

# AMR



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## Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom: My Experience of China Today

Roland Boer

The first version of this article was written after the first three months of being back in China after too long away. The version written then contained many immediate impressions and experiences, which I interpreted on the basis of extensive earlier research. There is an immediacy about such reflections, especially when you notice all that is new and different. Soon enough, however, what seemed new becomes part of the normal fabric of life and is no longer so remarkable. The earlier should have been published soon after it was written, but more than half a year has passed. Now it is time for revisions, and what I seek to is keep the immediacy of the writing then. There will, of course, be some clarifications and explanation, but the sections on socialist rule of law, the greening of China, optimism, and letting a hundred flowers bloom remain largely as they were written. The most substantial addition is a final section on the noticeable effects of the CPC's rectification and reform of the last decade, or "self-reform" as it is known by short-hand.

The basic method used in this material is what is known in China as "what is seen and heard." What you see with your eyes and hear with your ears is the only way to verify what is going on. Hearsay and rumour – the preferred "method" used by Western media – is certainly not the way to understand anything. All that does is lead to a very distorted picture of the world. In the last eight months, I have also been on a research field trip to Xizang (also known as Tibet), have travelled by train to Guangzhou in the south (by a glorious old-style sleeper), Suzhou, and the old Song Dynasty capital of Kaifeng. Above all, I have kept my eyes and ears open, talked with so many people, and discussed the situation in China today. What follows comes from these experiences.

### Socialist Rule of Law

Let us begin with the comprehensive consolidation of the socialist rule of law. Some

may find this a somewhat strange development to notice, but I begin with rule of law since it is vitally important for socialist construction. Among the many aspects of rule of law that I have noticed, let me give four examples.

To begin with, in the early days of my return some people complained of what they saw as increasing "bureaucracy." It may be a new Party secretary for an educational institution, who observes that the old "work style" is no longer adequate and must be changed. It may be all the new forms one has to complete, whether for work approval, organising a conference, rescheduling a class, and so on. It may be new requirements for outsiders to be admitted to a university campus. The list could go on. As time moved on, I began to realise that people had become used to the old way of completing tasks. Now, they actually needed to learn how to follow correct procedures and processes. Overall, it seems to me that the procedures are more efficient and rational, although on occasion a further improvement could be made. Lest we think of "bureaucracy" as a negative term, we need to remember Max Weber's point that socialism would require a qualitatively more efficient and rational bureaucracy than what may be experienced in a capitalist system. [1] The reader may think: did not Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and others rail against "bureaucratism"? Yes, they did, but "bureaucratism" is a different beast. This is an inefficient, over-burdened approach that clogs up processes rather than making them happen. By contrast, a properly functioning "bureaucracy" is rational and efficient.

Further, the former "grey area" between the law and observance has gone. One of the effects of the "wild 90s" was this large "grey area." Moving in this "grey area" became a necessary skill for living, but it also bred significant social mistrust. Fast-forward to the present. Counterfeit products: gone. Fake student IDs for cheaper tickets on trains and so on: gone. Scams on Wanfujing St in Beijing:

gone. Extravagant meals to impress guests for favours in return: gone. Malpractice by large enterprises: gone (due to comprehensive processes of rectification and reform). Again, the list could go on and on and on. The “grey area” has become very small indeed, if not completely gone.

Further, I have noticed a significant return of social trust. The value of social trust comes out of China millennia-long cultural tradition, in the sense that you can trust the person with whom you are dealing. Of course, China’s history has had periods when there was a distinct lack of social trust, most recently the “wild 90s” and its aftermath in the first decade of the new century. For most people, this loss of social trust was an affront to deep cultural values, so they have welcomed in so many ways the return of this value into daily life. Whether I visit the campus hospital, local dentist, hearing-aid specialist, or optometrist, they have the very refreshing – especially for one too used to Western contexts – approach of knowing what they are talking about, of a comprehensive gathering of scientific information so as to make the correct recommendation, and a concern that I am happy with what they have recommended.

Finally, I have noticed that everyone is subject to the rule of law, from common people going about their daily lives to the highest levels of leadership in the country. When you have ensured and strengthened the leadership of the Communist Party through rule of law, then it becomes possible for all to be subject to the rule of law.

We have come to the point where some background and theoretical explanation is needed. As for background: although the step-by-step development of rule of law dates back at least to the late 1970s, and arguably further back to the very first days of the New China from 1949, the most significant developments have taken place since the CPC’s Eighteenth Congress in 2012 – now known as the beginning of the New Era. [2]

As for theory: we are speaking of a socialist rule of law, which is qualitatively different from

a capitalist rule of law and its supposed “separation of powers.” How is a socialist rule of law defined? It ensures both the “people-centred” reality in China today, the reality that the “people are masters of the country,” and strengthens the leadership of the Communist Party. For readers accustomed to think in terms of either-or – as in “either the people are the centre or the Communist Party leads” – you will need to put aside such thinking and try to understand this vital point. In other words, the reader will need to exercise some dialectical thinking: a socialist rule of law ensures and strengthens the leadership of the Communist Party precisely through ensuring that the people are masters of the country. But how does this dialectical relation work? The rule of law comprises a core feature of the mechanisms – the technical term is “statutory processes” – through which the will of the people is connected with the will of the Communist Party. Other aspects of these statutory processes include the constitution and China’s robust socialist democratic system, but I have noticed most at a day-to-day level how much the rule of law and the associated legal system have been enhanced and strengthened.

A final note: since we have not seen until today the reality of a socialist rule of law, it could not be instituted immediately. Such a rule of law must be developed, through pilot projects, through trial and error, through crossing the stream by feeling one stone at a time. It also requires learning best practice from every other country in the world, discarding what is unsuitable and adapting the best in light of China’s concrete conditions.

### **The Greening of China**

The second feature that has struck me is the greening of China. Upon returning to Beijing earlier this year, I immediately encountered greenery at every turn and in every corner. To set the context: some years ago, I decided to get to know Beijing somewhat better. So I set out on ever longer hikes covering the length and breadth of the city. It was not uncommon for me to walk 15-20 kilometres or more on each hike.

Back then, I could see clearly the greening process already underway. Yet, that experience was nothing compared to what I encountered this year. Green belts running through the city, clean waterways, and trees, trees, trees. Every resident is now able to gain access to green space within a short distance from their residence. Simply put, Beijing has become a garden city. I have since found out that a rather innovative approach to cities has been developed in China: their drainage, waterways, and green spaces have been redesigned to capture all of the precipitation that falls. This “water sink” approach has many purposes. For cities along major rivers, it means the cities can more water into their systems so as to assist with flood mitigation. For dry cities like Beijing, it means seeking to fill the water table under the city to capacity, so as to assist the flourishing greenery even more.

Even more, Beijing’s sky is blue almost every day, except when it is raining. True, a very occasional smoggy day might still happen, but these are few and far between and nothing like what it was before. When I first visited Beijing in 2009 people used to joke that they may have seen the sun during a brief period in the previous year (the 2008 Olympics), but by 2009 the situation was back to “normal”: you could not see a clear sky or the sun. Weather reports included statistics on the level of air pollution: light, moderate, heavy, hazardous or very hazardous. All manner of air purifiers were common in homes, dust masks were common on the streets, and I had to exercise by running up stairs wearing a dust mask. The rare clear day was due to the wind. Today, not an air-cleaner or dust mask is to be found. To repeat, the norm in Beijing is a blue sky, except when it is raining.

The reader may wonder whether these environmental projects are to be found only in Beijing? I have travelled through the countryside and cities by train to see some friends in Guangzhou, Suzhou, and the ancient Song Dynasty capital of Kaifeng. When I asked people concerning such matters, they confirmed that there had been significant improvement. I have also been on a

week-long research field trip to Xizang (also known as Tibet) and found that afforestation projects are to be found all over the region. For example, the mountains surrounding Lhasa, which rise to over 4000 metres above sea level, are well on the way to being forested with trees that flourish in such conditions. These mountains have always been bare of trees. Now they are being forested.

To understand how China has been able to achieve such a turnaround and become a world leader in environmental protection and development, we need to consider some of the key policies and projects. For example, the phrase “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets [1 2 3 4 5 6 7 4 8 4 *lǚshuǐ qīngshān jiū shì jīnshān-yīnshān*]” has come to sum up the whole range of environmental projects across China. One may wonder whether economic development and environmental protection are compatible with one another. This question arises only if you adhere to an either-or approach to contradictions. Instead, the Chinese approach is thoroughly dialectical (and this is a millennia-old approach): it is precisely economic development that enables more effective environmental measures, and vice versa. In this sense, it becomes possible to understand the concept and reality of “green growth.” All of this may be summed up in the term “ecological civilisation [生态文明 *shengtai wenming*],” which is very difficult to translate. While 生态文明 *shengtai* concerns the way an organism’s mode of life relates to its environment, 人类 *wenming* concerns the essence or the best of a cultural tradition. Together, the two words mean that “civilisation” is not simply a human endeavour, but is rather a comprehensive, holistic, and environmental endeavour.

One of the features of China that impresses me the most is that no matter how good a project is, no matter how much has been achieved, it is always in process and much work needs to be done. For example, in the General Secretary’s report to the CPC’s 20th National Congress in October of 2022, it was noted that significant achievements had been

made in the last five years in ensuring “stronger ecological conservation and environmental protection across the board, in all regions, and at all times.” All of this has led to “historic, transformative, and comprehensive changes in ecological and environmental protection and has brought us bluer skies, greener mountains, and cleaner waters.” However, a much longer section later in the report outlines how much still needs to be done after achieving zero emissions: this is nothing less than a project of environmental restoration in the framework of “ecological civilisation.”

### **A Quiet Optimism**

A third feature of China today is a quiet optimism. There is an energy and vitality about everyday life, a distinct optimism that shows itself through all manner of daily interactions. And this optimism rubs off on the many foreigners who are flowing to China as I write. Talking with an English colleague from Peking University: he points out that being back in China has been very good for his view of the world. Meeting an old Australian friend in Beijing (who was quite down for some time): I see his renewed smile, his energy, and the bounce in his step (he is in his 80s). My spirits too have been lifted, to the point of taking up running again and other exercises I thought were no longer suitable for my age.

There are so many reasons for such optimism as the New Era (from 2012) has unfolded. We may put it in negative terms: about 15 years ago the effects of the “wild 90s” were still felt in many areas. Today these effects have either been comprehensively solved or are well on the way to being resolved: the chaotic situations for workers – whether losing jobs without compensation, major delays in pay, and illegal flouting of labour laws – have been resolved; the wide gap between wealthier and poorer regions has been reduced through the success of the anti-poverty campaign and now the growth of a middle-income group to about 500 million; the problems with air, water, and land pollution are well on the way to being resolved (see above); the absence of medical,

unemployment, retirement, and disability insurance schemes has been resolved with the largest welfare scheme on the planet now basically implemented; and the wide gap between the CPC and the common people has definitely been resolved through the most resolute, thorough, and long-lasting anti-corruption campaign of the New China; the lack of knowledge of Marxism by even leading cadres in the CPC has moved to a point – through regular study sessions and much more – where cadres are ever more knowledgeable; and the disjointed nature of the CPC, between central and local bodies, of 15 years years ago has turned into a Party more united than it has been since before 1949.

However, the negative approach reveals only so much. I find it better to focus on the positive dimensions. Perhaps I can sum it up best as follows: when I return to China I am stepping into the future; when I visit a Western country I am stepping into the past. It is common in some quarters to focus on a few areas of technological development, where China has taken a major leap forward to lead in almost all areas. But the future I mention is evident everywhere: visit the local dentist and you will see high-end equipment (which I do not find in, for example, Australia or Denmark) that provides accurate assessment in seconds; visit a medical specialist and you are told that the “latest treatment” in a Western country was abandoned five or more years ago since it is not so efficient; travel through the countryside and you will see that the standard trains crisscrossing the whole country are the older “Harmony” high-speed trains which travel at “only” 300 kilometres per hour (the newer “Fuxing” trains of 350 km/h are beginning to replace the older ones). At so many levels, China has not “caught up” but has already taken a dialectical leap forward. The contradiction here that sometimes I need to tell my students, comrades, and friends that the situation in the West is worse than they imagine and that China’s situation is better than they think.

At a social and political level, the country is not falling apart but is moving forward at notable speed that is also stable (dialectics!). My assessment is that China's socialist democratic system is now more mature and developed than any political system you will find elsewhere. And at a cultural level, there is a creative energy that is increasingly being called the new "liberation of thought" (see more below).

By now some readers may have a question or two. What about the Western-hyped "slowing" of China's economy? This would have to be the great myth of this year. True, the vast ocean of the Chinese economy had a few small storms in some parts, but the extraordinary planning economic capacity has ensured that the concerns have by now been overcome and that China will achieve the targeted growth for 2023 of 5.5 percent. Further, we need to set this in context: averaged over the last four years, China's economic growth was 20 percent, the USA struggled to make 8 percent, and the Eurozone 3 percent. Finally, one way say that ten or more years ago China's growth was running at about 10 percent, and now it is below 6 percent. Yes, but the size of the economy is now many times larger than it was ten or more years, so 5.5 percent means far more than 10 percent a decade or more ago. A final thought: historical estimates indicate that before 1800 China contributed to more than 30 percent of the global economy of that time. At the time of writing, China's economy – a socialist economy, mind you – has surpassed that earlier figure. Perhaps now the reader may understand at least one dimension of the phrase, the "great renewal of China."

Another question: some may be wondering what China thinks of the few countries of the world that make up the "West." To be clear, the causes for optimism I have discussed here are primarily internal, to which external factors add another dimension. As for the West, at an everyday level people are neither interested in nor afraid of the West. It rarely comes into discussions, and the news outlets may have an item from time to time but it is well down the main page on the website. In other words, for

ordinary people the West has become irrelevant. The real world and the most important developments are elsewhere. BRICS 11, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, and much more has seen to that.

As for experts and policy-makers, the assessment now is not that the West is in decline, but rather that it has hit the wall. Fifty years of economic decline, stagnation, and fragmentation have increasingly evident effects on political systems and societies. Stagnation and fragmentation at these levels have now become tears in the social fabric, evident breakdowns of old political certainties, and waves of social unrest. Having ceased to innovate, all that the West can do internationally is attempt a feeble and "outdated Cold War thinking," without any economic substance and in response to China now setting the agenda. As for a supposed "containment" or "encirclement" of China, this is laughable. Any Communist propagating such terms should be ashamed of themselves. From personal experience, I can attest to these realities. Coming from China to Western Europe, I am struck by how degraded, fearful, and isolated Western countries have become. We are in a time of the pessimism of the West and the optimism of the East.

However, it is important to note that unlike many in the world who would like to see the West collapse entirely, a Chinese approach is to hope that the West can find the resources for social, cultural, and political renewal. It will no doubt take a long time, and it will require initially a full acknowledgement that the West has hit the wall. The next step is to dig deep into Western traditions to find the resources for renewal. I am not speaking of some conservative approach that seeks to reinforce the "either-or" or "zero-sum" approach to the world; I am not speaking of a "chosen people" who try find renewed justification for warmongering and seeking to impose hegemony on others; and I am certainly not suggesting a renewed emphasis on the possessive individualism. The resources for renewal need to be quite distinct. The process, from a

Chinese perspective, is not to recover old values and reclaim them, but to find other values that can then be transformed in a very different context. However, by the time the West manages to do so, the world will be a very different place.

Finally, I would like to explain a few key phrases that sum up the Chinese approach. Each phrase carries a wealth of connotations that do not need to be repeated, for they sum up the breadth and range of scholarship and assessment on such matters. The first is “qualitative change [文明 *zhibian*],” in the sense that the world is now undergoing qualitative and not quantitative transformation. More fully, we are now witnessing “profound changes unseen in a century [新形态优秀传统 *bainian weiyou zhi da bianju*].” Think back a century or so and we are in the time of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. Although the times are quite distinct, the depth and breadth of changes underway now are analogous. The third phrase is “a new form of human civilisation [人类文明新形态 *renlei wenming xin xingta*],” which expresses the clear awareness that a different structure of the world is emerging out of the qualitative changes underway and that this provides unique opportunities to which China is already contributing. The reader may be familiar with other ways of expressing this awareness, such as a “multi-polar” world, and that the US-led West is exhausting itself trying to roll back the clock.

Perhaps the reader can see now why there is a quiet optimism in China, whether we speak of everyday of common people or the assessments and policy decisions being made. In short, the times suit China very well, as indeed they suit so many developing countries.

### **Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend**

The fourth feature I have noticed is the extraordinary ferment of ideas, proposals, and plans. This truly is a time – to quote an expression from millennia ago – of “letting a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools

of thought contend [新化齐放新家争鸣 *baihua-qifang, baijia-zhengming*].” There are so many examples, ranging from the inherent innovation of Chinese culture as it is integrated with Marxism, the writing of a whole new chapter of Marxism from the midst of the mainstream, and the energetic development of existing and new international projects as China engages ever more deeply with so many countries in the world.

Writing now, after about eight months after returning, I can say that I am truly exhausted by my involvement in some these “hundred flowers” projects. So many forums, seminars, conferences, focused on realistic and practical problems and their solutions. There are simply too many events in which you can take part, and in each one I have met many foreign specialists participating, making suggestions, putting their heads together for solution (and I include here some leading and articulate Australian policy-makers). I now need to step back a little, since I prefer to study, think, write, and work behind the scenes.

Perhaps the best way to indicate this ferment of ideas, proposals, and plans is to mention a couple of the “hot topics” in China today. The first concerns “justice [正义 *zhengyi*],” which initially appeared about a decade ago and continues to be a topic of much discussion and debate. The first is to develop further a socialist approach to justice, in the sense that justice is absolutely central to a whole range of questions on the socialist road. The second is a comprehensive and very practical approach to justice. Thus, justice involves: the imperative that no-one should live in poverty, which has been a core dimension of the immense project of lifting 800 million Chinese people out of poverty; the fact that no-one is to be left behind on the path to common prosperity; the core human right as the right to socioeconomic well-being, from which flow civil, political, cultural, and environmental rights; access to quality education from the cities to the remotest high-altitude regional areas; a medical insurance scheme that covers all of China’s 1.4 billion people, with a focus on primary care at local hospitals (such as the



very competent one on my campus) to specialised care in major hospitals – so much so that the policy is to ensure that no-one needs to leave their province for a full range of medical care; livable retirement pensions, which come alongside the many other aspects of care for the elderly; and so on.

A second focus of much attention concerns the “two integrations [两个结合 *liangge jiehe*],” in the sense that Marxism needs to be combined or integrated with China’s concrete realities and the best of China’s traditional culture. The first integration may be dated back to the late 1930s, when Mao Zedong spoke of the need for communists to understand the whole history of China, from Confucius to Sun Zhongshan (Sun Yat-sen), of the need for concrete Marxism in light of China’s actual conditions, and the need to develop Marxism in terms of China’s specific characteristics. [3]

However, it is the second integration that is drawing most attention. While the integration of Marxism with the best of China’s traditional culture has been a feature since the beginning of the CPC, it has only recently been specifically identified as such. The first moment was in the CPC General Secretary’s rallying speech at the Party’s centenary celebrations in July 2021. [5] Since then, there have been a couple of very important explanations and elaborations.

Thus far, we find two main moves: the one seeks to identify the essence of China’s traditional culture and the compatibility of this essence with scientific socialism. The other seeks to identify the process by which this is done. These include: 1) the need for a good fit between two approaches that come from different sources; 2) the organic unity of the two, in which Marxism has become China’s Marxism, and China’s traditional culture has become modern; 3) while Chinese culture has given Marxism a much longer and broader historical road, it is Marxism that has led to the renewal of Chinese culture, giving us Chinese-style modernisation and thus strengthening China’s traditional culture; 4) since China’s traditional culture is inherently innovative, Marxism has and continues to provide the

impetus for enlightenment, renewal, and innovation of that culture; 5) the integration of the basic principles of Marxism with China’s traditional culture has consolidated the distinct identity of China on the world stage today.

Allow me to summarise these dialectical formulations. Marxism is often described as China’s “Enlightenment,” in the sense that it has enabled China to grasp the laws of historical development and profoundly shift the direction China is taking. Further, the second integration is described as another “liberation of thought” (after Mao Zedong in 1942-1945 and Deng Xiaoping in 1978). [4] As I write, there are the beginnings of a comprehensive assessment of how modernisation and traditional culture relate to one another, how to identify the essence of traditional culture, and how all of this has contributed to Chinese-style modernisation as well as a new form of human civilisation.

Finally, not all of traditional culture can and should be carried forward. So how does one identify the dross to be discarded and the essence that is to be creatively developed? The debate has only begun, but I would like to emphasise that the phrase “优秀传统文化 [*youxiu chuantong wenhua*]” is increasingly translated as the “best of China’s traditional culture.” In this way, the dialectical process of discarding the feudal and indeed bourgeois dross and developing the “best of” that culture can be indicated. All of this can be summed up in the observation: “The best inheritance of history is to create a new history; The greatest respect for human civilisation is to create a new form of human civilisation.”

### **The Party’s Leadership in a New Light**

This section I have added after more careful observation. It concerns clear evidence of new forms of Party leadership and should be of particular interest to comrades in the CPA. By way of background, in preparation for the last chapter of my most recent book (*Socialism in Power: On the History and Theory of Socialist Governance*, 2023), I engaged in some in-depth research concerning the comprehensive process of rectification and reform in CPC

grassroots branches and regional committees. A specific task force was set up after the 18th Congress in 2012 to deal with such matters, and it promulgated document after document – some for the first time – concerning structures, practices, and leadership in grassroots Party branches. Initially, these were all “trial” guidelines, meaning that they were implemented for a while, feedback was sought on effectiveness and problems, and revisions made. Some were more generic guidelines, while others had a specific focus, whether non-public enterprises, state-owned enterprises, educational institutions, government organs, Party organs, village branches, and so on. Provisions were made for retired and mobile cadres, and there has been a particular concern with the quality, workloads, and roles of Party branch secretaries.

Why was this rectification and reform implemented? A notable problem that had grown until the 18th Party Congress in 2018 was lack of Party unity. We should understand that back then the CPC already had about 90 million members, and if you pause to think for a moment you will appreciate the enormity of the task at hand. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of Party branches exist across the country, in every single community, enterprise, educational facility, and much more. With such a large Party, the problem of unity became acute. The Central Committee found that carefully considered decisions would be filtered, delayed, blocked and not implemented by the time the decision went through the city or provincial committees, regional committees, and so on, so that by the time the decision reached the grassroots branch it was often not implemented at all. Anyone who knows Communist Parties will recognise that this situation simply could not continue. Hence the rectification and reform, the ultimate purpose of which was the restore Party unity in both robust democratic practices and centralised decision making. I could say much more about the process, but perhaps it is best to refer the reader to the final chapter of *Socialism in Power*.

The catch with the book was that I researched and wrote the chapter at some distance from

actual events. I had not yet been able to return to China and relied on information from Party building journals, articles, and experiences as they were written by those involved. Now that I am on the ground in China once again, I have been able to observe closely how the rectification and reform has produced concrete results. Let me put it this way: a decade or more ago, the assumed approach was that the Party branch would deal with Party matters, but that it would leave the affairs of the village, enterprise (state-owned or non-public), government organ, educational institution and so on to the people responsible for those matters. Much of this has changed. My most immediate experience is the university environment and it is very noticeable that the workplace Party secretary of the university as a whole, as well as the many branch secretaries in the schools and faculties play a much greater role in leadership and decision-making. Branch secretaries are now publicly present and involved everywhere, and the university workplace Party secretary is a very competent person of significant substance and competence. This development has of course required a clarification of the roles of the Party and educational leadership, but it is very clear that the Party has once again taken the leading role.

I am told that this applies across the board, and – especially for my interest – to non-public enterprises. The Party no longer sits by and keeps its focus on Party members. Instead, leadership in decision making in these non-public enterprises is increasingly a Party matter. Needless to say, this is an extraordinary development, and raises the question as to what the role of non-public enterprises is these days. From my perspective, they are no longer “private,” at least as those who live in Western contexts think about such matters, since the Party is in the leadership position. As for an abiding interest of mine: in village Party branches in the many country and remote areas, the fact that it has been the grassroots Party branch and its secretary that has spear-headed the final phase of the poverty alleviation project

means that now the Party branch clearly plays the leading role.

Thus far, I have written of rectification and reform. Of course, this is internal Party terminology, and the more common short-hand is to speak of “self-reform” or “self-revolution” of the Party. When you come across such terms, these are not vague terms but rather very concrete references to a decade-long process.

### Conclusion

To sum up: I have written of five features that have struck me, initially upon returning to live and work in China this year and then in light of further experience and reflection: socialist rule of law; the greening of China; a quiet optimism; the ferment of ideas, proposals, and plans; and the leadership of the Communist Party. On each topic I could have given many more examples, and provided more theoretical discussion, but the points are clear as they stand.

### Notes

- 1) Weber, Max. 1922. *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Science and Society). Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr.
- 2) Xi Jinping. 2017. *The Law-Based Governance of China*. Beijing: Central Compilation and Translation Press.
- 3) Mao Zedong. (1938) 1991. “Lun xin jieduan” (On the New Stage). *Zhonggong zhongyang wenjian xuanji* (Selected Documents of the Central Committee of the CPC), Vol. 11, 557-662. Zhonggong zhongyang xuexiao chubanshe, pp. 658–659.
- 4) Deng Xiaoping. 1978 (1995). “Liberate Thought, Seek Truth from Facts and Unite as One in Looking to the Future (13 December, 1978).” *Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping*, Vol. 2, 50–63. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press.

There is one final feature that I mention here by way of conclusion: I continue to note an extraordinary flow of people to China, to study (Marxism as well), to work, to live, and simply to visit. Not only is China increasingly open to the world as it has stepped onto the world stage, but people are drawn to the country. I am especially struck by how many people from countries in the Belt and Road Initiative are now in China. I regularly meet people from Africa, Latin America, the Pacific, Southeast Asia, the Subcontinent, Russia, and much more. Most notably, I have begun to meet leaders, scholars, and students from India. India? Yes, India, especially members of the Communist Party of India (Marxist), which is not only the largest Party with a proud history, but also the Party that had held and holds governance in three of India’s states. That they are here to learn from the experience of Chinese socialism and the Chinese model for India’s experience is very heartening. Who knows? Next stop may well be India.

- 5) Xi Jinping. 2022. “Hold High the Great Banner of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics and Strive in Unity to Build a Modern Socialist Country in All Respects: Report to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, 16 October, 2022.” *Qiushi Journal* (English Edition), 12 Nov 2022. [http://en.qstheory.cn/2023-01/06/c\\_845251.htm](http://en.qstheory.cn/2023-01/06/c_845251.htm).

Xi Jinping. 2023. “Speech at the Meeting on Cultural Inheritance and Development, 2 June 2023.” *Qiushi Journal* (English Edition), 10 November 2023. [http://en.qstheory.cn/2023-11/10/c\\_938766.htm](http://en.qstheory.cn/2023-11/10/c_938766.htm).