

Ideology and the Demise or Maintenance of Soviet-type Regimes

Perspectives on the Chinese Case

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The rapid demise of Soviet-type regimes seems to confirm that communist ideology is either resistant to change or, when it does change, changes totally, and that the belief factor is extremely weak or non-existent in these previously self-avowed ideological systems. But what about the Chinese case where ideology has survived and has entertained major empirical reforms? This article seeks to argue that it is possible to retain the conception of ideology as a belief system and incorporate it into an interpretation of its role in the demise or maintenance of Soviet-type regimes. An adapted, but still centrally sanctioned, doctrine can contribute both to policy innovations and to the maintenance of ideological hegemony and political stability. Conversely, the failure to manage ideological change and the corresponding loss of ideological hegemony in a Soviet-type regime can contribute significantly to the breakdown of its moral and political authority. These points will be illustrated with a survey of leading Chinese discussions on the nature and role of ideology, ideological change, and the role of ideology in empirical reforms. These discussions show how the Chinese regime has steered a middle course, against conservative opposition to change on the one hand and liberal challenge to the system on the other, leading to successful reform communism.

For local residents and foreign visitors alike, ideology cannot be more irrelevant to today's commercially driven China. But it is not irrelevant to ask the question, where and how did it disappear? For all its demise globally and in the dubiously socialist China, ideology remains important for understanding the historical fate and current state of reforming and former Soviet-type societies. A linkage between ideology and empirical change exists in those regimes not least because ideology for a long time served as a source of rectitude, a framework of public discourse, and a mechanism of systemic control, all of which would directly affect the character and outcome of change in those societies. Indeed, Deng Xiaoping's idea of "socialism with Chinese characteristics" has steered a reformist course in post-Mao

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China, while Mikhail Gorbachev's new thinking on "democratic humanistic socialism" heralded a revolution in the last days of the Soviet Union.

The divergent fates of ideology and divergent outcomes of change in China and the former Soviet Union have raised interesting questions about ideology and the demise or maintenance of Soviet-type regimes. What has been the role of ideology, for instance, in the reformism of some and in the revolution of others? What has been its role in the stability of change in some and instability in others? What has been its role in the successful economic transition in some regimes, notably half-reformed China, and in the strenuous transition in other regimes, notably Russia? Since the totalism of communist ideology was once regarded as an inherent barrier to change, it seems appropriate that at least some attention be now given to its role in the transformation and demise of Soviet-type regimes.

An adequate understanding of this role should begin with a proper conception of the notion of ideology. How can the belief system of an ideological community, as ideology is traditionally conceived, suffer such a rapid collapse among its observers?¹ In an attempt to bridge the gap between recent reality and the conception of ideology, one study proposes an understanding of ideology as a form of discourse shared by its adherents, "a body of linguistic propositions expressed as speech-acts and united by the conventions governing them." Thus conceived, the function of ideology is located at the level of social conventions rather than individual convictions. As such, ideology is central to the maintenance of Soviet-type regimes as a uniform linguistic discourse, without which those regimes cannot function, although they cannot fundamentally reform themselves while preserving this authoritative discourse. Only by completely discarding that conventional discourse would they think totally anew (Schull, 1992). Apparently this conception of ideology has the advantage of taking ideology seriously while accounting for the widespread cynicism toward official doctrine in those regimes.

This reinterpretation nonetheless does not satisfactorily explain ideology's role in the maintenance and the recent decline of Soviet-type regimes. It may account for cases where ideology and the political system both collapsed, but not for a major case where ideology has entertained and survived substantial empirical reforms, namely, Deng Xiaoping's China. The exclusion of the belief factor also ignores the origins of the ideological movement in those societies: why did they subscribe to that ideology in the first place? Further, this view ignores the fact that some of communist ideology's sincere believers can be true reformers, not just faithful observers of an authoritative language, as in the cases of Gorbachev and Hu Yaobang. Nor can it fully explain the substantive differences and conflicts among contending political forces in reforming socialist societies within and outside the party. Finally, with particular regard to Marxism-Leninism, its avowed role as the worldview and methodology of the proletariat makes it hard to ignore its normative and analytical dimensions. In short, it is difficult to completely rule out the belief factor in any conception of ideology or interpretation of its role in the maintenance and decline of Soviet-type regimes.

The challenge then is to incorporate the belief factor into the conception of ideology without assuming a uniformity and stability of beliefs among members of an ideological community or reducing ideology's role to constituting beliefs. This article seeks to argue that it is possible to incorporate the belief factor into the conception of communist doctrine and an interpretation of its role in the demise or maintenance

1. In a survey of 27 definitions of ideology, Hamilton (1987) finds that all contain the basic element of a belief system shared by an ideological group.

nance of Soviet-type regimes. Premised on ideology's capacity to change, the article further argues that an adapted but still centrally sanctioned ethos can contribute both to policy innovations and to the maintenance of ideological hegemony and the political system. Conversely, the failure to manage ideological change and the corresponding loss of ideological hegemony in a Soviet-type regime may contribute significantly to the breakdown of the regime's moral and political authority.

Central to the treatment of ideology here is a "gradational approach," one that views ideology on a continuum whose components have different orders of importance to the belief system (Ray, 1984, p. 26). This view of ideology enables one to take account of the diversity of beliefs within an ideological group and of ideology's capacity to change. It also allows one to view ideology's role on normative and methodological levels, rather than merely in terms of an instrument of social control or a form of linguistic expression. Most of all, it permits one to account for different responses to doctrinal change among the members of an ideological movement and cross-nationally.

Below I will first discuss the gradational conception of ideology by drawing on some scholarly treatment in the literature and considering its implications for understanding reforming communist regimes. Then I will illustrate these with a survey of leading discussions in post-Mao China that deal with the questions of the nature and role of ideology, ideological change, and its role in empirical reforms. These discussions show how the post-Mao regime has steered a middle course of ideology, against conservative opposition to change from the left and liberal challenge to the system from the right. The article will conclude by linking the Chinese regime's approach to ideology to its reformism and to its successful maintenance of the political system and social stability.

Dimensions of Ideology as a Belief System

Ideology as a belief system is often perceived as all-embracing and immutable. As such, it is either resistant to change or when it does change, changes totally. In the words of a recent study, reform communism is unfeasible and leaves only "two options open to a political actor in a Soviet-type system: either a conservative defense of ideology or a radical leap beyond it, an outright rejection of the official discourse's authoritativeness" (Schull, 1992, pp. 728–729). A major problem in this conception is the failure to consider the differentiated levels that an ideology may be comprised of. An alternative conception, summed up by Ray Taras as a gradational approach, "retains several levels of abstraction of the concept and allows for a choice to be made as to which level will be the subject of a study. Rather than distinguishing between what is ideological and what is not, this approach seeks to answer the question: How ideological is a phenomenon?" The most basic case of the gradational approach is the dichotomy between general, long-term theoretical objectives and specific, short-term practical ones. The basis of the dichotomy is the universality or particularism of the interests represented: general or specific, fundamental or immediate, universal or group-oriented. The gradational approach avoids the pitfalls of dealing with ideology either at the most general or particular level of abstraction (Ray, 1984, p. 26).

Based on this conception, two dimensions can be distinguished in any political ideology: one fundamental and the other operative. As one scholar delineates,

Ideology applied in action inevitably bifurcates into two dimensions of argumentation: that of fundamental principles, which determine the final goals and grand vistas

in which they will be realized, and which are set above the second dimension, that of the principles which actually underlie policies and are invoked to justify them. This second dimension of argumentation I have proposed calling operative ideology. In each, all the components of ideological thought are activated, yet with different emphasis. (Seliger, 1977, p. 4)

That is, out of political reality a political party may develop a line of argument in support of its actual policies. This becomes the operative dimension of ideology which may derive from but may deviate from the fundamental. In his empirical study of Soviet ideology, Barrington Moore confirms that “the operating ideology of the leaders is more sensitive to environmental factors and the influence of success and failure than is an organized system of overtly expressed doctrine.” Moreover, “shifts in operative ideology were likely, sooner or later, to provide changes in the officially promulgated doctrine” (Moore, 1965, pp. 421–422).

This bifurcation of ideology allows one to locate ideology’s power at the epistemological level without reducing its role to constituting beliefs, for it can link politicians’ operative ideology to their formal doctrine without equating them. The formal doctrine is still important because in a long established Soviet-type system, Marxism–Leninism alone furnished leaders with a conceptual framework for organizing their understanding of the world. Like other individuals, these leaders had a basic need for affective and analytical categories to “make sense of complex social and political reality” (Femia, 1987, p. 217). Even one cynical observer of Soviet politics has conceded that there was a basic Marxist component in the operative ideology of Soviet politicians, which was none other than their coherent vision of the world in the Marxist perspective and analytical categories. Some key Marxist notions, such as the central role of material conditions in determining the forms of superstructure, the paradigm of the forces of production versus the relations of production, and the base versus the superstructure, influenced the worldview and the basic way of thinking of communist leaderships (Shlapentokh, 1986, pp. 10–11). The same can be said of the Chinese political leadership, reformist or conservative. Indeed, only by appreciating this function of communist ideology can we better understand how, as will be shown below, the Chinese reform leadership have used what they call the fundamentals of ideology to discard parts of the old ideology for political and policy objectives.

The differentiation of ideology also enables one to see fundamental value dimensions in political conflicts over change in reforming Soviet type regimes. Not all elites could tolerate the discrepancy between the practical goals of policy and the fundamental principles of party doctrine, a tendency that has been demonstrated among political leaders of an ideological movement. In his study of Soviet ideology from the beginning of Bolshevism to the height of Stalinism, Moore observes several kinds of elite resistance to change in the revolutionary doctrine. Some elites develop emotional attachments to official doctrine. Others take it too seriously, as in the case of Bukharin, so that making compromise or adaptation become very difficult for them (Moore, 1965, pp. 421–422). Or as another scholar notes,

Policy-makers are not always bothered by dissonance (between formal and operative ideology), but its perception and the pressure to dissimulate or reduce it are part of the conduct of politics, and are imposed directly by some actors on others. Purists and diehards are normally bothered by dissonance between cherished and applied principles, and, in return, they worry the leadership with their rather articulate misgivings—which at least part of the leadership may share but choose to ignore. (Seliger, 1977, p. 233)

Indeed, the need to defend policy innovations has frequently forced the Chinese reform leadership to fight ideological battles with the more conservative leadership; while the need to placate the latter has also led them to ideological compromise at other times. Only by appreciating the differentiated levels of ideology can we better understand the contradictory directions in the post-Mao ideology of anti-left in economics and anti-right in politics.

In short, the pluralistic conception of ideology offers a useful framework in which the syncretic route of post-Mao ideological change can be explained: how the CCP has repudiated certain aspects of ideology without negating the whole and how the retention of the whole has served to maintain the political system.

Dialectic Materialism and Post-Mao Ideological Change

The very questions of the nature and role of ideology were debated after Mao's death in the controversy over the criterion of truth between two contending political groups as a prelude to Deng's historic reforms since 1978. The contribution of the debate was precisely to establish two levels of ideology, one fundamental and one transient, which then allowed one group to abandon some of Mao's tenets while pledging fidelity to his fundamental thought. This new approach to ideology, officially termed the "dialectic materialist" line, has since established the framework of the reformist discourse and has served as the doctrinal basis of the regime's economic reforms. A discussion of some salient aspects of the debate of 1978 will highlight the post-Mao conception of the nature and role of ideology, and its impact on ideological and policy change.

The well-known debate on the criterion of truth arose over a "two whatevers" formula proposed by Hua Guofeng, Mao's heir apparent: "Whatever policies Mao has made we will resolutely safeguard and whatever instructions Mao has given we will forever follow." These pledges vividly reflected the state of ideological absolutism in Mao's late years. It has been emphasized earlier that even communist ideology is capable of pluralistic tendencies. In practice, however, these can be impeded by political leaders' refusal to recognize the ideology's relativity (*true only in this way*) (Dahm, 1980, pp. 110). Under Mao's leadership, the absolutization of ideology and intolerance of deviation resulted in much rigidity and ossification. The claim to total truth, moreover, gave grounding to constant imperative appeals to correct behavior and thinking, as seen in the intense efforts in ideological education, media promulgation, political campaigns, and thought censorship. The crux of Hua's "two whatevers" was to uphold the ideological and policy lines of Mao's late years.

A debate on the criterion of truth thus ensued as the first issue of serious contention between Hua's "whatever" group and the reformist group led by Deng and Hu Yaobang. Questions of legitimacy and the political environment at the time necessitated that the issue at stake was not whether or not to continue Mao Zedong thought but how. This was especially so because the "whatever" group's high ground rested on its role as the guardian of Mao's word. Hence the key issue in the 1978 debate concerned what constituted the correct approach to upholding Mao Zedong thought, a question essentially about the conception and the role of ideology. The fact that the debate was politically motivated did not trivialize its substantive aspects. On the contrary, because the debate arose out of political contention, its significance was not limited to theoretical issues but involved an important political question of how to gauge the correctness of past leaders and policies.

Central to the reformers' response to the "two whatevers" was a bifurcation of ideology: a distinction between an essential component of Mao's thought that was of fundamental importance, and a specific content that was conditioned by time, place, and subject context. "What we should uphold and use as a guide to action," Deng declared, should only be "the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought." As to the specific conclusions, "neither Marx, Lenin, or Mao can avoid making this or that error" (Deng, 1982, pp. 157-158). To the fundamental dimension he designated Mao's notion of "seeking truth from facts," while Hu Yaobang emphasized Mao's postulate of "practice is the criterion of truth." Both ideas supported the contention of the reformist group that "practice," rather than Mao's words, constituted the "criterion of truth." In an article backed by Hu Yaobang that formally launched the truth debate in May, 1978, the anonymous authors cited Marx's dialectical materialist epistemology to support those designations.² Because dialectic materialism stressed the primacy of material existence in contributing to human cognition, it followed that even the theories of the classic masters were conditioned by reality and must therefore "move forward" with practice (Special Commentator, 1978).

A related question in the truth debate concerned the role of ideology. The "two whatevers" in effect assigned to ideology the role of the criterion of truth. Anything less would amount to "de-Maoization" or infidelity. In response, the "practice" advocates countered that Marxism-Leninism and Mao Thought were not criteria of truth because ideology could not test itself or any other lines of thinking, but only be tested by its congruence with reality. As generalized theories from practice, ideology would serve as a *guide to practice*, in which case "theory reacts on practice" rather than acting in its stead. That is, the role of theory was to provide analytical insights into universal features, which, when applied to reality, would help one discern specific manifestations of those features (Li, 1979a, pp. 19-21). By contrast, the "two whatevers" assigned to ideology the role of providing authoritative answers to all situations. Furthermore, in misconstruing the origin and formation of theory, the "whatever" claim to truth exaggerated the role of ideology by denying an ongoing process of change internal to theory. This process, argued the "practice" advocates, was highlighted by the distinction between fundamental and specific principles (Li, 1979b, 36-39).

This debate on appropriate approaches to ideology allowed the reformist coalition to repudiate the "two whatevers" as guilty of dogmatism and to replace it with a new approach that stressed the primacy of practice and the interaction between theory and practice. This new dialectic materialist approach was then used to repudiate key areas of Mao's ideology and politics deemed unsuited to Chinese practice, e.g. the pursuit of class struggle, the purification of socialist production relations, and the exaltation of ideological incentives. By designating these tenets as "specific principles" of Mao, the "practice" group was able to discard Mao's radical socialism without abandoning official ideology itself.

The dialectical materialist approach would be invoked repeatedly as a buttress for more empirical reforms throughout the Dengist era. This was especially so in the midst of political and ideological controversies between two major groups within the reform coalition—the more conservative and the more radical—who have become principal rivals after the demise of the "whatever" group. One salient

2. Independently submitted to the paper *Guangming ribao*, the article was substantially revised by party theoreticians under Hu Yaobang's instruction. Before appearing in *Guangming ribao*, the article was first published in *Lilun dongtai*, an internally circulated journal.

case was the debate between them over the question of whether the “development” of Marxism or its “affirmation” should be of priority for the party. Whereas conservatives worried that priority given to “development” would open the way to negating Marxism, the more reform-minded felt that the priority of “affirmation” would constrain the extent of reforms. The controversy was a major issue during the elite discussion of the Resolution on Spiritual Civilization in the autumn of 1986, a key document on ideological matters, and in the anti-liberal campaign later that year, a conservative offensive that ousted Hu Yaobang as party chief. When reformers eventually prevailed after the 13th Party Congress in late 1987, a previously suppressed project on “developing Marxism,” headed by the leading student of Marxism Su Shaozhi and now officially funded, used the dialectic materialist approach of the party to defend the development of Marxism (Su and Zhang, 1989).

Following the distinction between fundamental and specific dimensions of ideology, Su and colleagues define the development of Marxism as the regeneration of lower-level principles under the epistemological and methodological guidance of high-level ones. Specifically they differentiate three levels of Marxism: (1) Marx’s worldview and methodology, i.e. dialectic and historical materialism; (2) his theories on broad issue areas, such as social revolution and socialist society; and (3) his discussions of a particular society or historical period. The higher the level of principles, the more universal are their applicability and greater their stability. Thus Marx’s idea of a product economy (circulation and distribution of goods not based on the market), a middle-level principle, is discarded on the proven practice that the absence of a market is not conducive to the growth of production forces, the latter being a fundamental principle of Marx. On the other hand, new “developments” of Marxism can be made in the Chinese context on the basis of the higher level principles, reflecting empirical and temporal changes that will do no harm to Marx’s fundamental doctrine. The process of differentiation and regeneration, Su and Zhang (1989, pp 18–25) conclude, provides students of Marxism with the “methodological freedom” to advance ideology.

The book edited by Su and Zhang (1989) on the development of Marxism became the most authoritative companion to Zhao Ziyang’s 13th Party Congress report, which spelled out more than a dozen officially designated Chinese “developments” of Marxism. The book quickly disappeared from bookstores after the Tiananmen crackdown. Still, the post-Tiananmen regime has never abandoned the dialectic materialist framework of the reformist discourse, and reiterated it in every major party document.

Historical Materialism and the Reform of Socialism

Historical materialism, Marx’s analysis of social history on the basis of dialectical materialism, forms the other aspect of the twin fundamentals of post-Mao official ideology. As the elaborate worldview of Marxism, historical materialism lends substance to the conception of Marxist ideology as a belief system. Its view of the processes and forces of social development is the source of guiding values and designs for followers in their quest for human progress and emancipation. If dialectical materialism has provided the philosophical basis of ideological change in post-Mao China, historical materialism has provided the theoretical basis for economic change. Central to the reformist efforts here has again been the attempt to differentiate Marxist doctrine, emphasizing the fundamental and discarding the so-called specific, thereby legitimating the reform of established socialism without

discrediting socialism as a whole. A brief look at reformist discussions in this regard will offer a glimpse of how historical materialism has been made to play this role.

To begin with, a major effort of post-Mao reformers was to de-emphasize the normative stance of historical materialism. The theory of class struggle—the fulcrum of social development central to historical materialism and to Mao's thought—was eclipsed by an elaborate emphasis on a still more basic Marxist tenet: the role of production forces in determining production relations and socio-economic modes. From here reformers were able to point to the distance between China's (low) level of production forces and its (high) level of production relations, thereupon making the argument to bring down the latter to historically lower (capitalist) modes. This use of historical materialism first emerged in the agrarian reform of the late 1970s, when some rural teams contracted production and output to the household and were then accused by the "whatever" group of violating collectivism. Reformers responded by questioning the feasibility of implementing rural communes across the country regardless of empirical circumstances. Citing the determining role of production forces vis-à-vis production relations, they argued that whether a production form conformed to the state of production forces, rather than to the specifications of socialist theory, should be the criterion of its soundness (Contributing Commentator, 1980). This criterion of "production forces" effectively served as the rationale for legitimizing rural household production, which became universal by late 1982. The new orthodoxy depicted the departure from communes as a special road of socialism rather than a deviation from it.

By 1983, when the initial reforms compelled more comprehensive changes, reformers extended this line of argument to the entire Chinese economy. At the centenary of Marx's death in early 1983, reform theorists explored China's special conditions that entailed a "socialism with Chinese characteristics." Their central concern was the discrepancy between Chinese society and the mature capitalist society in which Marx envisioned socialism to germinate. To their realization, the discrepancy here between two types of society at different levels of development presented a generic problem: the difficulties of applying socialism in an underdeveloped country. Upon its revolutionary triumph in such a country, the proletariat could use political power to establish public ownership and eliminate the capitalist economy. But could this society bypass the material prerequisites of building a socialist society? For example, a well-developed market economy and a large-scale socialized production that are essential to the construction of a planned economy and public ownership, a level of production forces compatible with the newly established socialist production relations and superstructure, and a well educated population and technical personnel. Further, the generic problems would pose difficulties specific to each underdeveloped country, such as, in the Chinese case, a large and predominantly rural population, poor financial and technological resources, and a weak industrial base (Song, 1983; Hu, 1983; Su, 1983, pp. 37–38, 46).

In other words, Chinese reform Marxists admitted that aspects of historical materialism did not apply to China, especially Marx's idea of the sequential evolution of five modes of production. Yet these problems did not lead them to the conclusion that China should throw out socialism, but only that it should adopt "socialism with Chinese characteristics." In their analysis, Marx's theory of socialism prescribed the general principles of a socialist society that need not be applied arbitrarily. "Chinese characteristics" dictated that China not be "obsessed" with a "pure and perfect" model of socialism. Nor should there be such a standardized

or immutable model. Rather, China should find the path best equipped to increase production forces, even though this may entail a certain retreat from Marx's socialist visions. Thus China's special road may lie in the proletariat's prior seizure of power and then the use of this power to learn what others had acquired under capitalism. If the general principles of the founding fathers were applied arbitrarily and the growth of production forces were impaired, Chinese reformers agreed, socialist development would be "impeded" rather than enhanced (Song, 1983; Hu, 1983; Su, 1983).

Just as the elevation of the "practice" criterion has guided ideological change in post-Mao China, so has the emphasis on production forces been behind official thinking on reforming Chinese socialism. This thinking was synthesized in the idea of the "primary stage of socialism" formally adopted at the 13th Party Congress in November, 1987. Conceptually, the notion was designed to redefine China's current state of socialism "down" to a lower level: a special beginning stage that an economically and culturally underdeveloped country like China must go through before making a full transition to socialism. It is a lengthy period in which the production forms of the pre-socialist stage must exist to build up the material prerequisites of socialism (Zhao, 1987). Politically, the idea was put forth to defend further economic reforms against conservative opposition in the wake of the anti-liberal campaign in late 1986-early 1987.

The crux of this theory was to highlight the incongruence between the actual state of China's social development and the ideal socialism of Marx, a differentiation based on the bifurcation of ideology. In this conception, the fallacy of China's past approach to socialism was the failure to differentiate China's present stage of socialism from the ideal stage. China was previously judged to have entered the socialist stage because attention was paid only to the general features of socialism, not to the special characteristics of China. Since its socialist production relations did not conform to the actual level of production forces, China could not be said to have entered the socialist stage completely. A proper reappraisal was important, in this argument, because an overestimation of China's developmental stage had contributed to the lack of objectivity in past policy making: production relations of earlier social stages were not allowed to exist, while institutions that exceeded China's stage of development were pursued simply because they were socialist (Wu, 1983; He, 1987; Xiao, 1987; Su and Zhang, 1989, pp. 105-108). With the redefinition of China's social stage, the reform leadership was thus able to "retreat" to a mixed economy on a sound doctrinal basis.

The post-Mao reformers' use of dialectic and historical materialism may be expedient or even cynical, but it does present an interesting case of how the political leadership can creatively mold ideology to suit policy changes without having to totally discredit it. For all its pragmatism, the reformist discourse does articulate the reformers' motives for policy change. It also lends some coherence to the changing ideology that has helped to diffuse conservative opposition on the one hand and safeguard the regime's ideological hegemony on the other. The latter is especially important in the process of change in a reforming Soviet-type regime, when alternative visions of change were bound to emerge among social forces outside the state.

Liberal Intellectuals and the Hazards of Ideological Change

Foremost among those forces are what the Chinese regime refers to as "bourgeois liberals," mostly liberal intellectuals who have taken advantage of the relaxation

of ideology to go beyond officially sanctioned boundaries and even to challenge official thought. They figure crucially in the question of the role of ideology in the transformation of a Soviet-type regime and in the maintenance or demise of such a system.

We have already shown that the concept of ideology as a belief system can accommodate the diversity and mutability of beliefs within an ideological community. Such a conception can also account for alien or even contrary beliefs that may exist in this community, such as those of the liberal intellectuals. Whether they are dissidents, non-believers, or critics of official interpretations, the dissenters cannot be explained simply in terms of the diversity of beliefs among speakers of the same language, for they object to the prevailing ideology not just as a uniform language, but, more importantly, as a body of normative prescriptions and assumptions. Indeed, only when ideology is conceived as a belief system can we appreciate how important it is for the regime to exclude alien and contrary beliefs in order to maintain the system. In a negative way, the liberal intellectuals have demonstrated that communist ideology does have a value dimension, and that their clash with the regime involves a fundamental clash of beliefs and preferences for social arrangements. These are most clear in the liberal discussions that touch on the normative and analytical biases of post-Mao ideology, namely, the reformist discourse on dialectic and historical materialism.

The liberal critique begins by rejecting the normative and analytical framework of dialectical and historical materialism, i.e. the materialist premise. For liberal critics the elevation of “practice” and “production forces” to the first priority obscures the role of human actors involved in social and historical processes, which they believe to be more important than material forces. Herein lies the clearest evidence of the normative dimensions of their dispute with official faith.

The “practice criterion,” established on the official use of dialectic materialism, does not seem as objective as it sounds for Chinese liberals. They ask: *Who* determines *what* practice should test the correctness of ideology? Does being part of the working class entail a uniform allegiance to Marxism and to the party’s understanding of it? Further, they wonder, would not any social class proceed from “practice” to find truth, including the bourgeoisie (cited in Su and Zhang, 1989, p. 46)? The implication is that there may be a plurality of truths held by different social groups and that those truths may be of equal value. Defenders of official thought respond that given differences in class stand, viewpoints, and values, different social groups’ observations and interpretations of reality would vary. The bourgeoisie would be likely to refuse to recognize those aspects of reality that run counter to their class interests, thus rendering their versions of truth class-biased (Su and Zhang, 1989, pp. 46–47). This reply, however, falls short of answering the real question posed by liberal intellectuals: what is the role of subjective choice in ideological thinking? The question in effect challenges the official monopoly of truth.

This line of inquiry became especially significant in late 1988 and early 1989, when economic reforms ran into a major crisis due to hyperinflation, financial chaos, and cadre corruption. While conservative leaders attributed these problems to the nature of market reforms, liberal intellectuals blamed them on the ideological limits that confined the economic reforms. Specifically, were two ideological “taboos” cited. First, the tenet of central planning prevented a full transition to the market, leaving a mixed economy that combined the worst of two worlds. Second, the tenet of public ownership precluded a full transition to private ownership, allowing individuals to abuse public property for personal profits. From here

the conservatives on the left and liberal intellectuals on the right proposed different solutions: the resignation of the reform leader Zhao Ziyang or more thorough reforms that would bypass any remaining ideological confines.

Against this background, the liberal intellectuals intensified their challenge to official orthodoxy, even though some of them were the same reform theorists who had earlier aligned with the regime in developing Marxism. Most fundamental was their questioning of the status of Marxism as the sole source of truth by disputing the sanctity of the so-called "fundamental principles." On the decennial of the criterion of truth debate of 1978, Yu Guangyuan, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), questioned whether any truth should be "concrete" and not "abstract" (Yu, 1988a,b). In other words, even the fundamental principles of Marx should not be absolute and immune to evidence of empirical change. Su Shaozhi and Wang Yizhou, of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism at CASS, complained about a *da yi tong* (uniform and all-embracing) belief system that suppressed "pluralistic thinking" (Su and Wang, 1988; Wang, 1988). A *Guangming ribao* article argued that "truth does not mean that it is absolutely correct, or that it is held by one school only" (Bao and Li, 1988). Another article complained that Marxism had been deified as if it embraced all human truth and no other schools of thought were needed (Chen, 1988).

Others directly questioned Marx's fundamental principles. Zhang Xiangyang, also of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism, attacked historical materialism as "mechanistic" owing to its "extreme rationalism." Arguing that this fallacy rendered simplistic Marx's analyses of human society and especially capitalist society, he cited Marx's deterministic view of private ownership, which failed to foresee possible changes in later periods, and Marx's class-based worldview, which was antiquated by contemporary capitalism to which private ownership and its concomitant class struggle were no longer central (Zhang Xiangyang, 1989). Still others advocated abandoning the premise of Marxist philosophy, i.e. the counterposing of materialism and idealism, which was the starting-point of philosophy across Soviet-type regimes. In its stead, they suggested that the study of the subjective person be the first question of philosophy (Gao, 1988; Mao and Gao, 1988). Ultimately, the assertion of the human role entailed the conclusion that because of the materialist bias of Marxist epistemology and methodology, the fundamental principles of Marxism cannot be absolute truths, and that further the "development" of Marxism will not suffice to transcend these limitations. This line of analysis led to a "plurality of truth" proposition (*zhenli duoyuan lun*), popular among intellectual circles in the late 1980s.

Similarly, the official use of historical materialism in the reconception of socialism has led liberal intellectuals to deride socialism as a desirable path of national development, further lending evidence to the value dimensions of their dispute with official faith. Liberal intellectuals have made an alternative assertion on the very materialist premise of China's retreat from socialism, as in the idea of the "primary stage" of socialism. Simply put, if China's socialist production relations exceeded its level of production forces, then she should go back in history to "make up for" the capitalist stage of development.³ In this view, the idea of the "primary stage" of socialism points to a theoretical incoherence: this stage is at once pre-capitalist (lacking the capitalist material base) and post-capitalist (possessing socialist institutions). These twin features denote that a particular

3. Fang Lizhi and Wang Ruowang, perhaps the most radical among the liberals, are best known for making these arguments.

historical stage may not be bypassed, but at the same time that it need not be traveled either. Thus socialism in China is a contradiction. Defenders of official ideology admit that the discrepancies between theory and practice in Chinese socialism suggests that one can no longer claim that a particular mode of production is “solely determined by economic factors or the level of production forces” (Su and Zhand, 1989, p. 111). Nonetheless, they insist that, as a scientific methodology, historical materialism still outlines the general trends of history, where production forces are the determining factors, although it cannot predict the specific processes of history, where the interaction of various factors come into play. In the Chinese case, they concede, superstructure (i.e., Marxist ideology and the communist party) played a decisive role in propelling China’s historical “leap” from the semi-feudal to the socialist stage (Su and Zhang, 1989, pp. 108–112).

For liberal intellectuals the very analysis of “specific processes” raises two crucial issues that Marx did not elaborate, at least in those of his writings emphasized in CCP doctrine. These are (1) the role of human choice in historical development, and (2) the possibility of diverse modes of production other than those dictated by historical materialism. As one scholar notes, the simultaneous pre- and post-capitalist positioning of the “primary stage” of socialism is problematic in the framework of Marx’s stage theory. The peculiarity of this stage implies that history is multilinear rather than unilinear, and that factors other than production forces can determine the mode of production in a given society (cited in Xu, 1988; also in Su and Zhang, 1989, pp. 110–111). The implication of this analysis is more problematic: unilinearism means that China should not adopt socialism because it did not go through the capitalist stage, while multilinearism implies that China need not adopt socialism because socialism is not an inevitable stage of human evolution. Fundamentally, then, the question becomes one of “do people have freedom to choose a particular set of production relations?” (cited in Su and Zhang, 1989, p. 111). For defenders of official discourse, Marx did not exclude this possibility, as testified by his theory of the Asiatic Mode of Production (Su and Zhang, 1989, p. 111; Zhang Kuiliang, 1989). But the heretics go much further. The history of human civilization, they assert, is a matter of human subjective choice rather than an inevitable evolution of material forces (cited in Zhang, 1990). The assertion in effect argues that the people can now make a new choice about the optimal path of national development. This line of analysis became the theoretical basis of a “free choice” proposition (*xuanze lun*) also popular among intellectual circles in the late 1980s.

Together, the propositions of a “plurality of truth” and “free choice” were accused of serving as the intellectual rationales for the anti-revolutionary riot of mid-1989 in Tiananmen Square. In the wake of the crackdown many articles appeared in major official papers and journals to refute them. Reclaiming the ideological arena also became a focal conservative agenda. As usual, the conservative forces of the regime linked the erosion of the ideological arena, manifested in the flourishing of the liberal discourse, to the erosion of political legitimacy and control and, ultimately, to the erosion of the system. Here they may be quite on target.

Conservative Reformers and the Limits of Ideological Change

The role of ideology in the maintenance or breakdown of Soviet-type regimes can perhaps be most clearly seen in the response of Chinese conservative reformers to the challenge represented by the above liberal discourse. Unlike members of

the “whatever” group, conservative reformers support ideological and policy innovations, albeit to a more limited extent than the more radical policy-makers. Unlike their counterparts in the former Soviet Union, the Chinese conservatives—mostly veteran revolutionaries—are often retired from office but not entirely from power, which they exercise through informal channels and the indulgence of Deng Xiaoping, who shares their preference for limited reform in the political realm. As such, Chinese conservative reformers have provided balancing voices against the more reformist forces within the party and the liberal forces outside it.

Not always happy about gaps between the party’s formal and practical doctrine, conservative reformers have been very sensitive to how the latter would affect the integrity of the former. Hence they have been quite aggressive at using liberal attacks on official thought to oppose the reformers’ “development” of Marxism, linking both to the erosion of the socialist system generally. Although not always endorsed by the more reform-minded leaders and sometimes shunned by them, the conservative response has been part of the official ideological platform, made through official documents and media, and through the literature of anti-liberal campaigns that have occurred periodically. Moreover, not only conservatives but reform officials have sometimes joined in this response to the liberal challenge, suggesting they at least share some of the conservative concerns over systemic erosion. In this sense, the conservative discourse also constitutes the other aspect of official discourse.

A major conservative concern has been to define the framework of ideological emancipation, since the liberal discourse has flourished whenever the party encouraged the “emancipation of the mind.” In the early post-Mao period, it was emphasized that the “practice criterion” was intended only to discredit leftist thinking from the Mao era and to promote the study of new situations created by economic reform. It should never, as Deng put it in early 1980, “deviate from the Four Fundamental Principles or impair the stable and lively political environment” (Deng, 1982, p. 243). The Four Fundamental Principles (adherence to the party’s leadership, to Marxism–Leninism and Mao Zedong Thought, to the socialist road, and to the people’s democratic dictatorship) have since become a new orthodoxy that defines the parameters of ideological and political discourse. Towards the mid-1980s, the line of demarcation was more sharply drawn between the economic sphere and the political/ideological spheres. By the late 1980s, the “emancipation of the mind” was marked off from the negation of Marxism as a guiding theory. This explicitly discourages the intellectual exploration of the “plurality of truth.”

The imposition of ideological boundaries seems in apparent contradiction to the party’s practice criterion that was promoted to discredit the very practice of ideological monopoly. The party justifies those limits by citing the bifurcation of ideology itself. First, the line of permissible truth is drawn on the basis of the differentiation between fundamental and specific principles. As the leading party ideologue Hu Qiaomu put it, the practice criterion was aimed at Hua’s “whateverism” and at the transitory aspects of official ideology, not its fundamental aspects (Hu Qiaomu, 1987, pp. 171–172). Thus differentiated, the insistence on ideological limits becomes compatible with, rather than contradictory to, the practice criterion. In the words of Gong Yuzhi, then a reformist official at the CCP’s Propaganda Department, it was the fundamental principles of Marxism (i.e., dialectic materialism) that dictated the practice criterion in the first place (Gong, 1988).

Another justification for placing limits on ideological change follows from here. It reveals even more about ideology as a belief system. As the party journal *Hong*

Qi once put it, the fundamental principles, being the worldview and methodology of Marxism, should provide the “cognitive and methodological” tools for observing and analysing reality. Specifically, the Marxist conception of man and history must be the guiding values and designs for China in its search for a viable path of social development and for appropriate forms of social arrangement (Shao and Guo, 1981). As for the party’s own policies of economic non-orthodoxy and political orthodoxy, the CCP sees no contradiction. In the economic realm, it justifies reform with the tenets of the primacy of “practice” and “production forces,” derived from the so-called fundamental principles (Gong, 1988). In the political and ideological arena, it opposes “bourgeois practices and values” on the normative stand of Marxism (Hu Qiaomu, 1987, p. 172).

In the conservative view, liberal opposition to the boundaries of official ideology has stemmed from a problem of a fundamental value dimension. That is, the heretics do not accept the Marxist premise of the practice criterion, namely, its normative stand. As Deng complained, “bourgeois liberals” equated “seeking truth from facts” with the freedom to say whatever they liked (Deng, 1982, p. 243). Or as Hu Qiaomu criticised, they took the policy of “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom” to be the party’s *sole* policy in the ideological realm. Heuristically Hu distinguished between the *manner* of intellectual and literary exploration, which should be governed by the above policy, and the *content* of that exploration, which must be guided by the policy of upholding the “leading role of Marxism in all political and ideological spheres” (Hu Qiaomu, 1987, p. 172). Still more interesting, conservatives blame liberal heterodoxy on the tendency of “skewing toward the right” in post-Mao political and ideological policy. This skewing, in their view, is a failure on the part of the reform leadership to aggressively promote the Four Fundamental Principles out of a “predisposed fear for leftism” (*Hong Qi*, 1987; Xiao, 1989). The result, conservatives concluded after the student protests of mid-1989, was the proliferation of liberal discourse throughout the decade and its final explosion in mid-1989.

This problem of “skewing to the right” for fear of leftism reflects a perennial dilemma of the post-Mao syncretic course of ideological change. Officially encouraged emancipation would unleash intellectual liberalism, which would in turn invite anti-liberal campaigns initiated by conservatives. Conservatives would then push anti-liberalism in the political front to the economic front, in turn forcing the regime to backtrack on the anti-liberal campaigns in order to check the rise of leftism. This cyclical development has been true of each phase of ideological relaxation, deviance, and re-ideologization in the post-Mao period. It testifies to the necessity as well as the difficulty of conditioned ideological opening in a reforming Soviet-type regime. Importantly, this cycle, maintained by a balance of political forces, did contribute to policy innovations on the one hand and political stability on the other.

If liberal intellectuals’ questioning of the practice criterion challenged official monopoly of truth, their spurning of historical materialism raised genuine questions about the soundness of China’s socialist path. Their underlying assumption is that had China not instituted socialism, it would have developed better; and that moreover, given a free choice, the people would choose capitalism. Official and conservative rebuttals again show how value judgments have led to those different assessments. These rebuttals affirm the CCP’s choice of socialism on the basis of China’s historical conditions and needs. They fault the liberal view for being “synchronically” mistaken because it denies the historical necessity of China’s choice of socialism, and “diachronically” mistaken because it juxtaposes

the level of development under Chinese socialism to that of developed countries without regard for historical and social contexts.

The major argument against the so-called synchronical negation of socialism is that capitalism could not have worked better under China's historical circumstances, for generations of Chinese had already tried it but failed. In this interpretation, from the Westernizing Movement of the 1860s, through the Restoration Movement of the 1890s, to the republican efforts of this century, all previous efforts failed mainly because of the West's subjugation of China under semi-colonialism. In an article intended for the student protesters of late 1986, Hu Sheng, a party authority on historical and ideological issues, argued that the presence of colonial powers was the most important factor in preventing China from developing a strong capitalist economy, for the imperialist forces introduced certain capitalist forms in the colonies according to their own interests, but maintained other pre-capitalist socio-economic relations for the same purpose. Thus the feudal landed class, the basis of indigenous rulers in China, was not only preserved but turned into a compradore capitalist class dependent on imperialist powers. Lacking control over national sovereignty and autonomy, China was never able to freely develop capitalism or to utilize foreign trade and capital in accordance with indigenous needs. In Hu's view, the only time when capitalist development could have flourished in China was between 1914–1918, when the major imperialist powers were preoccupied with the war in Europe (Hu Sheng, 1987).

In contrast to the liberals' glorification of Western achievements, official and conservative rebuttals blame China's previous failures to develop capitalism on the economic and human costs incurred by colonial invasions, related war indemnities, and civil wars backed by Western and Japanese colonial powers. In another article intended for the student protesters of 1986, Chen Junsheng, a leading reformist official, stressed that China had genuinely wanted to pursue capitalism but its constant humiliation in the hands of the West forced this "earnest pupil" to search for alternative paths. The result of the failure to develop capitalism, he argued, was the lack of an indigenous bourgeois class strong enough to eliminate semi-colonialism and semi-feudalism and to lead the nation on a path of modernization. This left the CCP as the only political force to play that historical role with the support of the lower classes (Chen, 1987).

In response to the liberals' underlying preference for the Western model of development, especially its political system, party critics also contend that generations of Chinese intellectuals had indeed admired and pursued Western democracy before eventually abandoning it. This historical fact was particularly emphasized in the anti-liberal campaign of 1989–1990, because of the overtly pro-Western tones of the student protesters in Tiananmen. The futile quests of such reformers as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Sun Yat-sun, the May 4th youths, and the founders of the communist party such as Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, and Mao Zedong were all cited to highlight the inevitability of China's choice of socialism. Official accounts made a special point of citing Li Dazhao's transition from a passionate democrat to China's first Marxist in the early 20th century. Li's transition was said to distinguish him from other progressives who were equally despairing of China's plight. While the others opposed colonialism and feudalism from the Western perspective of *individual* freedom, Li came to realize that he must do so from the point of *society's* happiness and emancipation. The individualism of other progressives eventually lapsed into anarchism, while Li turned to questioning Western values and their relevance to the welfare of the Chinese masses. The outbreak of World War I led Li to further recognize the destructiveness of

Western values. Li was quoted as observing that “the war has cast much doubt on the authority of European civilization” and that “Europeans themselves now have to re-evaluate the real value of their civilization.” This disillusionment led Li to doubt Western justifications of colonialism and Western conceptions of social development in general. Seeing the “development of capitalism” and the desire for “economic empires” as the root cause of colonial conquests and military rivalry among European powers, Li came to accept Marx’s analysis of history and capitalism, and eventually, Marx’s socialist mode of development (Hou Zongbin, 1989; Hu, 1989b; Zhao, 1989; Jin, 1989; Hou Qian, 1989). In delineating Li’s gradual change of faith, conservative writers seek to show that the party’s rejection of Western ideas has not been accidental or arbitrary.

Indeed, sometimes party critics cite Chinese sufferings at the hands of colonial powers as the primary reason for rejecting the capitalist system on moral grounds. Writing on the party’s decision to adopt socialism in the early 1950s, Hu Qiaomu revealed that the final choice was decidedly influenced by Chinese perceptions of capitalism from memories of colonial invasions, and from continued Western hostility and discrimination after 1949 (Hu, 1989a). The historian Liu Danian blames the “socially pernicious” imperialism for having played a “special role” in affecting China’s path of development. In his analysis, the impact of colonialism on China’s class composition made a social revolution inevitable, and this revolution made the rejection of capitalism logical, for no independent political force other than the CCP existed before 1949 that could assume the leadership role in the national struggle against colonialism and feudalism. Nor was there any other political force to mobilize the masses of the lower classes, because the entrenched feudal class and the compradore bourgeois class were unable or unwilling to ally with the working classes. Thus, Liu concludes, the choice of socialism was neither subjective nor unpopular even though the CCP happened to be the leader of this choice (Liu, 1989).

The CCP’s mobilization of the lower classes naturally entailed, these critics stress, the adoption of socialism in the interest of the lower classes. Had the class composition of the revolutionary forces been different, the choice of the social system might have been different. This argument implicitly criticizes the narrow interests of the intellectual strata in opposing the socialist choice and refutes their espousal of a “free choice” of beliefs and social order. Indeed, after the crack-down of the Tiananmen protests of 1989, the regime strenuously differentiated between the well-intended masses who were resentful of cadre corruption, and the few liberals who wanted to overthrow the socialist system and the communist party.

The worry about the role and the danger of liberal propositions is not merely political rhetoric. In so far as the conflict between the regime and liberal intellectuals stem from fundamentally different assessments of the prevailing system, alien beliefs such as those of the liberals represent the most destabilizing factor by serving as the motivating force for anti-regime activities. Conversely, the containment of those beliefs serves political stability by diffusing anti-system rationales.

Conclusion

Just as the demise of the former Soviet Union was heralded by Gorbachev’s *glasnost* and “new thinking,” so the maintenance of the Chinese system must be understood with reference to the ideological factor. As has been suggested elsewhere, the Soviet Union’s recent experience with the “de-ideologization” of

political debate, and the concurrent meltdown of its central political institutions, have pointed to the potential cause-and-effect relationship between these two phenomena and to the centrality of ideology to a system of this kind (Schull, 1992).

But in contrast to the linkage between the demise of central ideology and the political system in the Soviet case, the Chinese experience suggests that ideology can play an important and even useful role in serving both change and the maintenance of the system. The Chinese reformers have shown that the maintenance of the political system does not have to mean the maintenance of the central ideology intact, or that there must be an outright rejection of ideology and its authoritativeness in order for real reforms to occur in the system. They have also demonstrated that the communist ideology, even treated as a belief system, needs not be a monistic and immutable whole that serves only to condition belief, foreclosing innovative thinking and policy debates. They have further shown that the survival of ideology need not entail the regime's ineffectuality in rendering new ideas in old language or in seeking conformity between innovative policies and traditional commitments, as some may claim (Schull, 1992, p. 41).

One major lesson of the Chinese experience, therefore, is the feasibility, if not total desirability, of reform communism. This feasibility has rested upon a "middle course" of ideology, represented by the reformist approach and set apart by the liberals on the right and the conservatives on the left.⁴ Politically this "middle course" is epitomized in the firm theoretical and policy leadership of Deng Xiaoping. Substantively this "middle course" is marked by "two zones of demarcation." The first consists of the so-called dialectic and historical materialist approach to ideology, which allows reinterpretation and adaptation. The second consists of the officially defined parameters of ideological reformulation, symbolized in the Four Fundamental Principles. The first zone applies mainly to the economic realm, defending change against conservative forces; while the second zone applies to the political and ideological realm, containing the direction of change against liberal forces.

The "middle course" has stemmed from the regime's need for ideological change and contention among major political forces over this change. If the first zone of this course has been entailed by policy exegesis and a genuine desire to rectify past ideology and practice, the second zone has been dictated by a perennial contention among elites on the one hand and between the state and society on the other. At the elite level, ideological reorientation first led to opposition from the Maoists who desired no change, and later from conservative reformers who worried about the relinquishing of the purposes and normative concerns of the socialist movement. At the level of the state versus society, liberal forces have pushed ideological reorientation to its logical conclusion: the questioning of the very sanctity of official thought. The unleashing of the liberal line of thinking has forced the regime into a policy of concession to the left and reaction against the right, further safeguarding the "middle course."

The middle course of ideology is closely linked to innovative policy changes on the one hand and systemic maintenance on the other. It underlies a reformist rather than revolutionary approach to change in the transformation of a Soviet-type system. Innovations in the system are possible because in the intra-elite conflict over change, which usually involves the first zone or the economic realm, the more reformist leadership have prevailed over the more conservative. Here the repudiation of past doctrine did not directly threaten the foundation of the

4. The term "middle course" is from Tang (1984).

system. Thus the “practice” group prevailed over the “whatever” group and the radical reformers over the conservative reformers. On the other hand, the maintenance of the system and political stability are possible amid change because in the contention between the state and societal (liberal) forces, which usually involves the second zone or the political realm, the more conservative leadership have usually prevailed. Here the repudiation of party doctrine would threaten the foundation of the system, for behind the dispute over the soundness and rightful place of official thought is a fundamental conflict between the state and society over moral and political authority. Deprived of this authority, the regime would lose its buttress and leave its fate to the outcome of a “plurality” of opinion or a “free choice” of the populace as the liberal intellectuals call for. It is of little surprise that those leaders who failed to take intellectual heterodoxy seriously, such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, eventually lost their political battles.

The significance of a middle course in post-Mao China is highlighted by the entirely different unfolding of ideological change in the USSR under Gorbachev. In the Soviet, as in the Chinese case, there were three major contending views that cut across elite and societal lines: the conservative view represented by Yegor Ligachev, the reformist view represented by Gorbachev, and the liberal view represented by Boris Yeltsin. However, the CPSU under Gorbachev made no elaborate attempts to define the parameters of *glasnost* or “new thinking.” There was no periodic cycling of relaxation, deviance, and re-ideologization. And despite Gorbachev’s consistent efforts at balance between conservatives and liberals, no suppression of liberal views was ever launched to placate conservative pressure. Rather than checking the impulse of officially sponsored “new thinking,” this impulse was allowed to develop in directions that may not have been intended by the Gorbachev leadership. The conservative voice, meanwhile, was increasingly pushed out of the political scene by Gorbachev’s frequent and adept organizational maneuvers. Without China’s middle course, the CPSU eventually lost the defenders of its ideology and the basis of its ideological hegemony. The impact of a middle course of ideology is remarkable by comparison: its presence has helped to save the increasingly precarious fabric of the socialist ethos from a total breakdown in China, while its absence helped to erode it completely in the USSR.

The dilemma of ideology in a reforming Soviet-type regime, then, is not so much that ideology either cannot change or changes totally, but that ideology has to change yet the regime cannot afford to change it totally while wishing to maintain ideological hegemony and political stability.

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