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China: Ancien Régime, Revolution and After

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INTRODUCTION

The economic boom of the last three decades (circa 1980s–2000s) testifies to a miraculous rise of China, which keeps observers wondering what the Chinese model really implies (Peerenboom, 2007). Beyond the economic boom, the key *problématique* in debate over the Chinese model is how China modernizes. Political modernization exemplifies the sometimes puzzling line of China's history. 'Political modernity with Chinese characteristics' has phenomena in common with most developmental countries, at least those in East Asia. Yet ideological projections and prejudiced clichés limit researchers, and then two popular tropes become dominant: China's response to the West and the overemphasis on communist revolution. In that period, the situation has changed, and new perspectives have emerged. Cohen in *Discovering History in China* (1984) succinctly summarizes the change. In this chapter, we attempt to 'discover' the contexts in which China has struggled for political modernity. But, before going further into the argument, some precautionary notes are needed:

1 To be politically modern is an option, no matter how pervasive or destructive modernization has been. Thus there is often a time lag or discrepancy in modernizing processes.
2 Bidding farewell to the *ancien régime* and embarking on political modernization is a form of political self-determination which involves re-understanding the past and imagining the future. It involves various procedures or political acts, from mild reform to violent revolution, from civil war to mass mobilization. Neither political transitions nor the repertoire selected to fulfill the modernizing objectives are arbitrary, though some historical contingency or unintended consequences do exist. Besides, even imitation among different countries involves not only active, intentional policymaking, but coercive or normative isomorphism. After the nineteenth century, isomorphism, very common among countries, is ascribable to the reconstruction of the international system (Buzan & Lawson, 2015).

3 To be modern means to be new or renewed. Although in Western civilization, periodically some proclaimed the arrival of a new era, the modernity proclaimed in the nineteenth century implies something different. One difference is that industrialization and military reform, along with capitalism or scientific advancement, changed what had been the agriculture-centered human condition (Diamond, 1999). This great transformation terminated, if not all at once, this long-existing human condition, and liberated people from it. Consequently, tribes, countries, or nations, like the people within them, experienced kinds of Janus-faced liberations: as one becomes free, one is also decoupled from older settings and identities (Schorske, 1980). Another important, though unintended, effect is increased longevity and the enormous increase in human populations. In retrospect, in the last one to two centuries, political turmoil or reform can be deemed as experimental process that attempts to handle or tame large populations of people with longer lives.

4 Political modernization is an uneven process. Different agents in turn try to make political modernity possible or doable. This agency cannot be explained only by class struggle.

DISCOVERING THE PROCESS OF POLITICAL MODERNIZATION IN CHINA

'Discovering political modernization in China', if not new, is a succinct and effective formula for dealing with the orientalism which has long existed in China studies. Orientalism can take different forms, but the core *problématique* is similar: why China cannot develop a modern political system, and how can China's response to the West lead to its political modernization. And when there is orientalism (Vukovich, 2013), there is occidentalism (Chen, 1995; Paltiel, 2007), which is equally problematic.

The orientalistic mentality about China is evident in the dominant images of the Chinese past: the image of an immobile empire; patrimonialism, with a huge but ineffective bureaucracy (Weber, 1951); and oriental despotism, dominated by the Asian mode of production (Sawer, 1977; Wittfogel, 1963). Each image has its own genealogy and mutations, but what is in common seems obvious: their legacy is far-reaching and influential. The contrasting approach of 'Discovering political modernization in China' highlights two orientations: any assessment about China's political modernization should emphasize how China's politics and its tradition actually work; it should be a data-based and contextualized approach. In the last three decades, China studies have experienced an academic boom, and China's 'reform and open policy' have also granted researchers another opportunity to recheck or make new assessments of old theories. Two types of achievement can be identified: China's case can now be studied and judged by comparison; several historical events or figures, overlooked or ill-treated for a long time, now can be re-described.

Comment on Three New Approaches

There are three new approaches, attempting to re-tell how China comes to terms with its political modernization: first, one of taking political changes in the last 150 years as China's search for political modernity, rather than the result of response to the West (Mitter, 2004; 2008); second, regarding political changes as the passage from a totalitarian or authoritarian system to a 'democratic' one ('consultative democracy') (Xiao, 2009; Fang, 2015); third, one of revising class struggle theory to re-portray political changes.

These approaches, though contextualizing China's political changes and making possible comparative studies, are still plagued by some prejudices, and often overlook some interesting but pivotal questions, for instance, the question of timing (when did China start to modernize politically), or the role that state building plays in China's political modernization.

In the following, we will focus three themes – the legacy of empire, state building and its failure, and revolution as a way to modernization – to re-narrate China's struggle for political modernity. These themes may reveal some historical tendencies, somewhat poorly treated in the past by researchers. All of them are about the involution or turning inward process: the empire's involution, the involution of the state, and the extension and then involution of the revolution. It is in these multiple involutions that China finally steps out of the *ancien régime*, and out of the revolutionary ambience in later times.

EMPIRE'S INVOLUTION

Since the mid eighteenth century, a series of events signaled the decline of the Qing: environmental crisis, bureaucratic corruption, a difficult fiscal situation, border conflicts, and domestic rebels. The predicament couldn't be merely ascribed to dynastic decay. Overexpansion might be the significant factor in bringing down the empire (Kennedy, 1987). In the nineteenth century, the situation in China was exacerbated. War, rebels, and natural disasters repeatedly struck the empire and weakened its statecraft. At this time the Western powers marched east, and finally collided with what was already a crisis-stricken empire.

The historical scenario narrated above was usually regarded as the starting point for Chinese modernization. As a consequence, the opium war and its impact were often, but disproportionately, highlighted. However, if we adjust the ratio between the impacts of different events, and contextualize the changes the Qing encountered, three tendencies that may be summarized as involution are worthy of consideration.

First, both the Qing and the British Empire were expanding imperialisms, and their eventual expansion and collision was an inevitable consequence of great power politics. The differences between them included three contrasts: decline/rise; land power/sea power; and older, traditional empire/new species of imperialism.

Second, from the 1840s to the 1890s, the Qing regime was obviously under siege, by threats from inland, border, and outside. Nevertheless, it survived threats by using a specific political strategy. Although the effect of the strategy was not the beginning of modernization, it provided the frame by which China coped with modernity, especially politically, in later times.

Third, the most significant effect left by the Qing's strategy was that China was not broken into several independent political entities. 'To stay large without falling apart' wasn't identical with 'being too large to fall', but by 1900, the two conditions were easily mixed up, and then intertwined. These conditions had ambivalent effects on China's political modernization. A large and unified China represented an achievement, at least with respect to its resistance to Western powers. But being too large to fall had two negative effects: the endless civil wars trying to terminate fragmentation; the uncomfortable adjustment made by China in entering the international system.

A Peculiar Coping Strategy

The Qing has long been regarded as a closed empire, and it is a commonplace that its ignorance and slowness to adapt to international changes ultimately resulted in its collapse. The Chinese people therefore fell into a condition of slavery, living in a semi-feudal and semi-colonial status. Two things deserve our attention in this common description: first, the late Qing period truly testified to the collision among empires, so the Qing was never simply a victim. The life cycle of empires and the particular attributes that empires possessed should be underlined. Second, the Qing's retreat from competition among empires involved pressures both from domestic and international conflicts.

Two examples will show that the Qing did have a strategy for expanding and maintaining its territory. Even when it was falling, the strategy was still followed. This strategy could include: land-powered orientation, limited involvement in maritime affairs, and using 'divide and rule' to govern ethnic groups. Whether or not the Qing was a closed system may miss the point.

International intercourse between the Qing and Russia had a long history, including border conflicts, treaties signed, diplomatic exchanges, and cultural interactions (Chen, 1966; Hsü, 1999, pp. 107–148). This history reveals several interesting and important features: first, the relation between them, though not so peaceful, generally was based on reciprocity and equity. These relations show that the Qing was also not entirely ignorant with respect to international systems. Moreover, the policy of expanding and maintaining the territory of Inner Asia or the North area of China clearly illustrated the Qing's strategic aims (Rawski, 2015). Tibet's case was no exception (Dai, 2009).

The second example involves maritime affairs. Comparing the way the Qing dealt with Inner-Asia or Tibet, their handling of the maritime affairs appeared more limited and conservative. Even so, cultural interactions and international trade proceeded, though with more restrictions (Wills, 2010). Basically, the Qing divided maritime affairs into the fields of diplomatic affairs and overseas trade. In diplomatic affairs, the Qing never viewed the other countries as equal, except Russia. The other affairs were all tributary, although they could enjoy the privilege of reciprocity. The Qing designed a procedure to deal with details in tributary affairs. The tributary system, though distinctly at odds with modern diplomacy, at most of the time was the Qing's foreign policy. Although it represented a symbolic politics of international order, in practice it only had a limited constraining power over subordinate countries.

Overseas trade system was the other way to handle maritime affairs. The Qing inherited its policies from the Ming, while improving the Ming's design. Around the mid eighteenth century, two related policies furthered control over overseas trade: establishing the authorized agency for overseas trade (*cohong*), and decreasing the number of trade ports from five to two (Zhao, 2013). This reform not only displayed the Qing's restrictive attitude towards maritime affairs, but also suggested its strategic aims. Nevertheless, restrictions on maritime affairs never ended trade and cultural exchanges. Since the mid eighteenth century, overseas trade and translational activities had grown enormously.

In its strategic thinking, the Qing preferred the path of 'involution' to adapt to changes. To involute, for an empire, implies two things: to shrink or retreat its influence back to its normal scope; to intensify its control over the territory which its statecraft can reach or state power is able to penetrate. In the Qing's case, involution happened both in its approach to coping with overseas threats and to its approach to domestic turmoil.

Overseas threats didn't pose a serious problem to the Qing before the 1840s, but conflicts, including armed conflicts, took place much earlier. The prelude to large-scale warfare was the spatial expansion and incorporation of local commercial networks that the British Empire had achieved in Southeast Asia after 1700 (Hillemann, 2009; Souza, 2004). The First Opium War followed and was the consequence of this expansion (Wong, 1998). After the First Opium War, there was a series of conflicts and warfare between the Qing and the Western great powers. Warfare brought about defeats and treatises were signed.

Before the outbreak of the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), the Qing's strategic thinking was carried out through several devices (Scott, 2008: Chapters 2–4): First, the Qing attempted to limit the Western powers to certain, restricted coastal areas where foreigners were allowed to live, trade, and disseminate Christianity. Second, the central government didn't deal with foreign affairs

directly, so local officials took responsibility. This situation didn't change, even when the defeat in the Second Opium War forced the Qing to establish a bureau to administer and oversee the whole of international affairs in 1861. Third, defeats, along with their inability to repress domestic rebels, forced the Qing to recognize the importance of modernizing its military force. Consequently, a Self-Strengthening Movement was initiated in the early 1860s. Its major objective was to learn from the Western powers. Peculiarly, but still reasonably, the Qing Government handed over the assignment to local officials.

The policies mentioned above might underline their ignorance or conservative attitude, but they also suggest that the Qing still had some confidence in their capacity to govern, and some of their strategic thinking really influenced policymaking. In any case, the empire did survive threats, although it couldn't maintain the former size of territory and its capacity to govern.

By contrast to the critical situation in foreign affairs, the Qing also faced a harsh, perhaps harsher, domestic predicament, which at last contributed to the empire's involution. The domestic predicament resulted from threats from overseas and domestic rebellions. After the White Lotus Rebellion, at least three major rebellions happened in the nineteenth century. Among them, the Taiping Rebellion was the most serious. It lasted over 14 years, devastated China's most prosperous areas, and caused supposedly 20 million deaths. Rebellions thus ultimately contributed to the empire's involutionary approach to handle domestic affairs.

Due to the dysfunctions of its former military force, the Qing allowed local officials to organize a new army based on militias (*xiangyong*). Later, the new army gained financial independence by collecting inland transit taxes (*likin*). Furthermore, rebellions indirectly contributed to the initiation of the Self-Strengthening Movement. As the movement went on, local officials took charge of administering all these activities, including the new industrialization system being built.

Rebellions led to the enlargement of local officials' power, and their autonomy was increased as a result. When these officials held more bargaining power, the balance between central and local government gravitated to the local side. Likewise, as local officials also took responsibility for handling foreign affairs, the imbalance became more apparent. This power shift was a part of the empire's involution.

Imperial Legacy and Its Wisdom to Govern

When the Western powers marched east, the Qing, who had always marched west (Perdue, 2005), stopped to involute. The involution caused the Qing to rearrange its imperial landscape by learning from the West in a limited way, and also 'learning from the East'. Learning from the East confirmed the fact that the empire and its elites never lost confidence in themselves, and appealed to ancient wisdom in governing. This confidence, long regarded as ignorance or pedantry that brought the empire to fragmentation, might reveal some other overlooked characteristics of the Qing. First, the Qing was 'authentically' an empire, definitely one of the largest empires in China's history. Its imperial logic was to govern people living in an agriculture-centered and land-bounded life form, and to assure its own boundaries: who was its enemy or 'barbarian'. Besides, crisis situations never blurred their intention to rebuild or maintain its empire in a 'traditional' way. Here, we can argue that the Qing, by any standard, possessed neither traditional nor modern political governance: 'proto-modern' is a more accurate term for it. 'Proto-modern' means that the Qing had many political attributes or elements shared by modern polities, but its governance and statecraft still functioned in a non-modern way. After all, to learn from the East helped the Qing to resist fragmentation, avoiding the fate the other old empires met in the nineteenth century, such as the Ottoman Empire (Hanioğlu, 2008).

Generally, China's politics has undergone numerous changes, carrying out political experiments to find a more adequate, efficient way to run politics. To analyze China's political modernization, the following imperial legacies deserve our attention.

First, long before the first empire was built, both family (*jia*) and city-state (*guo*) had performed functions of a state in feudal times. The Chinese therefore had developed an idea of coextensive relationship among the dimensions of personal, social, and political order, which they didn't give up after feudalism. Instead, family and state were isomorphized, and the state was in a sense equal to society, though the Chinese actually had no idea of society before their encounter with the West (Hall & Ames, 1987; Tang, 2010). The division between state and society, so common in the Western political thought, assuredly fails to describe Chinese politics.

Second, in the Warring States period, the elimination of contest in one state (in Elias's terms) was already complete. In contrast to the European case (Tilly, 1992), the Qin state, which only concentrated its coercive power, triumphed in their interstate competition, and built an empire (Hui, 2005). Briefly, the Han Empire replaced the Qin. After the Han, a bureaucratic empire, with the following attributes, gradually became the prevailing political form in China: (1) despotism over all social powers; (2) the Confucian-Legalist hybrid offering an ideological façade; (3) 'the political' taking primacy over other social areas; and (4) relatively open political participation that not only recruited elites into bureaucracy, but also forged a stable political identification between empire and elites (Tang, 2004; Zhao, 2015). Chinese bureaucratic rule was therefore colored by a mixture of aristocracy and meritocracy. Even today, communist rule follows this pattern.

Third, the distinction between 'Chinese' and 'barbarian' played an important role in the unification of the empires. In the last two thousand or more years, China had been invaded, conquered, and dominated by 'barbarians', but none of these events would have the effect of wiping out the distinction. It is not identical to the Han/barbarian distinction, and overlapping does exist. It is certainly not 'nationalism' in the modern sense, though it triggered, at times, 'proto-nationalism' from as early as the eleventh century (Ge, 2011; Tillman, 1979; Yao, 2002). At the end of the nineteenth century, its components and the related historical changes were accommodated into modern nationalism (Huang, 2002; Zheng, 2007).

Fourth, the Qin's short life suggested the predicament of the imperial system: its huge territory prevented imperial power from really penetrating into people's lives. Later, some transformations helped to resolve or at least alleviate the predicament, among which the relationship of division, with collaboration between the central and local could be counted as the most cunning innovation. This logic of governance had a nuanced modification in the Song. The strengthened despotism and centralization in power adjusted the central-local relationship: the central government occupied a more dominant position, but at the same time shifted many responsibilities to local communities (Tang, 2004, 2010; Wong, 1997). This elementary imperial logic still reflects today's governance techniques: combining a vertical subcontracting in administrative levels with a horizontal competition among bureaucrats; making use of formal and informal mechanism (Zhou Li-An, 2014; Zhou Xueguang, 2014a, 2014b).

Fifth, the societal transformation from the Tang to Song might explain the power shift mentioned above. This transformation indicated the fulfillment of post-nobility society. Although local force could no longer challenge the central government, the local community was still capable of resisting the state's rule in every dimension. Thereafter, the upper-class, gentry shifted their concerns from the politics of the central government to local community and family networks. The situation became more apparent after Mongol conquest of the Song (Bossler, 1998;

Johnson, 1977; Miyazaki, 1980, 1992; Smith, 2011; Tang, 2004). This led to a synergy between commercial prosperity and advanced urbanism. What the Ming and Qing Empires inherited was exactly this post-nobility pattern of governance. As a response to this structural transformation, one that would undermine the primacy of politics, some emperors tried to make more radical modifications to state practices to enhance their power, but ultimately these failed. The state finally implemented an inclusive policy, tacitly granting local communities an informal quasi-autonomy (Brook, 2005; Tang, 2010). Thus, until the end of the imperial age, the governance pattern embodied by the central-local collaboration had been preserved and sustained.

Sixth, after the monetarization of taxes since the mid Tang, the Song achieved a further advancement: tariffs replaced poll taxes as the main source of the empire's revenue. Thus the Song, long viewed as a notoriously weak empire, had a robust fiscal capacity that helped it to resist the mighty Mongol invasion for decades (Miyazaki, 1980). This is an important feature, as many phenomena denounced as patrimonialism in the late imperial time had to do with insufficient fiscal capacity.

Seventh, in the mid-Tang period, a mercenary system replaced conscription in the state's military force, and the mercenary entitlement even later became an inherited identity. Building a professional standing army and implementing a more sophisticated control over military force, both made sovereignty impartial and also rendered civil war 'in strict sense' quite improbable (Chen, 2004; Fang, 2009; Hucker, 1998; Lorge, 2005). The Qing, a Manchurian regime by its origin, made an additional modification: to divide the military forces according to members' ethnicity, into the Eight Banners Army and Green Standard Army. This division reflected the Qing's strategy in two ways: it aimed to accommodate different ethnic groups into empire, but also to implement the policy of 'divide and rule'; to maintain the Eight Banners Army as a huge and powerful military force, and take advantage of its strong familial bonds to invade, conquer, and expand (Elliott, 2001).

Orientalism portrays China as immobile empire, or as patrimonial empire, or even as oriental despotism as part of what Marx had called the Asiatic mode of production. All these theories miss the point. Actually, Chinese politics changed over time. Before China searched for political modernity, it already had a full-fledged statecraft and a political system with nominal legitimacy to intervene in all human affairs (Fukuyama, 2011). Hence, its road to political modernization was different from that of a tribal society without a state (e.g. some areas of Africa) and also from Europe's nation-states that emerged in the competition among multiple forces under feudalism. This point deserves our attention because the new approaches often overlooked it as they tried to go beyond the orientalistic paradigm.

Concluding Remarks about the Empire's Involution

The Qing's involution implied its retreat in power from the areas where it was incapable of governing, and its elaboration upon what it had inherited from the predecessors. As discussed above, the imperial legacy is a complicated, delicate result produced by numerous political experiments. The Chinese empire and its statecraft share a lot of elements with modern nation-states, although they cannot be regarded as truly modern. The connection between this particular empire system and its modernization is too important to be overlooked.

The Qing, by using a specific strategy and taking advantage of the international situation, successfully preserved most of its territory, and achieved the status as being 'too large to fall'. This 'achievement' cast a long shadow (some may say 'light') over the path of political modernization. It is a part of

imperial legacy which influences China's modern politics so profoundly that it persists even after various revolutionary waves.

What does 'being too large to fall' imply? First, it is a process attributed not only to objective conditions or intentional endeavors, but also to cultural factors. The objective condition refers to the trajectory of the Qing's collision or negotiation with the great powers, and the realpolitik that emerged after the revolution of 1911. The nationalism that was newly formed at the end of the nineteenth century and the mentality of avoiding disorder made their cultural contributions to sustaining the empire. Second, when revolution overthrew the Qing and built a republican regime, it inherited this political legacy. The legacy provided an important source of legitimacy, if not the only one, by which political elites could claim their right to rule, no matter how fragmented or conflicting the actual politics is. Finally, its huge territory and large population therefore became the basic condition of politics, which posed a great challenge for any attempt to modernize politics in China.

STATE INVOLUTION

The late Qing period was a critical moment to China's political modernization, but it was better characterized as a proto-modern starting point, or even as a 'non-starting-point'. In this period, the Qing did not figure out a 'new' way to transform its politics. Likewise, to be or not to be modern was a question yet to be posed. The Western powers came and brought about changes, but these changes were not so powerful to shock the Qing out of their normal course. Thus, elaboration upon the imperial logic took priority.

China was late to abandon its *ancien régime*, and the Boxer Uprising in the 1900s certainly ruined the Qing's legitimacy. Only thereafter were revolutionary activities to strengthen. Revolution never obscured the fact that the revolutionaries had inherited the imperial legacy as the *ancien régime* was overthrown. The imperial legacy consisted of several elements: the political landscape that was too large to fall; the fragmented territory where various political entities were self-governed and armed; and the ideological legacy forged by cultural or moral tradition. No matter how radical the revolutionaries were, they were locked into actual or cultural politics. As they met with successes far beyond expectations, continuing revolution proved inevitable.

In a long view, two symbiotic but somewhat contradictory tendencies dominated the years after the *ancien régime*: to rebuild the state (or to liberate the state from imperial rule) and to liberate society. Ironically, both tendencies reflected the same reality: after the *ancien régime*, China was left without either a successful state-building process or a process of societal liberation.

State weakness and state rebuilding exert a great influence on modern China's politics. The most evident, somewhat ironic, case is that of the communist regime after 1949. In appearance, this regime was strong, sometimes even aggressive, but its statecraft suffered difficulties shared with the Qing and the Nationalist regime. Meanwhile, party building took the place of state building, and mass mobilizations replaced bureaucratic formation. In 1976, when Mao finally died, state capacity was still below expectations for a modern state.

If state building posed a serious challenge to different regimes after 1911, state weakness might offer another explanation to, or even falsify, the theories that portray China's political modernization as a passage from a totalitarian or authoritarian system to a democratic one. The passage does not reveal a powerful state that finally adopts the democratic rules of the game, but a weak state that tries to achieve two basic objectives at once: to shrink the scope of its power to the normal size where statecraft can truly reach its citizens; to increase state capacity to strengthen its penetration into ordinary people's lives through deliberate policy.

Here, we argue that to build a modern state in China not only involves 'bringing the state back in', but also refers to building a state by way of a state's involution. In the following, we will further the argument by describing change in the polity, and the development of state powers in different periods after 1911.

State Building in Different Periods

'Bringing the state back in' signifies an ambitious enterprise among American political sociologists (e.g. Evans, Rueschemeyer, and Skocpol, 1985). For Chinese people, the state or statecraft has been a missing character since 1911, so bringing the state back in has a different meaning. When revolution succeeded, with the imperial regime overthrown, the conception of the state became ambiguous, and led to an attitude of ambivalence towards the state. If abandoning the *ancien régime* involved renouncing the mighty power of the state, what else could defend China against threats, and terminate internal wars? This ambivalent attitude has prevailed in the 100 years or more after the Qing's fall. Against this ambivalence, almost every political leader and elite attempted to find a new way to build a modern state. However, foreign invasions, civil wars, and wild political experiments always resulted in failure to do so.

The warlord and Nationalist regime period

The collapse of the Imperial regime left a power vacuum, but the republican project failed to fill it. Thus, China slipped into a long period of internal war. From 1911 to 1949, China's territory was never unified by a single regime. After 1928, the Nationalist regime united and reigned over China only 'virtually'. Several factors could explain this fragmented condition: first, in 1914, the outbreak of World War I released the new-founded republican regime from the pressure of the great powers. However, Japan seized the chance to invade in the name of declaring war on Germany. Russia transformed to a communist regime in 1917, never abandoning its ambition to intervene in China's politics. The Western great powers continued indirect interventions, mainly by money and weapons imports. Thus, invasion or intervention caused a significant stagnation in state building.

Second, the state of war was definitely a legacy left by the Qing. This legacy not only characterized the tension in the central-local relationship, but testified to the effect left by the Qing's strategy (Ch'en, 1979; McCord, 1993). When the Western great powers were kept away from inland China, they could only deal with the local officials. With the empire gone, local governments and military forces gained independence. They still maintained relationships with some great powers. Now becoming warlords, they often granted privileges in exchange for loan or weapons. Great amounts of debt worsened the fiscal condition of the government. Weapons imports escalated the conflicts among warlords. After 1911, armed conflicts ran rampant, which not only reflected the struggle among the great powers, but also inhibited state building. Moreover, the only role of the state in people's daily lives under these circumstances was negative, even predatory.

Third, although some attempts were made to build a modern state, these political experiments died out quickly. After these failures, staying self-governed seemed to be a common choice among the warlords. In additional to warlordism, revolutionary ferment was another blockage. The reason seemed simple but full of contradiction: to revolutionize politics meant to liberate society from imperial rule. A strong state might help to resist invasion, but it was easy for such as state to become a tyranny.

The Nationalist government 'virtually' united China in 1928. But warlordism, if acting in a more restricted way, continued to dominate. After 1930, Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalist regime's leader, effectively decreased the power of warlords, and attempted to rebuild statecraft. Chiang's rise testified

to the transformation of the Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT). Around 1920s, Sun Yat-sen, the leader of KMT, was determined to reorganize the party, and attempted to transform the KMT on the model of the Bolsheviks. Through this transformation, the KMT successfully incorporated revolutionary forces and founded its military forces. In this process, Chiang was promoted to become one of the military leaders. After Sun's death in 1925, the KMT fell apart, which granted Chiang a second chance in the power struggle. In 1928, he succeeded in defeating the opponent warlords, and 'united' China. Under his rule China did experience some transformations: building a centralized state, forging a single ideological frame, and strengthening state capacity (Lary, 2007; Wilbur, 1985).

Although the nationalist regime launched a series of reforms and attempted to build a modern state, the result was far beneath expectations (Strauss, 1998). Among the possible reasons are that the time span was too short, that Chiang's despotic power was limited, the Japanese invasion, and the fact that the reform mainly stressed central government. The failure of the reforms was foreseeable, because they never solved the predicament left by the Qing. After the civil war (1945–1949), the Nationalist regime collapsed. China was united again by Mao, although the formal unification came as late as the 1950s.

State building under Mao

Mao's China, commonly presumed to be new and united, was actually suffering from the negative consequences left unresolved by former regimes. Division between the central and local, or the armed political forces reflected these serious issues. Among these effects of past regimes, the weakness of the state might be the gravest one (Shue, 1988; Zheng, 1997). How to terminate the old world, and turn to a new one was still a formidable challenge. At first the party, the National People's Council, the administration and the military were designated as the four pillars of the new regime. The balance in this quadrilateral relationship supposedly assured the building of a modern state. Nonetheless, after a relatively 'peaceful' period (1949–1956), a debate over the road taken or not taken emerged, which ignited a conflict over the issue of deciding the party line. Two factionalized attitudes came into conflict: either to continue revolution or to be pragmatic. Mao represented the former position. From 1949 to 1976, he successfully waged a series of purges, within and outside of the party, to consolidate the revolution's accomplishments. The trajectory of the purge was clear: first, wiping out the legacy left by former regimes, and then purifying bad elements within the party (Walder, 2015).

As for state building, Mao's regime had several attributes: first, his regime still suffered the negative impacts left by its predecessors. The years after liberation were less peaceful and united than it appeared (Dikötter, 2013), not to mention the period of mass mobilization. Besides, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and its ruling pattern, mostly modeled upon Stalin's regime, took party building as the priority. To build a state sometimes contradicted this ruling pattern. Moreover, both state and party were just the means to the end of transforming the old China. The debate over the road taken or not taken was about which road could lead to modern China. Mao's triumph underscored the attitude that the revolution was to be continued.

Mao should be held responsible for initiating mass mobilization and bringing about tragic results, but he was definitely a captive of the movements in his name. Cadres and ordinary people could easily take advantage of mobilizations, purges, and political education schemes, to fulfill their own political ambitions or satisfy their appetite for power (Dikötter, 2016). If the fragmented condition was still lurking and statecraft still proving too weak to inhibit the popular urge to pursue conflicts, mobilizations only could lead to chaos. Perhaps Mao was always in charge, but he never had politics under control.

State building after 1978

In 1978, as a new political alliance was forged, Deng Xiaoping took the lead. The 'reform and open policy' then was confirmed. More space for different opinions was granted, and a relatively easier atmosphere in politics emerged. China started again to modernize. The reform produced by the new policy was a process of trial and error and step-by-step adjustment, including debates and conflicts. We can divide the period from 1978 to the present into two sub-periods: 1978–1989, and 1989 to the present.

In the former period, the reforms produced incredible achievements in economic growth, but social inequality and social disorder swiftly increased, dramatizing popular grievances and undermining the CCP's legitimacy in a 'crisis of belief, confidence, and trust' (Ding, 1994). The protest movement in 1989 might be understood to reflect the critical situation, and the harsh repression that followed was the only answer that the CCP chose to offer.

In the later period, China's politics and the CCP made widespread adjustments. Deng's 'one core with four principles' illustrates the main objectives or 'spirits' of political reform in this period.

After 1978, three tendencies can be detected in state building. First, although state was still in involution, its involution reveals two different attributes: involution as the result of state building rather than state dysfunction; and the market and other institutions starting to take over the functions formerly served by state or party. Second, the recognition that to modernize China is to build a 'modern state'. Third, as the state was rebuilt, several related reforms also proceeded: party reform (Brodsgaard & Yongnian, 2006), military reform, police system reform (Wong, 2011), legal reform (Liang, 2007), and reform of nationally owned enterprises.

State Power in Different Periods

To define state power is to demarcate the scope and capacity that a state has for exerting its influence and powers of constraint. Usually, the state in the modern sense can comprise various phenomena, including polity, governing institutions, and so forth. Here, however, we refer to state only in terms of state powers, and 'state' is equivalent to statecraft.

Based on the works of Mann and other theorists (Mann, 1986; 1988; Giddens, 1985; Tilly, 1992), we can identify five dimensions that define the state (Table 65.1). These dimensions not only provide us with a model for analyzing China's state building since 1911, but also account for some particular variations in China's case. It is worth noting that the variations in China's case exactly reflect the debate over the 'great divergence'. As this debate has revealed, the comparison between the Qing and its European counterparts shows that the lag in China is not longstanding. Around 1800, the divergence slowly emerged (Pomeranz, 2000; Rosenthal and Wong, 2011). The factors that caused the divergence were various, and among them, the development of the state is undoubtedly significant (Vries, 2015). However, how to define the economy or statecraft of the Qing, especially with respect to the difference with modern economies and statecraft, is still left unanswered. The question of how to explain the transition of statecraft in China in the last 150 years proves even more critical, if we separate it from the question of 'why China didn't develop modern economy, state, and so forth'. By decomposing the dimensions of state power, in short, and examining it on its own terms, we may derive some answers about China's state-building process and its failed attempts.

Unlike the popular impression, in the twentieth century, the state in China has been relatively weak. Many state capacities have been slow to develop: among them, the monopoly of military force, a modern budget and auditing system, and energy systems. The central-local relation significantly limits the ruling capacity of central government (Remick, 2004). A consultative process rather than the rule of law offers a temporary solution to the

Table 65.1 State power in different periods of state building since 1911

	Warlordism (W) and Nationalist (N) regime (1911–1949)	*Mao's reign (1949–1976)*	*After 1978*
Despotic power	W: 1. Without a unified, central government 2. No single official ideology N: 1. 'Virtual' unification, but only 25% territory and 66% population under control 2. State power only reaching the county level 3. Attempting to build a single official ideology (the New Life Movement)	1. China in unification 2. Single party regime with single official ideology (communism) 3. The central-local relation still limiting the central government	1. China in unification 2. Single party regime with single official ideology (communism, and 'Confucian-communism' after 1990s)
Bureaucratic capacity	W: 1. Without a full-functioning bureaucracy 2. No self-regulating mechanism in bureaucracy 3. Irregular recruitment of bureaucrats N: 1. Founding a relatively complete bureaucracy system 2. Building a procedure for regulating bureaucrats 3. Enlarging bureaucracy by recruiting those with diploma of modern education	1. Party, National People's Council, administrative sector, and military force forming a quadrangle relation in power 2. Bureaucratic capacity in administrative sector checked by the other sectors 3. After 1966, administrative sector under siege 4. No single procedure for regulating and recruiting bureaucrats	1. Party, National People's Council, administrative sector, and military force forming a quadrangle relation in power 2. Bureaucratic capacity in administrative sector gaining independence 3. Personnel downsizing in bureaucracy 4. Establishing procedure for regulating and recruiting bureaucrats 5. Party still the reservoir for recruiting bureaucrats
Fiscal capacity	W: 1. Having insufficient fiscal capacity, and using foreign loans to compensate the fiscal gap 2. Limited power to promote commercial activities N: 1. Rebuilding and redesigning tax system 2. Abolishing unequal tax treatment 3. Establishing modern budget and auditing system 4. Promoting commercial activities and fostering capitalist enterprises	1. Redesigning tax system 2. Modern budget and auditing system in building 3. Fiscal capacity of central government checked by the local 4. Deliberating command economic plan, and promoting industrialization and collective agricultural policy	1. Redesigning tax system 2. Modern budget and auditing system in building 3. Fiscal capacity of central government increasing, the local still enjoying some independent fiscal capacity 4. Building capitalism with Chinese characteristics, and promoting the role of market 5. Reforming national enterprises and deliberating macro-regulation

(continued)

Table 65.1 State power in different periods of state building since 1911 (Continued)

	Warlordism (W) and Nationalist (N) regime (1911–1949)	*Mao's reign (1949–1976)*	*After 1978*
Coercive capacity	W: 1. Warlords possessing independent military forces 2. Limited power to repress rebels 3. The police system built, but without good training and single authority 4. Founding modern legal system, but without full procedures or institutions to carry it out N: 1. Relative monopoly over military forces 2. Power in growth to repress rebels, sometimes using intelligence organization to achieve the informal repression of dissents 3. Building a centralized police system 4. Developing legal system	1. Monopoly of military forces, but different military regions possessing high independence 2. The Cultural Revolution as civil war, with military forces involved 3. Developing police system 4. Legal system unified, but without a complete procedure	1. Monopoly of military forces, and different military regions possessing only relative independence 2. Protests and conflicts being common and great in number 3. Accomplishing reform in police system 4. Legal system unified and developing a more complete legal procedure
Infrastructural capacity	W: 1. Communication system in building 2. Unable to unify coinage and the other measurements 3. Coal as major resource for energy N: 1. Building communication system, especially railway 2. Unifying coinage and the other measurements 3. Coal as major resource for energy, but electricity swiftly rising in use	1. Communication systems, especially railway, highway, radio, and telegraph 2. Unifying coinage and the other measurements 3. Coal as major resource for energy, but electricity in common use	1. Communication systems enlarging extensively 2. Unifying coinage and the other measurements 3. Various energies in use

Source: Authors

weakness of statecraft. The strength of the state has been in the unification of territory and ideological despotism, and these dimensions make the state appear stronger than it is.

Moreover, in all three periods, the state's performance and effectiveness depend on collaboration among different political forces or organizations. Under the communist regime, the party, the National People's Council, the administrating sector, and military force form a quadrilateral relation. The balance in power relations, though helping to maintain political order, can prove unstable, if one sector outgrows the others, or the rules of the game are not clearly set and followed. Consequently, the autonomy of the state is much more limited than expected. More important, if we consider the contribution made by assistant sectors or organizations, state power proves less effective and powerful than it might appear.

Concluding Remarks on the State's Involution

In modern China, statecraft is strong only 'virtually'. What does this ironical result imply? First, its weakness manifests itself not only in its large scope of the tasks of the state, but also in its low level of functionality and its underdeveloped capacities. The issue of infrastructural capacity may be the weakest link. Uneven development among the five dimensions of state power also brings about disorder, and undermines statecraft itself.

Second, almost all regimes after 1911 failed to find a way to organize state powers that did not continue the imperial ruling pattern. After 1978, the situation changes: the state is rebuilt, and state powers are redefined. However, uncertainty and imbalance still testify to the weakness of the state, if we distinguish party from state, and don't overrate the significance of the state's monopoly of military force.

Why is building a modern state so difficult in China? First, the imperial legacy and its mentality certainly outlived empire itself. In the imperial age, empire or state played a role in almost all human activities in China. This ambivalent legacy frustrated any attempt to build a modern, limited state, and provides a reasonable explanation to the CCP's triumph. Under the communist regime, however, the party rather than the state performs the functions that the state was formerly expected to serve. Nevertheless, the party can never be the cure for the problems of state building.

Second, when state is expected to take care of all human activities, and when 'the political' gains primacy over other social areas, the state is destined to be weak. This pervasive 'political' mentality, 'the political in command' as we may call it, was forged both by the imperial legacy and more recent political experience. It resulted from collaboration between political elites and ordinary people. More important, when China industrializes, develops its market economy, and builds a modern education system, this political mentality cannot adapt to these changes. Even worse, social, economic, and cultural mobility, though granting China an opportunity to develop, doubtlessly escalates all kinds of inequalities. This produces a paradoxical situation: 'the political' has by far, still played the major role as the solution to social cleavages. Yet, this solution often involves military force, with bloodshed as a result.

In the last century, many developing countries have suffered the same conflicts in building the state, and some describe the problem as one of 'strong society vs. weak state'. In China, the situation is different. Since 1911, 'society' has been liberated, along with the liberation of the state, but society, like the state, is also weak. Its weakness can be attributed to several factors, for example, the fact that the so-called 'society', made up of free, equal citizens, includes too small a portion of the total population. Beyond the big cities or trade ports, familial and the other networks still dominate. Moreover, political leaders in different periods never really gave a positive role for society, especially when they seized power, and attempted to build a new regime.

Accordingly, China has, and has had, both a weak state and weak society. Some political entities which mediate between state and society have seized the opportunity provided by these two weaknesses to enlarge and increase their own influence. The political party is the best example of this. The KMT's remolding in 1922–1924 was a critical moment for China. After that, party played a powerful role in politics and society at large. The situation has continued unchanged to the present day.

Seen in comparative perspective, China has taken a particular path of involution to build a modern state. The role of civil war or quasi civil war has been decisive for this unusual pattern. The future of China's state-building process still depends on how well military forces can be monopolized not only by the party, but, most importantly, by the state.

REVOLUTION AND ITS INVOLUTION

In China, the relationship between revolution and political modernity is close and complicated. In 1911, foreigners had noted that China had changed, just because of the revolution. Similar observations could be found in the words of reporters who visited the CCP's base area during World War II. Some even started to believe that the postmodern age had come, not in Europe or America, but in China, as the CCP was about to achieve victory in 1949 (Anderson, 1998, pp. 8–12).

However, after Mao's death, 'revolution' began to assume different meanings and undertones. In 1985, Deng remarked that this was 'the second revolution', by contrast to the first one in 1949. Assessing the political situation after 1978 by the standard of 1949 or 1966, however, makes it clear that the reform and open policy belongs precisely to the 'capitalist roaders' and anti-revolutionaries.

In 1992, Deng made his last public appearances, embarking on the Southern Tour. In the course of his journey, he repeated his insistence on reform, and confirmed four principles as the guideline for reform. After 1989 or 1992, revolution was disengaged from political modernization. Some intellectuals even proclaimed farewell to revolution. 'Farewell to revolution' may suggest: first, bidding farewell to revolution can be regarded as itself a way to modernize. Second, revolutionaries, long regarded as important carriers in political modernization, now lose their glamour, and exit the stage. But if the farewell to the *ancien régime* can be viewed as the beginning of Chinese people coming to terms with political modernity, why did they choose the most violent way, and finally bid another strange farewell to revolution itself? In the following, we focus on two contexts to redescribe the process between the two farewells.

The Origin of Revolution in Modern China

Three common models allow us to analyze Chinese revolutions in 1911–1949: polity change (Skocpol, 1979), class struggle (Kurzman, 2008; Smith, 2008), and peasant revolution (Moore, 1973). Although each of these models do something to explain the revolutions, there exists an alternative way to understand them, if we bring the Chinese context back in and don't overemphasize the role of communism.

The word '*geming*' (revolution) has had a long history in China, but it only signified dynastic change, and that a regime had lost its mandate. In the late Qing period, the term gained a new sense from the Japanese experience: to revolutionize was to reform, to renew politics. This new meaning attested to the change that revolutionaries had experienced. Around 1900, the revolutionary message was widely circulated, but its dominant meaning was to reform the Qing by creating a monarchic constitution and carrying out political reform rather than overthrowing the state. However, the situation changed as a result of the Boxer Rebellion. This uprising and its tragic results not only damaged

the Qing's legitimacy but also weakened the political conservatives.

After 1900, revolution still meant political reform by creating a constitution, but overthrowing the present regime became a meaning of equal importance. In the turmoil following the political reform after 1901, revolutionaries promoted the message that to overthrow the Qing was the only way to transform China, and to rescue it from misery. Meanwhile, revolution became a recognizable political project, and become a noticeable force in the search for political modernity (Jin & Liu, 2010, pp. 365–399).

In contrast to the prestige that the concept of revolution gained, the Qing in the twentieth century took on a negative, deformed image, which was exacerbated, when revolution finally achieved its ascendancy. According to the new narratives, composed of three themes – empire under siege, a failed nation, and unfinished revolution – it was the response to the Western powers and revolution that led to the demise of the corrupt, failed Qing and the revolutionary awakening (Karl, 2002; Miller, 2014).

Revolutionaries had become more widely known after 1900, but their development was still restricted. Moving from overseas to the mainland was not easy. Since the initial stirrings of the revolutionary enterprise, the fact of marginality had accounted for most of the impetus behind the revolutionary movement. Revolutionaries were marginal by social status, and they carried out their revolutionary project in marginal places. Nonetheless, some events enabled them to move out of the margins, for instance, the abolition of the imperial exam in 1905, and the death of Empress Dowager Cixi in 1908. After the popular protest against nationalization of the railways, revolutionaries and constitutionalists formed an alliance, and with support from local officials and military forces, overthrew the Qing.

The most significant effect of the revolution of 1911 was that revolution entered into the political repertoire as a way to modernization. Nationalist revolution would be a better term for it, because the situation after the revolution was neither democratic nor republican. Meanwhile, 'party' (*dang*) got rid of its negative meaning in Chinese.

As for the social origins of revolutionaries, the political landscape in the late Qing period revealed the basic pattern by which revolutionary carriers emerged and organized. The early revolutionaries were marginal by social status and location: overseas students, ordinary overseas Chinese, and members of secret societies. When the revolutionary message was recognized on the mainland, the revolutionary movement got recruits from new sources: students from new model schools, soldiers from the new model military forces, and former constitutionalists (Fung, 1980). The change in membership was indicative of the change in the path of the revolution: moving from the margins to the center. The newly recruited members also reflected the effects of the Qing's unsuccessful strategy for coping with the crisis.

By 1894, Sun Yat-sen had begun his revolutionary career and established several revolutionary organizations. Among all the revolutionary groups, he was the most famous leader, but his group was only one of many. His legendary status later sometimes obscured the fact that revolution never became the only way to transform China during his life, and he hardly dominated the revolutionary forces or discourses.

After the revolution, controversies over polity and constitutional design fermented, but were short-lived. Politics had begun to gravitate towards fragmentation. Subsequently, two restorations of monarchism failed, and warlordism, along with revolutionary waves, provided the overarching structure of China's politics. At this time, to continue revolution could mean either to unite China, to build a central government, or to remove influence of the great powers.

Revolution, a Dominant Way to Modernize China's Politics

Several critical moments can be used to enable us to sketch the process by which

revolution achieved its ascendancy: the KMT's transformation, the May Fourth Movement, and changes in the CCP.

The KMT's remolding

The revolutionary force led by Sun had undergone numerous transformations, from 1894 on. After 1911, the status quo never matched his expectations, which confirmed his will to revolution.

In the warlordism era, Sun attempted to cooperate with some warlords to continue the revolutionary enterprise, but none of his attempts succeeded. Failures and frustrations led him to search for new sources of support. The new communist regime in Russia offered a timely helping hand. Russia's revolution also inspired Sun to remold his revolutionary organization. The KMT remolded itself into a hierarchical and power-centralized network, by which Sun believed the party could be revitalized and capable of revolution. This complicated remolding was not simply imitating its Bolshevik model: Sun established a Bolshevik party with Chinese characteristics (Wang, 2003). Both the KMT and the CCP were its descendants.

After remolding, the KMT always attempted to maintain its revolutionary image, and even to dominate discourse on revolution. The split between the KMT and CCP, the purge of the CCP, or the power struggle between these two parties during World War II, could all be regarded as struggle over control of the discourse of revolution. This struggle successfully promoted the revolutionary message, and confirmed the relationship between revolution and political modernization. Accordingly, other kinds of political thinking, except the revolutionary ones, were marginalized, and counter-revolution was a crime inscribed in criminal law after 1927.

The May Fourth Movement

How did revolution become the dominant way to do or think of politics? Part of the answer to this question involved the political transformation of students. Among all the revolutionary movements the May Fourth Movement best represented this transformation. Hitherto, two narratives have dominated studies of this movement: modern China's renaissance (Chow, 1964), and the idea of a transition to a revolutionary movement. The second narrative emphasizes the relationship between this movement and the CCP's formation. Here, the relationship between the May Fourth Movement and students' political transformation is underlined (Lu, 1994; Rahav, 2015).

New model schools were hotbeds of revolution, but their role came late. At first, these schools were established during the Self-Strengthening Movement, and aspired to learn from the West, yet they played no significant role because Western knowledge or 'new knowledge' remained marginalized. The first Sino-Japanese War, however, dramatically changed the relationship between the Qing and its opponents, and changed the Chinese attitudes toward the 'new knowledge'. In the 1890s, new model schools gradually became close to revolutionary currents.

Besides, as new model schools were built, several difficulties were left unresolved: the fact that they received insufficient support and social recognition; that they recruited the less talented students; and the limited future for graduates. After 1894, the situation changed, but the difficulties persisted. The difficulties were not resolved even when the Qing collapsed. Why? Firstly, education in the new model schools was not considered equal to education for the imperial exam, because the former was just a part of the education system, and the latter a channel both to the civil service and to the education system. The imperial exam was also an important means for political participation or inclusion (Elman, 2013). Furthermore, in the late Qing period and later, there were limited occupational options for those educated in the 'new knowledge'. Unless the whole society underwent some dramatic transformation, new model schools and their students were inevitably troubled by the problem of careers and employment.

The decadence of gentry after the mid nineteenth century (Chang, 1955) was

another contributing factor. In the process of the decay of the Qing dynasty, the empire lost its cultural ascendancy, and the gentry no longer fulfilled a 'cultural' or 'civilizing' mission. Accordingly, culture and knowledge had lost their glamour. It was in the course of this trend that students became radicalized, because they still considered rescuing the empire or nation as their calling. As the empire fell into more severe difficulties in the 1890s, the revolutionary message started to spread, and spread widely among students.

After 1911, although students were still troubled by old problems, some positive changes were made. A modern education system was built, with the total number of students increased. However, the state of quasi civil war prevented the crisis from ending. In response to the difficult situation, students organized, and formed a powerful pressure group to urge the government to reform its domestic and foreign policy. Re-politicization of students swiftly changed cultural politics on campus. Except in the winter or summer vacations, and where no modern schools were located, student protests might take place anywhere. Through protests, students had changed their relationship with politics and started to assume a role as savior for the failing nation.

From this point on, students' movements were no longer limited to cultural politics, and turned into a new style, the 'culture of political students'. In the case of students' cultural politics, students debated political issues or participated in protests only because of their personal concern or interests. As the culture of political students rose, students had transformed into new political subjects, and took the campus and education system as a battleground for political struggle. In this context, the May Fourth Movement, long regarded as a Chinese Renaissance or developmental stage for communist revolution, might also be counted as the critical moment for the students' passage to a new culture of political participation.

This transition left dramatic effects on politics, on and off the campus. At first, the re-politicization of students amounted to a kind of resistance to the education system's involution, and kept its linkage with politics. Re-politicization also paved the way for the KMT and CCP to enter the campus. And students became a new reservoir for revolutionary force. These effects were enduring, and we can easily recognize them in later events, for instance, the Cultural Revolution, or the student protest in 1989.

CCP's formation and transformation

After 1949, the prehistory and history of communist China was destined to pass into legend. Nevertheless, it was the idea of revolution that provided the dominant way to conceive of political modernization, and then made it possible for the CCP to develop and gain victory.

The CCP's formation involved the emergence of left-wing intellectuals in China and the intervention of the Communist International (Yoshihiro, 2012). Yet, without the alliance with the KMT, these two factors could not have brought about the full-fledged CCP. The alliance also contributed to the ascendancy of Marxists or Leninists among those on the left. Before that, anarchism played an undeniable role (Zarrow, 1990). In the early 1920s, under the Communist International's direction, the CCP and KMT forged an alliance. After the alliance, the remolding of the parties proceeded both in the KMT and CCP, both of which accelerated their growth in organization and membership. However, after Sun's death, conflicts emerged. In 1927, Chiang launched a bloody purge, wiping out the communist members. After conflicts, the CCP's members basically were removed from the KMT.

If the split with the KMT was not a lethal blow to the CCP, the power struggle after Lenin's death certainly weakened its power, and brought it to the edge of collapse. Under the inadequate direction of the Communist International, the CCP jumped into several unsuccessful insurgencies (Elleman, 2009).

Their failures provoked a power struggle within the party and a debate over the party line. Hence, two transitions took place: first, the strategy promoted by Mao of initiating peasant rebellions steadily got the upper hand, although his contribution was yet to be recognized. Second, the Nationalist regime launched five military actions to eliminate the CCP. To survive, the CCP embarked on a long march. During the march, Mao, rallying several leaders, plotted a *coup d'état*, and seized power. Mao's line was established, and confirmed later by the Communist International. With the second Sino-Japanese War breaking out, Mao's power was consolidated and enlarged.

The year 1949 certainly marked a new era for revolution, both in politics and narrative. In the following three decades, revolution became the one and only dogma in the quest to make China modern. Obviously, no matter how creative and adventurous Mao's political career appeared, the long trajectory of revolutionary currents made Mao's rise to power possible. Mao's rise and his revolutionary strategy might be said to reflect the historical trends since the 1890s. The clues to understanding the relationship between Mao and political modernization in China would include the basic landscape where his political career was embedded, the fragmented warring status he confronted; the political legacy he inherited, the intentions of his revolutionary strategy, and the tragic consequences of his revolutionary politics.

With these clues, we can review the political condition of Mao's China. After 1949, the revolution was still in need of consolidation. Debates over the party line broke out even in the 'peaceful' times, and the way to continue revolution became the focus for controversy and power struggle. Some events escalated the debate over party line, and Mao decided to reorganize his power and plot a new way to mobilizing people. This led to the decision to carry out the Great Leap Forward; open criticism from within the party; the conflict and split between the USSR and China; the disastrous results of the Great Leap Forward; and the power struggle between Mao and some of the other leaders.

To avoid losing power, Mao decided to initiate a new revolution. The Cultural Revolution was a sophisticated political project long in development (MacFarquhar, 1997). Its prelude could be dated earlier at 1962–1963 when the Little Red Book was widely disseminated in the People's Liberation Army. Besides, it lasted for a long time, and roughly could be divided into two periods, 1966–1971 and 1971–1976. The unsuccessful *coup d'état* marked the transition between the two periods.

In 1971, after a *coup d'état*, winds of change did come: Mao's political opponents were gradually restored to positions of influence. Notwithstanding, this was just a hint, and never presented as the great change itself. Revolution, if moderate in its effect and coverage, still went on. The Gang of Four, in its turn, presented itself as revolutionaries. In the last days of Mao, revolution was still the way to do politics. In 1976, the question of continuing the revolution became a critical issue. Pragmatism became the party line, and revolution was abandoned.

Mao's revolution was a hybrid, incorporating several revolutionary traditions. Its distinctive features suggest the revolution tradition he inherited and his creativity in remaking revolutionary strategy. Mao's revolutionary imagination came closer to Lenin than Marx, because he emphasized class struggle rather than mode of production. Meanwhile, he took political liberation as the leading force to trigger other liberations. He also held that the party should occupy the primary position to lead and enlighten the proletariat. Moreover, he attempted to prolong the transitional phase and appropriate the command economy/politics/culture to confirm the achievements of the revolution. For him, struggles and conflicts, sometimes armed ones, rather than 'development' can liberate people from the *ancien régime*, and accomplish the passage to socialism. 'Development' alludes to

another great divergence that was taking place between USSR and China in 1950s, when de-Stalinization became the key source of controversy about the future of communism.

Although Mao inherited his revolutionary legacy from Lenin or even Stalin, his creativity manifests itself in how he transformed their political strategy to disseminate and diffuse the forces of the revolution into the quotidian details of the lives of ordinary people. Far different from the case of Russia, Mao had designed and crafted a folk-styled strategy to provoke revolutionary sentiment among the peasants. He also redefined class theory, trying to incorporate peasants into the political landscape. Taking peasants as new political subjects not only reverses the discursive frame in China, but also specifies Mao's political cleverness. Making use of wartime system also clearly displays Mao's creativity.

When *Mao: The Unknown Story* (Chang and Halliday, 2005) was published, it stirred a huge and far-reaching controversy (Benton & Chun, 2009; Karl, 2010). Beyond the debate pro and con of Mao's cruelty and inhumanity, the 'Chineseness' it ascribed to him certainly reveals an overlooked side of Mao. Basically, Mao represented the Chinese way of revolutionizing politics in two ways: on the one hand, he suffered the consequences of the imperial legacy. In actual politics, the status of quasi civil war and fragmented political situation persisted well into Mao's China. His political mentality also betrayed many aspects suggesting he was a traditional type of Chinese politician. On the other hand, Mao was surely an innovator with respect to the imperial ruling pattern.

Mao's fanaticism about revolution and power struggle not only exhibits his personal appetite for politics, but also his inability to transform the whole of China. The objective of endless revolutions became vague. It would be ridiculous to believe that transforming peasants into agricultural workers would realize China's modernization. Instead, the end(s) of revolution became putting an end to revolution itself.

Another characteristic of Mao's 'Chineseness' was reflected in his attitude to party building. Although party building was common to communist regimes, the function the party could serve was unique to modern China. If the liberation of society and state characterized the basic path of political change, the party was posited as a linkage between society and state. In the end, the party became the overarching organization and zone of mediation, taking over the role of 'the political' in the imperial age. Getting the entitlements of communist party membership was just like passing the imperial exam (Pieke, 2009).

Concluding Remarks on Revolution and Its Involution

Bringing revolution back into the Chinese context helps us to review the ending of revolution in another way. Why did China bid farewell to revolution? Several explanations can be provided: the failure of the Cultural Revolution, the tragic effects of the Cultural Revolution, and the consequence of power struggles within the CCP after Mao's death. Notwithstanding the differences in explanatory models, these explanations all point to the similar direction: the involution of the revolution.

The involution of the revolution after the late 1970s is a new political experiment, attempting to turn around the ruling pattern established by the previous regimes. When the Qing crumbled, two trends of liberation emerged: liberations of society and state. In the face of these trends, political leaders and elites tried to figure out a new way to replace the imperial ruling pattern. Replacement also could refer to a modernizing project, at least making politics modern. Nevertheless, almost all the political experiments from 1911 to 1976 had limited effects. The reasons why they didn't succeed are under debate, but it's certain that almost all of them represented some nostalgia for the imperial ruling pattern, and attempted to preserve this pattern against the

trends to liberation. More important, opposing the liberation trends produced a more critical problem: how to cope with the involutions that China had encountered since the end of the eighteenth century. A variety of political experiments after 1911 were presented, each of which were understood in the same way as the transitional passage that characterized a search for modern politics in the 'twilight' of imperial age. Consequently, whether or not they could win the power struggle and build a regime proved irrelevant to turning back the process of involutions. In this way, the revolution that achieved its dominance in the 1920s was truly 'revolving' or 'restoring' in the literary sense, and the revolutionary process could be nothing more than the transitional passage through which another new, modern era would show its real face.

After 1978, an attitude of pragmatism was gaining the upper hand within the CCP. Perhaps the pragmatic character of the leaders finally put an end to direct opposition to involutions, and made it possible to come to terms with liberation trends more 'honestly'. In 1989, students, the honest supporters of revolution, organized and protested to call forth political reform. A bloody repression followed, dismembering the protesting students and their organizations. Although the repression almost ruined the prestige of the 'reform and open policy', it clearly indicated the decoupling of reform and revolution. The reform in 1990s confirmed the decoupling, and revealed something else: reform and enlightenment rather than revolution or mass mobilization would take the lead in fulfilling the project of political modernity.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Within and Without the Dynasty's Life Cycle

In the imperial age, involutions exactly demonstrate the decay-rebuilding cycle of dynasties, but in the nineteenth century, they imply something different. Before the great powers marched east, the Qing had experienced the involutions in the empire system and its statecraft that had resulted from overexpansion. Beyond the normal dynastic decay cycle, several factors contributed to the end of the imperial ruling pattern: macrochanges in the world, the strategy adopted by the Qing, and revolutionary torrents. In the end, the departure both from the *ancien régime* and the imperial ruling pattern, much later than what was expected, marked the beginning of China's political modernity. However, this departure was never easy. The difficulties on the road to political modernization were too many. Three involutions and the macro-level contexts in which they were embedded illustrate the difficulties.

In the empire's involution, China lost its place as the middle kingdom, and became isomorphic with other nation-states, and was gradually incorporated into a new international system. Yet, since the mid nineteenth century, China's international place had become marginalized, and even left in a disengaged zone. Besides, as empire and statecraft involuted, the cultural authority attached to them was losing its glamour and virtue. After the *ancien régime*, the situation became worse. There was both a loss of cultural confidence and the experience of civilizational degeneration. Moreover, the imperial regime left many legacies. Among them, political turmoil and civil wars were the most devastating. To build a strong state could be a solution, but with foreign invasion, economic underdevelopment, and social grievances increasing, it appeared quite improbable.

In contrast to the pattern of Western Europe and North America, China's political modernization doesn't refer to the competition among religion, state, market/capitalism, and civil society. The involution of 'the political' is the pivotal process. In the imperial age, 'the political', empire, or state covered up almost all of the human activities. The involution of 'the political' could only

signify the regime's decay. In the last years of the nineteenth century, involution began to intimate a different meaning: the ending of the imperial ruling pattern, and the transformation of the political to a functional system with specific responsibilities. However, the involutions after 1911 brought pain and misgivings. From 1911 to 1976, political leaders and elites attempted to find an alternative way to rule China, but none of them really succeeded. Several factors can explain their failures: the still lurking imperial legacy; the power struggle that determined only the winners or losers in politics, but couldn't propose the solution to the problem of political modernization; both elites and ordinary people remaining unprepared for political modernization.

Generally, modernity refers to two kinds of political processes: farewell to the *ancien régime* and liberation. After the *ancien régime*, two basic liberation trends emerged. Both trends suggested the primacy of 'the political' should be ended. Still, the primacy of 'the political', just like the imperial ruling pattern, was dying hard and dying slow. In its long process of dying, revolution gradually became a dominant way to bring modern politics to China. Revolution, the most violent form of modernization, has lasted long enough to fulfill its modernizing project, but the Chinese revolutions from 1911 to 1976 had different effects and intimations. On the one hand, revolution did make its contribution not only to China's unification but also to kinds of liberations. But, on the other hand, revolution implied a transitional, unfinished stage. Long revolution only could mean a prolonged, if not endless, process of adjustment. It was in this transitional process that revolutionaries capitalized on mass mobilization to keep involutions at bay. However, such revolutionary sentiment and ambience begot nothing but tragic results. After 1978, the 'reform and open policy' was implemented, which testifies to another involution. Long after its departure from the *ancien régime*, China bids another farewell to revolution.

In the long view, three involutions led to political modernization in China, but in the different periods they make different contributions. The general effect that follows is clear: the primacy of 'the political' shrank, though it did not disappear; the state was relocated and rebuilt; society was liberated; some kind of functional differentiation was achieved. We can argue that the involutions that China has encountered in the way to political modernity are special, but never unique. The cases from East Asia confirm a similar developmental path in political modernization.

A Precarious Position: Thinking with China

After a long, crooked road to political modernization, what is China's future in politics? Some suggest that democracy is a possible path to move on to (Gilley, 2005). However, if we 'think with China', democracy in the Western sense only provides a precarious future, because it will make variations beyond what China can manage. In other words, democracy will expose the gravest problems in China's politics: (1) uneven or underdeveloped differentiation; (2) 'the political' acting like phantom and still dwelling in politics; (3) the party becoming an over-enlarged mediatory zone and organization; and (4) corruption, maybe functioning as a mediatory expense, running rampant. From a more positive view, some possible directions for reform still can be seen: rule of law, further rationalization of statecraft, and the involution of the overgrown party itself.

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