu*]’, indeed that every task undertaken is ‘people centred [*yi renmin wei zhongxin*]’.

3) Productive forces and relations of production – two terms central to Marxist analysis. Here Xi quotes from *The German Ideology* - ‘the amount of productive forces accessible to human beings determines the condition of society’ – and then applies this to socialist construction in terms of liberating (*jiefang*) and advancing (*fazhan*) the productive forces (as Deng Xiaoping emphasised). At the same, Xi also emphasises the other side of the dialectic, now in terms of the relations of production and the need for the primacy – albeit not exclusivity – of public ownership of the means of production in the context of the preliminary stage of socialism.

4) People’s democracy, where Xi quotes from the ‘Communist Manifesto’ and then Engels: ‘The proletarian movement is the independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority’, and ‘The working class, once come to power, could not go on managing with the old state machine’, for it requires a ‘replacement by a new and truly democratic one’. Here Xi emphasises material already analysed in the chapters on socialist democracy, arguing that all of its components are an organic unity [*youji tongyi*] ensuring leadership by the Communist Party and supervision by the masses.

5) Cultural construction, which begins by observing that Marx ‘held that in different economic and social environments, people produce different thoughts [*sixiang*] and cultures’. From here, Xi discusses both distinct development paths of socialism and its culture, as well as the promotion of advanced socialist culture, which not only draws from China’s tradition in light of Marxism, but also promotes ‘core socialist values [*shehuizhuyi hexin jiazhi guan*]’ and socialist ‘spiritual civilisation [*jingshen wenming*]’.

6) Social construction, for which Xi quotes from three texts and of which Engels’s ‘Principals of Communism’ provides the most concise summary: a communist society will enable ‘the participation of all in the enjoyments created by all’. For China, this means a common prosperity for the whole people, specifically in terms of improving livelihood, social justice and better education, as well as adequate income for labour, medical care for the sick, support for the aged, housing in which to live, and support for the frail. The foundations for all of this is a sound economic system and the elimination of absolute poverty.

7) The human-nature relationship, or ‘ecological civilisation [*shengtai wenming*]’. Marx’s observation that ‘human beings live on nature’ is connected with Engels’s warning that ‘if human beings, by dint of their knowledge and inventive genius, have subdued the forces of nature, the latter avenge themselves upon them’. Thus, it is not either-or, but both-and, a ‘harmonious symbiosis [*hexie gongsheng*]’ that has become one of the core challenges for achieving a *xiaokang* society (see Chapter Five).

8) World history, for which *The German Ideology* is deployed: ‘the more the original isolation of the separate nationalities is destroyed by the advanced mode of production, by intercourse and by the natural division of labour between various nations arising as a result, the more history becomes world history’. Here we find win-win (*gongying*) cooperation, and the community of common future or destiny for humankind (*renlei mingyun gongtongti*). But there is also an emphasis drawn from China’s long experience of humiliation by colonial powers: ‘neither dependent on others, nor plundering others’, and

– from the Confucian classics – ‘All things are nourished together without their injuring one another [*wanwu bing yu er bu xiang hai, dao bingxing er bu xiangbei*].’

9) Marxist party building: no speech by a general secretary is complete without this final topic. Drawing from a number of texts by Marx and Engels, Xi emphasises that the basis of the Communist Party, and indeed its difference from other political parties, is that it works with and fights for the people. From this premise everything flows: party unity and strength, strict management, correcting mistakes, political and theoretical knowledge of Marxism, and the unity of the party’s central authority.

Conclusion: Socialist System and Cultural Confidence

In the conclusion to the work as a whole, I draw together the key features of the book by focusing on the meaning of ‘socialist system [*shehuizhuyi zhidu*].’ Indeed, what I have presented concerns the main components of this whole system, from Deng Xiaoping to Xi Jinping, from socio-economic realities to socialist democratic theory. For non-Chinese observers, ‘socialist system’ can have different meanings depending upon what they emphasise. For some, it may be the economic base, while for others it is seen as the political structures. However, the conclusion stresses that it is the overall system that is the focus. The book closes by dealing with the question of ‘cultural confidence.’ This has been a concern for some years now, as Chinese scholars are aware that the level of engagement and influence of Chinese scholarship – and especially Chinese Marxist scholarship – is not commensurate with China’s economic power and global status. But what does ‘cultural confidence’ mean? It means neither copying Western liberal models (see above), nor closing off from the rest of the world. Instead, it means finding a way of expressing and presenting Chinese Marxist perspectives, modes of analysis, and proposed solutions in a way that does not negate China’s rich academic and cultural tradition but is also understandable and appreciated in parts of the world that have different traditions.