

A. Introduction

The Imaginaries of Empire--Theory, Discourse, and Policy Within and Around China, its Heartland, Peripheries and Projections Abroad

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China has appeared to ascend to the center of world affairs in 2021.³ It has become a great driver of global change that increasingly sees the world on its own terms. Where one once spoke of democracy, trade, culture, rights, and the like as a singular construct, there is now a socialist variant, one with its theoretical driving source in China and its vanguard.⁴ Law itself has acquired, once again, its own self-legitimizing character bound up in the intricacies of national context and history, but

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³ Larry Catá Backer, *China*, in *Tipping Points in International Law: Critique and Commitment* 52-73 (Jean d'Aspremont, and John Haskell eds., Cambridge University Press, 2021).

"China," in *Tipping Points in International Law: Commitment and Critique* (Cambridge, 2021), pp. 52-73.

⁴ Cao Yaxin, *Chinese Values: Traditional Culture and Contemporary Values*, (Beijing, Foreign Language Press, 2018). Cf., Stephan McDonnell, "Changing China: Xi Jinping's effort to return to socialism," BBC News (23 September 2021); available <<https://www.bbc.com/news/business-58579831>>.

in a way that can be generalized and offered as an alternative way of imposing order on the world.⁵

In the process it has upset what had been through to be a singular and inevitable progression of human society in all respects toward a very specific point of equilibrium in virtually all matters related to the organization and operation of human society.⁶ Though there was much angst in the process,⁷ it appeared clear enough that a markets based liberal democratic ordering was the inevitable path that the vanguard forces of society had not only forged but against which there were no credible challenges.⁸ The central contradiction of the 20th century appeared to have been overcome⁹ and the global order had entered its new liberal democratic era of free movement of goods, investment, capital, and eventually, people.¹⁰

In the face of the ascendancy of China, at least discursively as a driver of cultural-political-and economic conversations, liberal democratic states entered not an era of discursive triumph but one of self-doubt and self-defense.¹¹ The evidence is easy enough to manufacture, again, as a discursive trope¹²--it is found in every element of human response to challenge that might have been better handled.¹³

⁵ Ding Xiaodong, "Law According to the Chinese Communist Party: Constitutionalism and Socialist Rule of Law," *Modern China* 43(3): 322-352 (2017).

⁶ Cf., G. John Ikenberry, "Power and liberal order: America's postwar world order in transition," *International Relations of the Asia Pacific* 5(2):133-152 (2005).

⁷ See, e.g., Tony Smith, *America's Mission: The United States and the Worldwide Struggle for Democracy in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁸ Cf., Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (NY: Free Press, 1992).

⁹ The concept of contradiction is applied with some irony here. See, Mao Zedong, "On Contradiction," Originally delivered as lectures at the Anti-Japanese Military and Political College in Yanan and then revised August 1937. Available <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm>

¹⁰ U.S. Centers for Disease Control, About MERS (last updated 2 Aug. 2019) available [<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/mers/about/index.html>] . Later research suggested that MERS first appeared in Jordan in April 2012 and that the last large outbreak occurred in Korea in 2015. Ibid.

¹¹ For a taste, see Michael E. O'Hanlon (ed) *Big Ideas for America* (Washington, DC, Brookings, 2017); Jason Brennan, "Against Democracy: Democracy has had a Good Run; But its Design is Fundamentally Flawed," *The National Interest* (6 September 2016) available <<https://nationalinterest.org/feature/against-democracy-17605>>; Buttonwood, *Democracy's depressing descent into division: The strange death of liberal democracy* " *The Economist* (7 December 2015) available <<https://www.economist.com/buttonwoods-notebook/2015/12/07/democracys-depressing-descent-into-division>> .

¹² For a taste of the nature and use of tropes in the contemporary liberal democratic camp, in the context of its internal tensions, see, Sandy Grande, "Accumulation of the primitive: the limits of liberalism and the politics of occupy Wall Street," *Settler Colonial Studies* 3(3-4):369-380 (2013).

¹³ Well stated in Robert Kagan, "The Twilight of the Liberal World Order," *Brookings* (24 January 2017) available < <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-twilight-of-the-liberal-world-order/>>.

Liberal democratic elites and their intellectual spokespeople use the imagery of post disaster recovery--“build back better.”¹⁴ This discursive trope now infects elite liberal democratic world views, moving from the realm of disaster recovery to the centerpiece of the political agendas of political elites in the United States.¹⁵ As a political trope, it can suggest a reactive effort to get back to where one was (but at the same time a return to the forms of an idealized past, a realization of the past in its ideal form¹⁶) rather than as a trope to suggest forward movement. And in some of its forms it aligns with other discursive tropes that seek not to return to an imagined better past after a disaster, but which suggests that both past and present are the disaster whose foundations must be torn down and rebuilt along other structural lines--for example through a racial equality/justice lens,¹⁷ or a gender lens.¹⁸ Used in this sense, the trope of disaster and disaster recovery is both a tragedy and an opportunity¹⁹:

Disasters have been recognized and leveraged as opportunities for change and improvement and, in some cases, are even considered as a “helpful interruption” to previously unchallenged inadequate policies and practices, such as those that disadvantaged certain groups. . . BBB includes efforts to

¹⁴ Glenn Fernandez and Iftekhar Ahmed, “Build back better” approach to disaster recovery: Research trends since 2006,” *Progress in Disaster Science* 1:100003 (2019). The authors explain that the BBB concept was first introduced in 2006 by former U.S. President Bill Clinton in his role as he United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery. *Ibid.*, at p. 1. See, William Clinton, “Lessons learned from tsunami recovery: key propositions for building back better (Office of the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Tsunami Recovery, New York, 2006); available [<https://reliefweb.int/report/thailand/lessons-learned-tsunami-recovery-key-propositions-building-back-better>].

¹⁵ See, Joe Biden, “The Build Back Better Framework: President Biden’s Plan to Rebuild the Middle Class ,” (The White House, 2021); available [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/>]. See, e.g., Jason Furman, “The Crisis Opportunity: What It Will Take to Build Back a Better Economy,” *Foreign Affairs* 100:25 (2021);

¹⁶ Sandeeka Mannakkara, and Suzanne Jane Wilkinson, “Supporting post-disaster social recovery to build back better,” *International Journal of Disaster Resilience in the Built Environment* 6(2):126-139 (2015) (“BBB represents an ideal process where a holistic approach is taken to use reconstruction as an opportunity to improve the physical, economic and social conditions simultaneously beyond its pre-disaster state in an effective and efficient manner,”).

¹⁷ See, e.g., Dawn Dietrich, “For America to Rise It’s a Matter of Black Lives / And We Gonna Free Them, So We Can Free Us,” *Pacific Coast Philology* 54(2):220-251 (2019); Jessica M. Eaglin, “When Critical Race Theory Enters the Law & Technology Frame,” *Michigan Journal of Race & Law*, 26:151-168 (2021).

¹⁸ See, e.g., Lisa D. Brush, *Gender and Governance* (Alta Mira Press, 2003); Emma Russell and Bree Carlton, “Pathways, race and gender responsive reform: Through an abolitionist lens,” *Theoretical Criminology* 17(4): 474-492 (2013).

¹⁹ See, e.g., Ilan Noy, Benno Ferrarini, and Donghyun Park, “Build Back Better: What Is It, and What Should It Be?” (Dec 16, 2019) Asian Development Bank Economics Working Paper Series No. 600,; available [<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3590873>]; Jim Kennedy, Joseph Ashmore, Elizabeth Babister, Ilan Kelman, “The Meaning of ‘Build Back Better’: Evidence From Post-Tsunami Aceh and Sri Lanka,” *Contingencies and Crisis Management* 16(1):24-36 (2008);

prevent re-creating or exacerbating pre-disaster vulnerabilities in the process of reconstruction.²⁰

The liberal democratic critique, then, is grounded in the rejection of the present, and sometimes of the past as well, and now seeks to move back to a future that recaptures the past; the Chinese tropes are all relentlessly forward moving from the present. That appears to be the essence of the difference between the discursive politics of the liberal democratic and Chinese Marxist-Leninist regimes. The former speaks to recapturing a prior golden age, or at least of transformation meant to capture the idealized essence of the principles of a golden age re-imagined to capture contemporary sensibilities.²¹ The latter is driven, however lackadaisically it may meander,²² toward the establishment of a communist society in China as the final product of a relentless process of identification and overcoming of the challenges of contradiction in each era of historical development. For Chinese Marxist-Leninism the wedge

²⁰ Fernandez and Ahmed, "Build back better" approach to disaster recovery," *supra*, at p. 1-2.

²¹ The notion was recently expressed from the highest political circles of the United States during the December 2021 Summit for Democracy, sponsored by the U.S. American democracy is an ongoing struggle to live up to our highest ideals and to heal our divisions; to recommit ourselves to the founding idea of our nation captured in our Declaration of Independence, not unlike many of your documents. . . Democracy doesn't happen by accident. We have to renew it with each generation. And this is an urgent matter on all our parts, in my view. Because the data we're seeing is largely pointing in the wrong direction. (Joseph R. Biden, Remarks By President Biden At The Summit For Democracy Opening Session, delivered December 09, 2021, Washington D.C.; available [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/12/09/remarks-by-president-biden-at-the-summit-for-democracy-opening-session/>].

This is also nicely captured in Joseph R. Biden, "Inaugural Address," delivered 20 January 2021, Washington D.C.; available [<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/01/20/inaugural-address-by-president-joseph-r-biden-jr/>] ("A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer. A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can't be any more desperate or any clearer. And now, a rise in political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat. To overcome these challenges – to restore the soul and to secure the future of America – requires more than words.").

²² Cf., Mao Zedong, Rectify the Party's Style of Work, Speech delivered at the opening of the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (1 February 1942); available [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_06.htm]; Deng Xiaoping, Remarks On Successive Drafts of the "Resolution On Certain Questions In the History of Our Party Since the Founding of the People's Republic of China" (1981) from Deng Xiaoping works; available [<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/deng-xiaoping/1981/15.htm>] ("The "Cultural Revolution" was really a gross error. However, our Party was able to smash the counter-revolutionary cliques of Lin Biao and the Gang of Four and put an end to the "Cultural Revolution" and it has continued to advance ever since.")

with liberal democracy and its discursive sensibilities appears to make available to them a quite strategic element--one in which the self-critique of liberal democracy provides a self-made opening through which the Chinese alternative might be more effectively offered, and once offered, developed and implemented.²³ In this new era, then, it is possible to directly challenge the hegemony of the liberal democratic order and its normative framework as the arbiter of legitimacy even in the organization of political collectives.²⁴

This new clash of ideological rationalizations of the world²⁵ and necessarily, its ordering is in some respects healthy. Certainly, from the perspective of markets ideology, competition is the great tonic to decay and corruption, and an efficient means to accountability and refinement of what is offered up for consumption--whether it be things or ideas. And yet, given the stakes, that is easier said from the sidelines than lived with in a world order in which mistakes can be measured in lives. However, the conversation does suggest that the consensus that produced the rationalization of the world and the objectives of its vanguards in the form of the post 1945 world order has reached must now evolve to meet emerging historical and global conditions. At the same time, challenges themselves have yet to truly emerge completely formed from their historical and territorial contexts.

It is this context that provides the framework against which the short essays offered in this first issue of volume 16 can be most usefully considered. The essays are organized from a core or hub and then outward along its spokes to the Chinese periphery and then as a project of internationalization.²⁶ At their center is the consideration of the way in which Chinese Marxist-Leninism constructs its own symbolic universe as an iterative self-construction of theory and experience that progress through time replicating responses that change as context changes. It is an exercise in considering the way that a symbolic universe is manifested:

A symbolic universe is the world as it is known; therefore this knowledge of the world shapes one's experience of it. The world does not exist apart from what is known. A symbolic

²³ Consider Shaun Narine, "The End of Western Triumphalism and the Return of the Sovereign State," *Fulcrum* (24 February 2021), available <<https://fulcrum.sg/the-end-of-western-triumphalism-and-the-return-of-the-sovereign-state/>>

²⁴ See, e.g., Larry Catá Backer, "Party, people, government, and state: on constitutional values and the legitimacy of the Chinese state-party rule of law system." *Boston Univ. Int. Law J.* 30, 2: 331–408 (2012); Larry Catá Backer, "From constitution to constitutionalism: a global framework for legitimate public power systems." *Penn State Law Rev.* 113, 3: 671–732 (2009).

²⁵ With the ironies of Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* ((Simon & Schuster, 2011) lurking in the background.

²⁶ See, Larry Catá Backer, "China," in *Tipping Points in International Law: Commitment and Critique* (John D. Haskell and Jean d'Aspremont (eds), Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 52-73.

universe is the 'world' as it is viewed, not as something that exists apart from the way we view it.²⁷

It is to the application of the symbolic universe that gives form to the way that the world is seen, understood and lived in that the essays consider in quite specific manifestations.

The first group of essays--*The Chinese Heartland and its Imaginaries*--starts with the imagining of the Chinese heartland. That imagining is not organic but rather rationalized and in the service of the purposes for which the leading social and political forces of the nation must strive. More specifically, the essays take up the contemporary issues of the development of Chinese governing ideologies and its challenges. The essays examine the way that knowledge is constructed, and re-constructed, quite instrumentally to produce and manage a way of looking at the world that both informs and is informed by (that is that it is self-reflexive in its constitution and implementation) the core premises of social organization.²⁸ The focus is on a *sociology of knowledge* that centers discourse and ideology--that is the connection between policy expressions on the ground and the ideologies and ways of viewing the world they express. One cannot be understood without the other and each contributes to the other in a series of iterative engagement and re-engagements. The ordering premise, then, is of imaginaries.

Spatial imaginaries are mental maps representing a space to which people relate and with which they identify. They are collectively shared internal worlds of thoughts and beliefs that structure everyday life. They are thus different from spatial discourses in that discourses are 'moments' in the social process, they are repeated and uttered punctually, but they do not necessarily alter deeply held beliefs, fantasies, and desires in the long term. When discourses alter social practices and beliefs, they are 'translated' from 'moments' to 'permanences' in the social process. They become, in other words, imaginaries.²⁹

The emphasis, then, is on manifestations of ideology and discourse as shaping and being shaped by the premises that distinguish them from others, and that in their manifestation makes concrete the behaviors that

²⁷ Gert Malan, "Mythology, Weltanschauung, symbolic universe and states of consciousness," *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 72(1):e1-e-8 (2016), at p. e5.

²⁸ Cf. Ali Hassan Zaidi, "Muslim Reconstructions of Knowledge and Re-enchantment of Modernity," *Theory, Culture & Society* 23(5):69-91 (2006); Andrew Hemingway, "Franz Roh's Nach-Expressionismus and the Weltanschauung of the Weimar Republic," *German Studies Review* 40(2):267-288 (2017).

²⁹ Julie-Anne Boudreau, "Making new political spaces: mobilizing spatial imaginaries, instrumentalizing spatial practices, and strategically using spatial tools," *Environment and Planning A* 39:2593-2611 (2007), at pp. 2596-2597 (references omitted; citing among others David Harvey, *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference: The Geopolitics of Capitalism* (Blackwell, 1996)

signal difference. The core question underlying all of the essays is one of manifestation of systemic autopoietic systems³⁰ as altered states of consciousness.³¹

The first three essays of this group consider the imaginaries of education and education reform in China. These reforms are undertaken in the shadow of and as an expression of the evolving expression of Chinese Marxist Leninism. In some respects it is the evolution itself reflected in education for the new era of Chinese development and the expression in concrete terms of putting the Communist Party at the center of education. *The first of the essays*³² considers the way that it is possible to develop a structure for determining the 'correct' cultivation of knowledge. This is undertaken through the lens of 《中小学生课外读物进校园管理办法》 "Administrative Measures for the Entry of Extracurricular Reading Materials for Primary and Secondary School Students." Here the imaginary is that of the firewall.

*The next of the three initial essays in the group*³³ considers the imaginaries of education through the lens of the intensification of patriotic campaigns through education reform. Here the intensification focuses on the refinement of the role of faculty contributions to those campaigns. They occupy a space between the vanguard and youth and are instrumental in ensuring that the orthodox imaginaries of state and vanguard are naturalized in students. This is considered through the modification of 中国共产党普通高等学校基层组织工作条例 [Regulations of the Communist Party of China on the Work of Primary Organizations in Regular Colleges and Universities]. But its forms and objects are compared to trajectories of student socialization in liberal

³⁰ See, e.g., Menna Barreto and Ricardo De Macedo, "Da autopoiese ao hiperciclo do sistema jurídico / From autopoiesis to legal system hypercycle," *Revista Direito e Práxis* 7(3):340-375 (2016) ("O termo sistema pressupõe, em sentido comum, certa ideia de "organização", de "ordem" ou, até mesmo, de "totalidade". Ibid., p. 343); Stirling Oles Andriychuk, "Exclusive Legal Positivism and Legal Autopoiesis: Towards a Theory of Dialectical Positivism," *Rechtstheorie* 46:37-70 (2015) ("Metaphorically speaking, autopoiesis always implies thinking inside the box. Similar to biological systems, every social system - be it law, economics, morality, religion, art or, say, football, is primarily interested in maintaining some coherence between its own elements." Ibid., 39-40).

³¹ See e.g., Gert Malan, "Mythology, Weltanschauung, symbolic universe and states of consciousness," *supra*. (religious mythological worldviews as altered states of consciousness) (citing Markus Cromhout, *Jesus and identity. Reconstructing Judean ethnicity in Q* (James Clarke & Co., Cambridge, 2007).

³² Larry Catá Backer for CPE, "Knowledge Must be Correctly Cultivated! Considering 《中小学生课外读物进校园管理办法》 "Administrative Measures for the Entry of Extracurricular Reading Materials for Primary and Secondary School Students," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.1 (2021), *infra*.

³³ Larry Catá Backer for CPE, "The Duty of Faculty is to Further the Great Patriotic Campaigns! 中国共产党普通高等学校基层组织工作条例 [Regulations of the Communist Party of China on the Work of Primary Organizations in Regular Colleges and Universities] and the Florida Anti-Faculty Bias Legislation," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.2 (2021), *infra*.

democratic states. To that end, recent Florida faculty anti-bias legislation is considered.

*The third in this series of essays on Chinese education imaginaries*³⁴ takes the focus back to the center of the vanguard. It considers the way that content is developed to ensure the appropriate socialization of youth through the management of the content of student textbooks. In this case that context is curriculum reform and the modification of textbooks to better embed the current political line in the education of students. Here one encounters the rationalization of the imaginary and its management. Its object is to deeply embed the episteme of Chinese Marxist Leninism in the core texts of the curriculum so that it becomes both baseline and that path to the representation of reality through which everything else is understood, in this way substantially invisible and natural to the study of a field in which it appears.

*The fourth essay of this part*³⁵ moves analysis to the normative foundations of the Chinese political imaginary. It considers the rationalization of the semiotics of that foundation through the lens of a very interesting article, consider 陈朋 加强理论与实践融合共进 [Chen Peng, Strengthen the Integrity of Theory and Practice]. The essay considers that meaning making in the shadow of the fundamental meaning ordering core concept of 实事求是 [seek truth from facts] which has had a quite flexible history to suit the era in which it was deployed. It is remarkable, though in the context contemporary of Chinese Marxist Leninism quite fortuitous, that 实事求是 can bridge *revolutionary* party focus on class struggle and victory over adversaries, to the *institutionalized leadership* party focus on socialist modernization as it sought to rationalize an increasingly complex apparatus through which it is to guide the nation toward the ultimate goal justifying its exercise of leadership and power.

*The fifth essay*³⁶ moves from the socialization of youth to the management of mass imaginaries. The essay examines the recent efforts by the central authorities to manage celebrity culture. In the process, it is possible to see the way that the imaginaries of Marxist Leninist and

³⁴ Larry Catá Backer, “習思想滲各級教材 小學重「政治啟蒙」 革命傳統、國安、勞動教育 9 課題「融入」大中小學 [Xi's thought is embedded in teaching materials at all levels; primary schools to emphasize "political enlightenment," revolutionary traditions, national security, labor education, and a 9 topics curriculum are "integrated" into universities, middle schools and primary schools],” *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.3 (2021), *infra*.

³⁵ Larry Catá Backer, Brief Thoughts on the Semiotics of 陈朋 加强理论与实践融合共进 [Chen Peng, Strengthen the Integrity of Theory and Practice] and New Era Chinese Leninism,” *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.4 (2021), *infra*.

³⁶ Larry Catá Backer, “寻衅滋事 [Picking Quarrels and Provoking Trouble]: China Tightens Regulation of Celebrity Culture as it Reforms Education and Develops Insights From "Social Mentality" Studies,” *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.5 (2021), *infra*.

liberal democratic societies are decoupling. It is also to see how similar objects and events assume quite distinct meanings in each society. With the leading social forces, its political vanguard, at the center, the systemic toleration of autonomous sources of societal production becomes much more problematic. That problem increases as a function of its intersection with the objectives of the vanguard, its basic line, and its definition of the sphere of activity that are meant to be undertaken only under and through the guidance and leadership of the vanguard. In that context an autonomous celebrity culture, with its mass organs in the form of fan bases that can be mobilized to serve their economic interest, cannot be tolerated for long.

*The sixth essay*³⁷ then brings the reader back to the proper cultivation of the masses and mass opinion--to influence and equation of the masses. This is to be undertaken as a significant part of the work of the vanguard itself. Its framing, and especially its specific sources in the history of the nation can be examined through 用好红色资源，传承好红色基因 把红色江山世世代代传下去 习近平 [Make good use of red resources, inherit the red gene, and pass on the red country from generation to generation, Xi Jinping]. Here the imaginary of the nation, its red genes, are encoded in each generation through the historical acts of its people its fact and meaning passed from generation to generation. In the process the vanguard seeks to develop an intertwined set of premises about the deep normalization of Leninism within the advanced societal forces of China, the character of the Leninist normalization, and its encoding into the national genetic code. The "red genes" campaign suggests the challenge of self-reproduction but in ways that then propels the fundamental purpose of collective organization towards ends that lie well beyond the lifespans of its contemporary members and that must both necessarily change with the times but preserve its mission and essence.

The last essay of this section,³⁸ then considers the self-reflexive construction of the narratives of Chinese political imaginaries. This is undertaken through the development of an orthodox history. To those ends, the essay starts from the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century" [中共中央关于党的百年奋斗重大成就和历史经验的决议（全文）]. That project is then contrasted to two in the United States that serve its own imaginary: the

³⁷ Larry Catá Backer, "The Genetics of China's New Era: Red .Genes and Inter-Generational Leninism--Considering "用好红色资源，传承好红色基因 把红色江山世世代代传下去 习近平 [Make good use of red resources, inherit the red gene, and pass on the red country from generation to generation, Xi Jinping]," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.6 (2021), *infra*.

³⁸ Larry Catá Backer, "Thoughts on "Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on the Major Achievements and Historical Experience of the Party over the Past Century" [中共中央关于党的百年奋斗重大成就和历史经验的决议（全文）], *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay B.7 (2021), *infra*.

1619 Project and the 1776 Report. In each project one encounters the imaginary in the form of an instrumentalized history in the service of ideology. And each instrumentalizes ideology serves as a means of legitimating political projects. As such, each orthodox narrative, or rather the lens shaping its content and meaning, serves as a dominant form of not merely political expression, as a means of capturing the normative foundations for such political projects and of reimagining the structures of dominance and hierarchy in a political society.

The second group of essays--*From the Chinese SARs to its Silk Roads*-- consider projects those imaginaries out from the heartland to China's autonomous regions, and beyond them, to Chinese engagements through its trade networks. Here one moves from the first ring around the Chinese conceptual universe and its manifestations to the second and third rings. These essays suggest the manifestation of leadership in discursive forms, or rather it suggests the ways that power is translated into leadership through discursive tropes and their performance.³⁹ Within the second ring one enters the peripheries of the Chinese heartland--and principally its special autonomous regions. In the third ring one encounters the manifestations of the Chinese post-global empire. It is in the third ring that the Chinese conceptual universe is internationalized and projected out. That outward projection is most concrete within its "Silk Road"⁴⁰ and currently manifested in its Belt & Road Initiative.⁴¹ Those interactions have been marked both by coordination and conflict. That conflict, in turn, highlights the emerging differences in the competing rationalizations of the world and its ordering.

The first of the essays in this section touch on recent aspects of the development of relations between the Chinese central authorities and their Hong Kong SAR.⁴² These relationships have been transformed in profound ways since the start of mass protests in June 2019, and their suppression under the new administration of more closely supervised relations marked by the National Security Law for Hong Kong.⁴³ The essay suggests that way that the continued Sinification of Hong Kong's imaginary both further develops Chinese ideological development, and evidences the growing space between that development and those of

³⁹ Dirk Nabers, "Power, Leadership, and Hegemony in International Politics: The Case of East Asia," *Review of International Studies* 36:931-949 (2010).

⁴⁰ On the imaginaries of the Chinese Silk Roads from the time of the rise of the Chinese and Roman imperial orders, see, John E. Vollmer, E.J. Keall, and E. Nagai-Berthrong, *Silk Roads; China Ships* (Royal Ontario Museum, 1983)

⁴¹ See, e.g., Ricardo C.S. Siu, "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Reducing or Increasing the World Uncertainties?," *Journal of Economic Issues* 53(2): 571-578 (2019); Poshan Yu, Zuozhang Chen, and Yingzi Hu, "The Impact of Belt and Road Initiative on Regional Financial Integration – Empirical Evidence from Bond and Money Markets in Belt and Road Countries," *Chinese Economy* 54(4):286-308 (2021).

⁴² Larry Catá Backer, "Hong Kong on the Peripheries of the Chinese Imaginary," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay C.1 (2021), *infra*.

⁴³ That transformation is the subject of the essays in Larry Catá Backer *Hong Kong Between 'One Country' and 'Two Systems'* (Little Sir Press, 2021).

other important global actors. The essay highlights the way that these changes now make more visible the conceptual borders between China (and Hong Kong) and other emerging great systems of self-reflexive ideology. Those borderlands, in turn, also suggest the way that the territories of emerging post-global imperial orderings are being constructed and where those borders are being established. To that end the essay considers the legalization of autonomy within Chinese sovereignty in the case of *Tong Ying Kit v. Secretary for Justice*.⁴⁴ It then considers the political expression of autonomy within this New Era sovereign order through the lens of the discursive trope in the remarks of Luo Huining on the centenary of the Chinese Communist Party. Lastly, it considers the outward effect of the emerging parameters of autonomy in the context of outbound migration. Here the issue is the emerging differences between sovereignty over persons and sovereignty over territory.

The second of these essays focuses on the administration of the Xinjiang SAR.⁴⁵ While Hong Kong reflects to some extent a point of conflict with the liberal democratic camp and the international community, to some extent, that conflict is situated within well-worn pathways of disagreements about the conceptualization and application of rights to autonomy, self-determination and the exercise of political and civil rights, the emerging conflict around the Xinjiang SAR is more profound and of a different character. Chinese administration of Xinjiang bring sharply into focus great conflicts in the imaginaries of human rights, the autonomy of individuals, and religious liberties between the Chinese, liberal democratic and international normative imaginaries.⁴⁶ These differences have come sharply into focus in recent years both within and outside of China.⁴⁷

Here the focus on religious liberties and human rights touch on disjunctions in the evolution of two great movement in liberal democratic states and international human rights organs that distill the great and growing differences between them and Chinese sensibilities. International and especially U.S. led responses to Chinese administration in Xinjiang reflect not just those differences but also the great debates within liberal democracy (and at the international level) about the nature and application of religious liberty norms, and their universal character.

⁴⁴ *Tong Ying Kit v. Secretary for Justice* (20 May 2021; No. 473 of 2021; HCAL 473/2021 [2021] HKCFI 1397; available [https://legalref.judiciary.hk/lrs/common/ju/ju_frame.jsp?DIS=135853&currpage=T]).

⁴⁵ Larry Catá Backer, "Xinjiang in the Crosshairs of Chinese and Global Imaginaries," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay C.2 (2021), *infra*

⁴⁶ Cf., Kurt Tsuo, "How the West was Lost: China's Xinjiang Policy," *Harvard International Law Review* 31(3):10-11 (2009); contrast Tao Song, Weridong Liu, Zhigao Liu, and Yeerken Wuzhati, "Policy Mobilities and the China Model: Pairing Aid Policy in Xinjiang," *Sustainability* 11(13):3496 (2019)

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Avinash Godbole, "Stability in the Xi Era: Trends in Ethnic Policy in Xinjiang and Tibet Since 2012," *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 75(2):228-244 (2019).

That conflict and that challenge has produced a set of governing and policy technologies that extend far beyond the specific issues in Xinjiang. On the Chinese side, it has produced both a more refined rationalization of their political economic model and the principles necessary to align Xinjiang policy with core legitimating premises of the Chinese political model. At the same time it has produced both a reflex to project this newly refined perspective out through the Chinese Belt and Road System, and to protect the Chinese heartland and its key internal dependencies through the elaboration of a bifurcated economic system, building a wall that separates international and externally focused economic activity. On the U.S. and liberal democratic side, it has produced an important incentive to domesticate international norms into hard law (the supply chain due diligence and Modern Slavery laws) and to apply them throughout production chains that lend themselves to control by home states. It has also refined the use of markets based incentives to delegate and privatize international norms, and in the process to harden them within the private law regulatory systems of multinational enterprises. And lastly it has produced a refinement of the use of targeted sanctions against Chinese actors deemed to be primary offenders--whether enterprises or officials, or governmental institutions.

Together, the first and second essays suggest the way that conceptual differences in approaches to human rights generally, and the manifestation of human rights in economic activity now critically shape the distinct visions of China and the liberal democratic "other." That shaping has significant geo-political effect, threatening the global integration of economic activity and is contributing to the detachment of global production chains managed from outside of China with the Chinese heartland as well as its periphery. These are critically important developments in the construction of detached post-global empire and the rejection (in fact though not in expression) of the post-1945 animating premise of global convergence around trade.

*The third essay*⁴⁸ then explores these emerging borderlands. It pulls up from the center to its farthest peripheries where the borders between imaginaries are manifested not merely in conceptualizations of the world but also in the way those conceptions are translated into the structures of everyday political, economic, and social governance. It suggests not just conceptual but also the borders of imperial imaginaries. These insights are then examined more closely through the lens of the competing world conceptions projected outward from the center of the United States and of China. The former is represented by the G7 Build Back Better Project announced in 2021. The latter in the structures and outward projections of Chinese conceptual space through its Belt & Road

⁴⁸ Larry Catá Backer, "Brief Reflections on Emerging Global Trade Empires: From Trans-Pacific Partnership to "Building Back Better" (B3W) in the Shadow of China's Belt & Road Initiative," *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay C.3 (2021), *infra*.

Initiative. To those ends Xi Jinping's 2021 speech to APEC⁴⁹ is contrasted to the *Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué*⁵⁰ along with an analysis, an initial version of which was published in an interview with Payman Yazdani for the Mehr News Agency.⁵¹

The third group of essays--*China in Africa*--focus the robust outward projections of Chinese rationalizations of the world and its offer of a new framework for ordering the relations of human collectives. These essays provide a more granular examination of the application of heartland imaginaries (Part B) and its operationalization through China's peripheries and along its Silk Roads (Part C) in the specific context of Africa in society and African states. As researchers astutely observed more than a decade ago, and on the eve of the rationalization of the trends then emerging into the Belt and Road Initiative, that engagement has changed the visibility of Africa--as shifts in engagement and in the meaning of those engagements affect the ability to "see" clearly.⁵²

In 2007 Calderisi observed 'in recent years, in a geo-political version of Continental Drift, Africa has fallen almost completely off the map'. Such a claim would have seemed peculiar to those who attended the 2006 Forum on China–Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) summit in Beijing, where the city centre was bedecked with African iconography to welcome the forty-eight African states that attended. Far from falling off the map, Africa has gained importance and the Chinese are among a number of rapidly industrializing nations that see the continent in strategic economic terms.⁵³

And when these changes came back into view a few years later, it was in the form of threat,⁵⁴ both to the liberal democratic camp and reflected in

⁴⁹ 习近平出席亚太经合组织领导人非正式会议并发表讲话 2021 年 07 月 16 日 20:29 来源: 新华社 (Xi Jinping Attends and Delivers a Speech at the APEC Leaders' Informal Meeting, July 16, 2021 20:29 Source: Xinhua News Agency); available [http://www.cac.gov.cn/2021-07/16/c_1628023773641445.htm].

⁵⁰ The White House Briefing Room, *Carbis Bay G7 Summit Communiqué* (13 June 2021); available [https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/06/13/carbis-bay-g7-summit-communique/]. (Here after "Carbis Bay G7 2021").

⁵¹ Interview: "Liberal democracy would have to conform itself to new facts," Mehr News Agency (20 July 2021) (Interview by Payman Yazdani). Available [https://en.mehrnews.com/news/176338/Liberal-democracy-would-have-to-conform-itself-to-new-facts].

⁵² Cf., Helen F. Siu and Mike McGovern, "China–Africa Encounters: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Realities," *Annals Review of Anthropology* 46:337-355 (2017).

⁵³ Mary Tan-Mullins, Giles Mohan, and Marcus Power, "Redefining 'Aid' in the China–Africa Context," *Development and Change* 41(5):857-881 (2010). See also Daniel Large, "Beyond 'Dragon in the Bush': The Study of China-Africa Relations," *African Affairs* 107(426):45-61 (2008).

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Arzan Tarapore, "The U.S. Response to the Belt and Road Initiative: Answering New Threats with New Partnerships," *Asia Policy* 14(2):34-41 (2019). Part of that threat was military. See, e.g., David Styan, "China's Maritime Silk Road

their sensibilities, to the African states themselves.⁵⁵ Thus, “for all the fancy involvement of China in Africa, there still lingers a perception that China is up to no good.”⁵⁶

The two essays in this part suggest the way that Chinese engagements changes not merely practice but the meaning of those practices for both the Chinese metropolitan center and for its African peripheries.⁵⁷ *The first essay*⁵⁸ looks to Chinese involvement in Africa, especially through BRI as a cultural project. It is a project that is meant to change the lens through which African states can perceive their own interests and on that basis assess the value of deeper Chinese connections in ways that align with Chinese interests. Here one encounters the so called “win-win” strategy as a project of meaning making and cultural socialization.⁵⁹ The subject of examination is the “My China” story competition held in Uganda (as in other places) sponsored by a local news organization and the Chinese Embassy in Uganda.

The *second essay*,⁶⁰ examines the rationalization of China’s model and its development for projection outward to Africa. That examination is undertaken through the lens of Xi Jinping’s address to the 2021 meeting of FOCAC in Senegal⁶¹ and the Chinese State Council Information Office has released its position white paper: China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals [original: 《新时代的中非合作》白皮书

and Small States: Lessons from the Case of Djibouti” *Journal of Contemporary China* 29(122):191-206 (2020).

⁵⁵ See, e.g., Abel Kinyondo, “Is China Recolonizing Africa? Some Views From Tanzania,” *World Affairs* 182(2):128-164 (2019); Lammuaniam Gangte, “The Debt-Trap Diplomacy Revisited: A Case Study on Sri Lanka’s Hambantota Port,” *Artha--Journal of Social Sciences* 19(2):53-66 (2020);

⁵⁶ Abel Kinyondo, “Is China Recolonizing Africa? Some Views From Tanzania,” *supra*, p. 130.

⁵⁷ See, e.g., Padmasai Lakshmi Bhamidipati and Ulrich Elmer Hansen, “Unpacking local agency in China–Africa relations: Frictional encounters and development outcomes of solar power in Kenya,” *Geoforum* 119:206-217 (2021).

⁵⁸ Larry Catá Backer, “The “My China Story Competition” Campaign in Uganda: Molding the Global China Narrative One Human Interaction at a Time,” *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay D.1 (2021), *infra*.

⁵⁹ Raúl Bernal-Meza, “China and Latin America Relations: The Win-Win Rhetoric,” *Journal of China and International Relations*, 42(Special Issue):27-43 (2016); Cf., Brabtyl Womack, “Beyond win-win: rethinking China’s international relationships in an era of economic uncertainty,” *International Affairs* 89(4):911-928 (2013).

⁶⁰ Larry Catá Backer, “The Discursive Edifice of the Chinese Belt & Road Initiative in Africa: State Council of China White Paper-- “China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals” [《新时代的中非合作》白皮书（全文）], *Emancipating the Mind in the New Era* 16:1:Essay D.2 (2021), *infra*.

⁶¹ 习近平出席中非合作论坛第八届部长级会议开幕式并发表主旨演讲 2021-11-29 23:32 [China, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony of the 8th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and delivered a keynote speech 2021-11-29 23:32]; available [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/tpxw/202111/t20211129_10458620.shtml]

(全文)].⁶² The long form discursive trajectories of the State Council China in Africa White Paper, then, provide an elaboration of what in condensed form has become the signature approach to outbound projection of Chinese power. China serves as the hub for its friends. It is also the vanguard of leading forces that seek to displace the old era forms of globalization (with the United States as its core) with its own for the new era.

We hope our readers find the proceedings and essays of some use. We also hope that readers who are interested will also consider listening to the interviews. In many ways they provide a window onto the realities of the pandemic at a point when global actors were only coming to realize its scope and the challenges the pandemic posed.

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CPE 16(1) Editors



⁶² State Council of China, White Paper, China and Africa in the New Era: A Partnership of Equals (Beijing: The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China (November 2021); available [http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/2021-11-26/ChinaAfrica.docx] (Hereafter the "State Council China and Africa White Paper")

