

# New Developments in the Theory of the Historical Process

*Polish Contributions to Non-Marxian  
Historical Materialism*

*Edited by*

Krzysztof Brzechczyn



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# The Dynamics of Power in Postwar China: An Attempt at a Theoretical Analysis

*Dawid Rogacz*

## Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyze the dynamics of the political power in the People's Republic of China, using the conceptual apparatus of Leszek Nowak's non-Marxian historical materialism. By applying his Model I of the theory of power, I am going to generalize theoretically the main political changes in post-war China, from the foundation of the People's Republic of China, through the Cultural Revolution and the Opening-Up program, to the Chinese politics after 1989. The analysis will allow me to make three wide-ranging predictions concerning further development of China in the fields of politics, economy, and ideology.

## Keywords

Chinese Communism – Leszek Nowak – Mao Zedong – non-Marxian historical materialism – People's Republic of China – real socialism

## 1 Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The aim of this article is to carry out a theoretical analysis of the dynamics of political power in the Chinese society, with the use of the conceptual apparatus of non-Marxian historical materialism (hereinafter: n-Mhm), a theory created by Leszek Nowak (1983; 1991abc; 1991d), a co-creator of the Poznań School of Methodology. By applying the theory of power constructed by Nowak, or, to be more precise, Model I, I intend to interpret the political, economic, and ideological transformations in post-war China.

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One dominant feature of the analyses of the history and economic transformations of China is their division into two periods: before and after the opening-up reforms (*gǎigé kāifàng*). Deng Xiaoping's reforms from 1978 are treated as an abandonment of Mao Zedong's radical projects and an acceptance of Western capitalist models while preserving the appearance of a communist system. Assuming such an extreme discontinuity in the historical development of post-war China does not correspond to the standards of social science which obligate the researcher to find the most general rules possible which would describe the nature of human societies both in the synchronic and diachronic dimensions, not to mention the ultimately discarded ambitions of predicting social phenomena. In this article, I will nevertheless try to analyze theoretically the dynamics of power in post-war China and make a few political predictions based on my assumptions.

The purportedly sudden transition from Maoism to (hidden with shame) capitalism suggests an ideological key as the starting point for the analyses. However, the very instrumental nature of the Chinese politicians' use of the communist nomenclature belies that interpretation. The consciousness of that fact, combined with the inability to reject the ideological key, resulted in the trend of presenting the transformation of 1978 as stemming from the 'spirit' of Confucianism, by analogy to Max Weber's famous analyses of the influence of Protestant ethics on the emergence of capitalism. However, that approach does not take into account that after the Cultural Revolution, the influence of Confucianism on the public sphere and politicians' motivation was negligible, and that elements of Confucian teachings only reappeared in the content of the People's Republic of China presidents' speeches at the beginning of the twenty-first century (Bell 2010, pp. 3–18). Confucianism itself has never – in the two thousand years of its existence – been the driving force of economic transition toward capitalism. Even in the nineteenth century, the most 'radical' reformists such as Gong Zizhen (1792–1841) still idealized the economic well-field system and feudalism from the times of the early Zhou dynasty (11th–8th c. BCE) (Gong 1975, pp. 78–80). In practice, the attempts at showing the contribution of Confucianism to the formation of the Chinese variety of capitalism refer not so much to Confucianism *per se* as to its contemporary, very syncretic variant forged under the influence of polemics with Marxism, Western philosophy, and Christian thought (Makeham 2003, pp. 16–17).

The theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism offers the possibility of analyzing the political transformations in post-war China in a systematic way, with a reference, in the first place, to the dynamics of political power itself – which has at its disposal the means of coercion and is created in the clash of the interests of the rulers and the citizens – and not to social

consciousness (Nowak 1983). Another task of n-Mhm is to theorize about the changes of the relationship between the authorities and the civil society, so the models in n-Mhm cannot be treated as the usual simplifications of complex processes or as rectifications of previously made assumptions (Nowak 1991d). The idealizational theory of science (Nowak 1980), which is the methodological foundation of n-Mhm, precludes such interpretations of Nowak's theory of historical process, as it provides terminological precision for the whole concept and, consistently, supplies clear criteria of its application to particular empirical cases (see: Coniglione 2010; Borbone 2016; 2021).

In the first part of my article, I will present the basic assumptions of n-Mhm, especially Model 1 of the theory of power. Next, I will carry out a historical application of Model 1, and I will present some predictions concerning further political transformations in China, on the basis of the assumed model and the whole concept.

## 2 The Basic Assumptions of Non-Marxian Historical Materialism

The basic assumption of n-Mhm is distinguishing three spheres: economic, political, and cultural within the framework of every society. In each of those spheres, there arise inner divisions resulting from the disposal of certain material forces. The disposal of the material forces of production determines the division of a society into the owners and the direct producers, the disposal of the material forces of coercion determines the division of a society into the rulers and the citizens, and the disposal of the material forces of indoctrination determines the division of a society into the priests and the direct followers. The interests of the groups within each of those divisions are contradictory, so they are class divisions (Nowak 1991a, pp. 176–177). Waldemar Czajkowski points to five features distinguishing n-Mhm from Marx's historical materialism in Oskar Lange's canonical interpretation:

- the basic source of historical dynamism is not, as in Marx's theory, the development of productive forces but the conflicts between social classes;
- politics and culture are not a 'superstructure' of the economy but spheres independent from it;
- instead of two main classes determined by the disposal of the means of production, we have three class divisions which can also intersect or overlap, which complicates the image of social structure;
- not only the struggle between classes but also within them – the competition between the members of the ruling class – must be taken into account; and

- Nowak's philosophy of history is rooted in a clearly defined philosophical anthropology, that is, the non-Christian model of man (Czajkowski 2013, pp. 196–197; see also Czajkowski 2022).

A given social class can, as has been mentioned, have at its disposal more than one type of material forces at a time, so we distinguish class and supra-class societies in n-Mhm. In class societies, there are three separate dominant classes: the rulers, the owners, and the priests. One of them usually dominates the remaining two. For that reason, three basic types of society are distinguished: economic, political, and hierocratic. In supra-class societies, one social class takes over control over two or three material social means. Therefore, we can combinatorially distinguish the classes of rulers-owners, rulers-priests, and owners-priests.<sup>2</sup> In an extreme case, the means of coercion, production, and indoctrination are aggregated in the hands of one triple class. That case is the socialist society (Nowak 1991a, pp. 178–180).

The theory of power in n-Mhm is based of a number of idealizing assumptions. They make it possible to (1) construct a general model of the structure and dynamics of power and (2) apply models of power to increasingly complex political (and historical) reality, by way of gradual concretizations, that is, cancellations of the idealizing assumptions. That procedure led Nowak to the analysis of the evolution of the theory of power within the framework of eight models, the foundations of which are particular static and dynamic assumptions. The main static assumption is the premise that every ruler maximizes the sphere of control over the citizens' actions, while it is in the interest of the civil society to increase the civil autonomy.<sup>3</sup> Rulers who do not follow that principle are 'eliminated' by their political competition. The sphere of individual action which is outside of the rulers' control is the area of the citizens' autonomy which stands in opposition to the area of regulation. The civil alienation is a ratio between the number of civil actions regulated by rulers and the sum of all actions undertaken by citizens. The civil resistance depends on the level of such understood civil alienation. The relationship is characterized as follows:

- for low levels of the civil alienation, civil resistance is also weak – only people from the social margins rebel (the area of class peace);

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2 Nowak's initial typology of societies in n-Mhm was developed many times, see Brzechczyn (2004, pp. 73–86), Ciesielski (2013; 2022), Zarębski (2003; 2022).

3 It is in the owners' interest to maximize the surplus product, while the direct producers want to increase the variable capital. It is in the priests' interest to dominate the set of ideas professed by the followers, and it is in the followers' interest to maintain inner freedom.

- for average levels of the civil alienation, social resistance reaches its maximum (the area of the revolution of the first kind);
- when the level of the civil alienation grows even more, civil resistance decreases significantly (the area of enslavement) (Nowak 1991c, pp. 178–180).

Another static assumption of the theory of power is the thesis about the re-valorization of autonomous social ties. When the level of political control exceeds a certain threshold, people strive to replace (or go around) the etatized forms of collective life by means of direct relationships entered into within the framework of autonomous social structures, outside of the structures of power.

Moreover, a number of idealizing assumptions are made in Model 1:

- the society exists in a state of total isolation, unperturbed by any external influences;
- the society is purely political, that is, there are only two classes in it: the rulers and the citizens (that is, groups of people who have or do not have the means of coercion at their disposal), without any political institutions, political doctrines, etc.;
- the technology remains at a constant level, and there is no technical progress;
- the rulers make use of the means of coercion directly, that is, without the intermediation of special forces;
- there is no state organization, especially a hierarchy of power; and
- class consciousness does not have an influence on the social thinking of particular members of the class.

In Model 1 (in its the no-loop variant), there are the following phases of political development: the phase of the growth of civil alienation, the phase of civil revolution, the phase of enslavement with the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities, the phase of cyclical declassations, and the phase of cyclical revolutions.

In the phase of the growth of civil alienation, the level of power regulation is low. The mechanism of political competition forces a typical ruler to broaden his or her sphere of influence. Consequently, the level of regulation in the society as a whole systematically grows, which contributes to the constant rise of the level of the civil alienation. After a time, the society enters the phase of the civil revolution. That process can end in the stifling of the revolution or in the citizens' victory, *secundum non datur*.<sup>4</sup> A lost revolution is followed by the enslavement

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4 Only of model 1. The concretization of that part of political development is discussed by Brzechczyn (1993).



phase in which post-revolutionary terror is prevalent. It destroys autonomous social relations by eliminating the most socially active citizens. The disintegration of the civil society results in the declassification of the citizens.

The second possible outcome is the citizens' victory which in practice turns out to be the revolutionists' victory. They establish a new power elite which can use the means of coercion against the revolutionary masses. The revolutionary elite is the germ of a new class of rulers. From the perspective of n-Mhm, a revolution, although it is called 'civil,' only means replacing the old class of rulers with a new one. The mechanism of political competition triggers a conflict among the revolutionists – those who oppose the transformation of the revolutionary elites into a class of political rulers are deprived of power if not of their lives. When the masses have been sufficiently enslaved, the newly formed class of rulers begins to broaden its sphere of regulation within itself – the sub-phase of the self-enslavement of the authorities (in the enslavement phase) begins. The purges are followed by further broadening of the area of regulation. Once the critical threshold is reached, the so-called civil awakening takes place. A new revolution begins (Nowak 1991c, pp. 87–92). It initiates the phase of cyclical declassations.

Contrary to the revolution of the first kind, a defeat in the revolution of the second kind does not result in terror but in concessions on the part of the authorities. The sphere of power regulation decreases, and the sphere of social autonomy grows, which causes new revolutions. The scale of each such revolution, then, is bigger. As long as those revolutions are lost (a victory would bring about a civil loop and, consequently, a return to the beginning of the phase sequence), the declassification cycle continues. Nowak explains:

The cyclical process from revolution through a victorious revolution, concessions, and etatist pressure, to another revolution lasts until there is a revolution on such a large scale, involving so many citizens that mass repressive action becomes unfeasible and the authorities must immediately make concessions.

NOWAK 1991c, p. 93

In the end, there is a revolution which involves so many people that the authorities must react with concessions rather than repression. In the phase of cyclical revolutions, subsequent concessions reduce the authorities to the role of an administrator of public life. However, the competition between rulers forces them to increase (regain) the area of power regulation. Consequently, the civil alienation grows, and a revolution breaks out. That revolution is on such a large scale, with revolutionary attitudes among the citizens so strong

that neither the existing authorities nor the new (revolutionary) ones can pacify it. The citizens' loops do not disappear, and the citizens' revolution would not lead back to the starting point. In the phase of class peace, the level of civil alienation remains below the threshold of class conflict.

Nowak applied the presented models to the dynamics of power in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The February and October revolutions were two subsequent citizens' loops, that is, a phase of the initial political revolution following a phase of the growth of civil alienation. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was declassation. Collectivization and the increase of the number of Gulag prisoners could be interpreted as the phase of enslavement, and the purges – as the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities. The continued enslavement resulted in a revolution of the second kind, that is, a wave of strikes and uprisings in the Gulag Archipelago, which led to the closing of the camps and necessitated a condemnation of the cult of personality. Next, the system entered the phase of cyclical declassation: in 1959–1963, the army intervened in fourteen protesting cities of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. After that phase, the authorities made certain concessions, and the phase of cyclical revolutions began. It was represented by Gorbachev's perestroika and the dissolution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1985–1991).<sup>5</sup>

### 3 The Historical Application of the Model I of the Theory of Power. The Political Evolution of the Chinese Society

Let us apply the n-Mhm model to the political development of the Chinese society.<sup>6</sup> The structure of the Chinese society can be interpreted with the use of the categories of the triple-class society. It means that the rulers' class has at its disposal three types of the means of class rule: coercion, production, and indoctrination. The political rule manifests itself as the one-party system maintained since the creation of the People's Republic of China. The Communist Party of China has the leading role in the socialist state. In the peak period of enslavement, that is, in 1975 – the year the new constitution was

5 For a detailed discussion of dynamics of power in the Soviet Union, including an innovative application of the phase of political enslavement see Siegel (1992; 1993; 1998).

6 Non-Marxian historical materialism has already been employed to interpret the history of non-European societies, cf Brzechczyn (2004; 2007), Karczyńska (2013; 2022), and to interpret the sacred texts created in other civilizations (Bręgiel-Benedyk 2013; Bręgiel-Pant 2022), or to paraphrase other theories which describe the development of non-European societies (Zarębski 2022a).

TABLE 16.1 Power hierarchy in China (source: Bogusz, Jakóbowski (2020), p. 16–20)

| Body of political power            | Number of members |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|
| The Communist Party of China (CCP) | 86,500,000        |
| The Central Committee of CCP       | 376               |
| The Politburo of CCP               | 25                |
| The General Secretary              | 1                 |

passed – the prosecutorial branch, the independence of the judiciary, the right of an accused to be defended, and equality before the law were abolished. The revolutionary committees and people’s communes kept the range of the regulation of the class of rulers at the ‘bottom’ level of the society. Nowadays, those rights are respected but only to the degree to which they are not a threat to the monopoly of the rulers’ class. Political prisoners are kept, without due process, in the forced labor camps (劳改, *lǎogǎi*) modeled on the Gulag camps, and they are tortured there.<sup>7</sup> According to the Amnesty International 2009 report, most human rights are violated in China, including the right of association. The power hierarchy in the Chinese society is both a party and a state hierarchy. It consists of the state apparatus, the power elite, and the supreme ruler (see Table 16.1).

The General Secretary is the supreme ruler, the Politburo – the power elite, and the Central Committee – the state apparatus. The state apparatus constitutes 0.0005% of the Party – the greatest political party in the world – despite the fact that about 5% of the citizens are its members (Payette 2015).

The party, having at its exclusive disposal the means of production and indoctrination, also controls the remaining areas of public life, that is, the economy and culture. Private property has been allowed by the party by way of successive amendments of the constitution, first as a ‘supplement’ (1988) and then as an ‘important component’ (1999) of the socialist market economy. In compliance with the law, the economy is subject to the control of the state (that is, the party). All Chinese natural resources and land are also the property of the state – in China, one cannot buy land, one can only obtain the rights to

<sup>7</sup> Information about the camps: Laogai Research Foundation ([www.laogairesearch.org](http://www.laogairesearch.org); date of access: 16.04.2021).

use it (Rowiński, Jakóbiec 2006). Clearly, the rulers' class has the disposal of the means of production.

The cultural sphere functions in a similar manner. During the Cultural Revolution, foreign books were no longer published (with the exceptions of Stalin's and Hoxha's works), an attempt was made to replace the Beijing opera with the revolutionary opera, and from 1970 to 1976 "film-making was under the control of Jiang Qing and her allies in cultural leadership" (Clark 1983, p. 309). The youth did not attend school, and it had to learn Mao's *Little Red Book* by heart. The thesis about the intensifying "class struggle" justified the enslavement. Mao called class struggle "the highest form of revolution" and "logic of the people": every thought which encourages one to stop that fight even for a moment is wrong (Mao 1967, pp. 121, 135, 139). Despite the reforms of 1978, the party did not give up its monopoly on the means of indoctrination. In the 1999 amendment of the constitution, Deng Xiaoping's theory is described as the "ideological signpost for the state." In 2002, the principle of three representations (三个代表 *Sāngè Dàibiǎo*) was introduced. The groups which did not want to acknowledge the ideological monopoly of the party went underground or were persecuted. It is estimated that there are 6,000,000 Chinese Catholics in the official church, while there are at least 4,000,000 outside of it (Wenzel-Teuber 2020). Newly built church buildings were destroyed, and the government continues to imprison Catholic priests (CNA 2020). Nevertheless, the number of Christians continues to rise – each year, half a million Chinese are baptized in one of the protestant churches (Wang 2014). Last but not least, the party carefully supervises the Internet and blocks particular portals and websites (for example, Google and Facebook).

There is no doubt, then, that the Chinese society is ruled by the class of the triple lords. The system of government is the political version of the triple rule because the class of triple lords controls the means of production and indoctrination, while its economic and cultural power is used to maximize the area of power regulation. The changes in the structure of the classes of owners and priests after Deng's reforms did not entail any loss of power of the class of rulers which is superior to the other two classes. Since 1949, "the party is the state." During the Cultural Revolution, it was more apparent, but the Communist Party of China has never – not for a single moment – resigned its monopoly of the means of coercion, production, and indoctrination. The economic reforms in recent years could be treated as the emergence of the owners' class from the triple class, but that process is slow and fully controlled by the authorities.

It is time to apply the conceptual apparatus of Model 1 of the theory of power of non-Marxian historical materialism to the analysis of the dynamics of power in post-war China. The directly analyzed period encompasses half

a century (1949–1989). In this part, I shall distinguish the following phases of the history of China at that time: the growth of civil alienation, initial political revolution, enslavement with the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities, cyclical declassations, and cyclical revolutions.

The Communist Revolution, usually packed into the “Chinese civil war” in history course books, seems to be a political conflict between two parties rather than a citizens’ revolution with a broad social base. Indeed, the Kuomintang acted as the ruling party in that war, after decades of the rule of the military junta and after the war with Japan, with its disastrous results. However, the misery caused by the events of the 1930s and 1940s significantly raised the level of the civil alienation, and the citizens’ support became the decisive factor in the victory of Mao and the communist party over the Kuomintang. Lung Ying-tai states that during the Battle of Xuzhou alone, the communists mobilized 5.34 million peasants (Lung 2009, p. 184). The promise of an agrarian reform attracted masses of landless peasants who had nothing to lose to the Communist Party of China. It was mainly for them that the 1945–1949 was revolutionary. The Kuomintang, instead of making concessions to the urban population which were not allied with the communists, began taking over banks and factories (a few years after the Japanese had done the same), as well as civilians’ supplies, to use them in the fight with the communists, which led to student and intelligentsia strikes and to mass desertions from the Kuomintang army (Leung 1996, p. 96). That corresponded to the phase of progressive civil alienation. The increase of power regulation did not trigger an outbreak of the initial citizens’ revolution because, in return for the carrying out of the agrarian reform, the authorities gained the support of the peasantry which was the most numerous social group in the Chinese society.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the communist party became the core of the new state authorities. As early as 1949, that is, after the proclamation of the People’s Republic of China, the Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference was formed. It was headed by Zhou Enlai.

The tightening of political control took the form of the first five-year plan and the agrarian reform (1950–1953), the scope of which far exceeded the subdivision of land and was a pretext for the use of repression and terror:

A small cadre would find out who in a given village were the worst “enemies of the people” (...) They would gather all the persons in the village

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<sup>8</sup> Perhaps, if the economic dimension of social life were introduced to the model, it could be explained with the so-called NEP effect: the satisfaction of the economic aspirations of the peasantry contributed to the growth of support for the authorities; surely, it stabilized their rule. See Nowak (1991c, pp. 227–229).

and encourage them in “struggle meetings” to denounce those who had exploited them. When hatred had erupted or been worked up, certain of the most grasping landlords and richest farmers would be paraded before a People’s Court, accused, and condemned, some to execution, which the people would be compelled to witness, and some to reeducation and rehabilitation by labor.

MORTON, LEWIS 2004, p. 206

A few million people (the exact number is difficult to evaluate) lost their lives in such executions and show trials combined with dispossession (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, p. 350). As the communes were created (about seventy thousand of them), villagers were recruited to the triple class which had (sometimes unlimited) power over the peasants working in the communes. In consequence, Chinese peasants’ freedom was restricted even more than during feudalism. New duties were imposed of them in relation to the membership in production teams and communes (Oi 1989, p. 5). The multi-level tax system only left a tiny part of the grain for a peasant’s consumption – the amount was much lower than the daily portion of 7,000 calories considered to be sufficient for one person (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, p. 356). The declassification was the more hurtful as it was the smallholders that had supported the communist party and helped it win.

The party control reached new social groups. The aim of the so-called Hundred Flowers Campaign run with the slogan of “letting a hundred schools of thought contend” was to appease the intelligentsia by encouraging it to put forth critical opinions (提意见 *tíyìjiàn*), but the movement led to mass critique of the Communist Party of China and of the postulates of the democratization of politics. As the rulers’ class noticed the excessive loosening of the area of regulation, it began a campaign against the rightists, which cost about half a million Chinese people their lives (Prybyla 1981, pp. 254–259). About seven hundred thousand educated Chinese were dismissed from their positions, and most of them were sent to re-education camps in villages. After ten years of the communist rule, there were only two hundred thousand graduates of higher (mainly technical) education institutions in China, a country with a population of half a billion people (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, pp. 363–365).

Although it was officially presented as an attempt at a sudden invigoration of the Chinese economy, the policy of the Great Leap Forward, initiated in 1957–1958 made it possible to extend the authorities’ area of regulation to new spheres of social life. As the campaign began, units of people’s militia were formed. Their task was to militarize the everyday life of the Chinese. In one year, the movement encompassed three hundred million citizens, that is more than

half the population (Lüthi 2008, p. 105). All citizens (650 million) were mobilized to build the Chinese industry – one hundred million for steel production alone (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, p. 371). Scrap melting and steel production in primitive bloomeries ruined the industry, and progressive collectivization combined with natural disasters led to a great famine. At least thirty million human lives were lost during the famine. Cases of cannibalism were reported (Vardy, Vardy 2007). The survivors' life was subjected to radical control, with a complete prohibition of any private property and extreme organization of the life of the rural population in communes: women and men lived in separate dormitories and could only meet at certain times (Morton, Lewis 2004, p. 213). According to Model 1 of the theory of power of non-Marxian historical materialism, the period of time called the “twenty lost years” in Chinese historiography (1955–1975) represented the phase of political enslavement.

It is worth noting that in the model of power in n-Mhm, the ‘aggressiveness’ of the rulers’ class grows during the enslavement phase – they strive to expand their area of regulation to the citizens of other states. Indeed, we could make a general observation about the trend toward greater outward aggressiveness. For example, in 1949, the People’s Republic of China joined the war in Korea. Propagandists presented it as a glorious victory of China over the bourgeoisie United States of America (in reality, an armistice agreement was signed). Also in that year, the People’s Republic of China ‘freed’ Tibet. In 1958, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics attacked Taiwan. That conflict ended with a quick reaction of the United States of America and with the withdrawal of support by the Soviet Union. In 1962, the Aksai Chin territory was annexed in the course of the Sino-Indian War. Thus, in the 1960s and 1970s, the enslavement intensified. The Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of 1966–1976 could be interpreted as the phase of enslavement with the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities. The direct impulse for the announcement of the Cultural Revolution was the desire of the rulers’ class, especially Mao, to prevent events similar to those which took place in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, that is, to post-Stalinist ‘revisionism,’ as it would mean a significant restriction of the area of power regulation of the party. About thirty million Chinese people were imprisoned or killed in the course of the elimination of the ‘bourgeoisie element’ (Walder, Su 2003). The Red Guards (红卫兵 *Hóngwèibīng*) a paramilitary student organization which consisted of seven hundred thousand people, struck terror in the country. The Red Guards themselves were enslaved to enslave others. In their own words, president Mao defined their future, and nothing would stop them on the way (Chong 2002, p. 105). During their campaign of destroying the “old four” (四旧 *sìjiù*), the Red Guards attacked everything related to the old customs, ideas, traditions, and

culture. An immense number of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist historical objects. Buildings, cemeteries, sculptures, and bronzes were destroyed. Even the corpses of the emperor couple from the Ming dynasty were dragged out of their grave. Traditional books were burned. Also, all schools were closed, so the Chinese literature calls the youth of that time the “lost generation.” Factory production fell by 10% (as much as 40% in southern and eastern China). Great factories built in Henan, Hebei, and Hunan lost twenty-five million dollars because they became unprofitable, and then they were closed (Bai 2014, p. 12).

As noted by John King Fairbank, the pervasive terror was possible because of the complete erosion of the civil society; the Chinese were passive and obedient with respect to the authoritarian rule. Importantly, they were also told for many years that the concept of human rights is essentially egoistic and anti-socialist (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, p. 383). Let us note that in n-Mhm, enslavement is defined in terms of a reduction of the civil society and the popularization of the attitude of enslavement and of lack of resistance. The counterpart of the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities would be the period of Cultural Revolution when members of the rulers’ class were repressed. In 1966, Mao issued a circular which informed about the “representative of the bourgeoisie who broke into the party.” Liu Shaoqi, the head of the state, died in 1968, in prison. His successor, Lin Biao, died in a mysterious air plane accident in Mongolia. Generals Peng Duha and Zhu De, leaders of the Great March, were removed. Deng Xiaoping, the General Secretary at the time, was also repressed. During the Cultural Revolution, the purges included about 60% of the members of the party. Four hundred thousand party members were killed, and seven hundred thousand were imprisoned after illegal show trials (Fairbank, Goldman 2006, p. 387).

In the second half of 1968, the Red Guards themselves fell victim to the purges which had been initiated by its functionaries. The army sent from twelve to twenty million Red Guard soldiers to the country. Three million of them were arrested, and a few million were executed (Margolin 1999, p. 534). The failure of the Red Guards meant the end of Mao’s career as the Great Helmsman:

People still pretended to be faithful to their leader. But underneath, civil society was emerging from its torpor, prior to its explosion in the years 1976–1979 (...) When Mao finally died in September 1976, he had been a spent force politically for some time. The muted nature of popular response to his death was sufficient proof of that, as was his obvious incapacity to assure his own succession.

MARGOLIN 1999, p. 538



It was not the death of an individual but the internal dynamics of power that brought about the political transformation of 1976. Deng Xiaoping's reforms included the creation of economic zones for the Western capital, liberalization of the activity of the private sector, and dissolution of the system of people's communes in the country. All of them could be interpreted as concessions on the part of the Chinese triple lords. In the case of China, the transition to the phase of cyclical declassations is not typical in that concessions were not preceded by revolutionary unrest. In the light of the theory of power in non-Marxian historical materialism, a low level of social resistance is explained with either extremely low or extremely high – destructive for human relationships – level of enslavement.

It seems that it is the latter situation in China. It is worth noting that in the Chinese society, the nature of concessions was economic, not political. As there were no revolutionary outbreaks, the party monopoly of power was not violated, but the concessions did help initiate a process of the gradual emergence of a separate owners' class. A decade later, an amendment of the constitution of the People's Republic of China of April 2, 1988 sanctioned that state of things as it declared the private sector to be a "supplement" for the socialist economy and made it possible to trade the rights to use land.

We should not, however, be misled by the direction of those changes. Let us remember that the phase of cyclical declassations is characterized by the following pattern of development: "revolution – concessions – etatization – revolution, etc." In the Chinese society, the first demands for a liberalization and democratization appeared quite early: already in 1978, Wei Jingsheng presented an essay titled "The Fifth Modernization" in which he wrote that the Chinese needed democracy and freedom and not being a dictators' tool of modernization (Wei 1997). In consequence, Wei Jingsheng was imprisoned from 1979 to 1997. The governing style of the Chinese authorities did not change significantly, as proven by, among other things, the radical implementation (at the beginning of the 1980s) of the policy of one child – the area of the rulers' control (and punishment) extended to one of the most basic aspects of personal life. Social inequalities grew, and the citizens, deprived of legal protection and social benefits, were more helpless in the face of the expanding system of the corrupted *guanxi* ties. That facilitated even greater etatization of political life.

In 1989, during the strikes on the Tiananmen Square in Beijing, a group of one hundred thousand citizens, most of them young, demanded the same as dissident Wei: a liberalization and democratization of the public life in China (Nathan 2001). The demonstrations could be interpreted as a beginning of the citizens' revolution which was to lead to a restriction of the area of regulation by demanding that the authorities withdraw their control of politics, the

economy, and culture. The rebellion was brutally suppressed, and the revolution ended in defeat before it even began. Like every lost revolution, the one from 1989 brought about concessions on the part of the authorities, which initiated the second cycle of the phase of cyclical declassation. However, those concessions are gradual, as exemplified by the slow liberalization of private property law or by the progressive weakening of the policy of one child, which was finally abolished in 2015.

Communist officials have also successfully avoided that policy: in 2000–2005, in Hunan alone, about two thousand officials had more than one child (Xinhua 2007). The promises of the introduction of a social security system within the framework of the new five-year-old plan is another example of concessions made to delay, as much as possible, another rebellion and to maintain the authoritarian rule of the Communist Party of China. The Chinese civil society is too weak, and the rulers' class is too strong for the occurrence of the phase of cyclical revolutions. There are no signs of that happening in the near future, either. Thus, the Chinese society is stuck in the second cycle of the phase of declassation. The dependencies are presented in the Figure 16.1.

To sum up, in the history of the Chinese society, we can distinguish counterparts of the phase of the growth of civil alienation (1945–1949), the phase of enslavement (1956–1976), the subphase of the self-enslavement of the authorities (1966–1976), and the phase of cyclical declassations (the first cycle in 1976–89 and the second cycle since 1989). The society is unique in that there is no clear and separate phase of the initial citizens' revolution and of the citizens' revolution initiating the first cycle of the phase of cyclical declassations. There was such an initiating revolution, though, before the second cycle of

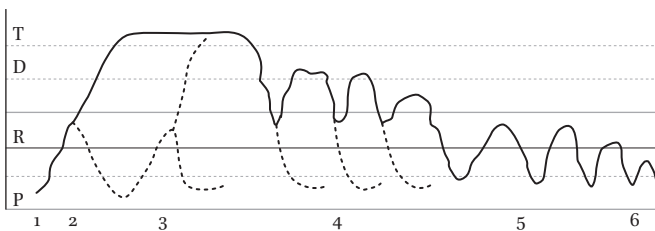


FIGURE 16.1 The dynamics of relation between the class of rulers and the class of citizens in the People's Republic of China. Explanations: P – the threshold of class peace, R – the area of revolutions, D – the threshold of declassation, T – the threshold of totalitarianism; development phases: 1 – the phase of the growth of civil alienation, 2 – the phase of the civil revolution, 3 – the phase of enslavement, 4 – the phase of cyclical declassations, 5 – the phase of cyclical revolutions; 6 – the phase of class peace.

that phase, in 1989. Still, considering the strong idealizing assumptions, the model of power is a satisfactory approximation of the post-war development of the Chinese society.

#### 4 Predictions and Perspectives

In the last part, I would like to present few general predictions or trends inspired by the n-Mhm conceptualization of the social world.

As regards internal politics, we can predict a gradual decrease of power regulation, which will continue until the threshold of a political revolution (Stepan 2015). As long as a strong civil society does not emerge in the Chinese society, the political concessions of the triple rule will not step out of the phase of cyclical declassations.

That decrease of power regulation in the internal politics will be compensated by an increase of power regulation in foreign policy. That will happen through cultural centers (such as Confucius Institutes) and general pressure upon censoring hostile comments on China's policy. Most importantly, however, the compensation will be made through new economic initiatives such as One Belt, One Road, or lately – the Polar Silk Road. The economic subjugation of African states will also follow the gradual decrease of internal control. In all cases, the economic expansion of China will be instrumental to the broadening of its external sphere of influence.

On the one hand, the concessions of the triple rule in the economic realm – that is, the consent to the activity of foreign capital and domestic companies and to individual use of land by the peasants – will ensure the internal stabilization of the triple rule; on the other hand, the growing effectiveness of the Chinese economy will help the country expand its influence abroad. That kind of economic domination in inter-social relationships will manifest itself in the construction of economic hegemony (see Brzechczyn 2007a, p. 247). Economic concessions will enrich the citizens and lead to the emergence of a separate owners' class.

In the cultural sphere, we will observe further distancing from the remnants of Marxism-Leninism which started in 1978. In order to ideologically justify the Chinese position on the international arena, the official discourse will increasingly contain references to the Confucian and imperial past. The image of Mao as the founding figure of Chinese communism, along with his theory of permanent revolution will be gradually superseded by model works created by Xi Jinping and his successors, with a clear preference for the language of interstate harmony and mutual co-operation (cf. Xi 2014).

However, the triple rule will not give up its spiritual monopoly, that is, it will not allow the formation of a separate priests' class because, given the appearance of the owners' class we have predicted above, it would cause a total erosion of the party triple rule. The state censorship will continue to control the citizens' cultural activity and preclude any pluralism of world views which – in connection with calls for democratization – would threaten the rulers' class and the maintenance of the area of power regulation.<sup>9</sup>

The particular predictions made on the basis of the application of n-Mhm prove the methodological efficacy of that concept. N-Mhm allows us to capture and describe the dynamics of power in post-war China in a consistent and precise manner.

As I have mentioned before, from the perspective of n-Mhm, the Chinese history is unique in that there was no revolution which would initiate the phase of cyclical declassations. For that reason, the theory faces the challenge of constructing a vision of the Chinese expansion which would include the economic factors alongside the political ones. That, however, would require further concretization of the assumed models. Another research obstacle to overcome would be the necessity to adapt the subsequent models and broaden of the scope of the adaptation of Models I and II (for example, for the years 1912–1949). The prospect of developing that concept – with its confirmed explanatory and prognostic power – should be encouraging for researchers and arouse interest in its expansion and even broader application.

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9 In 2013, in response to Xi Jinping's speech about the "Chinese dream," many articles were written with appeals for democratic and constitutional China. However, the censors did not allow their publication, which caused protests, see Stępień (2015, pp. 143–147).

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