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## Editor's Note

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Macalester Faculty Development International Seminars are never easy to design and implement. Consequently, each of the previous five (Hungary, Brazil, South Africa, Malaysia, Turkey) presented us with a thrilling mixture of intellectual, cultural, and logistical challenges—each site and theme a vigorous test for the organizers and participants, but in the end underscoring the authenticity of the College's internationalist tradition. The sixth biennial seminar was even more so than the ones that preceded it. For instance, for the first time since these seminars were established in 1995, we decided to hold the proceedings at three different sites: Taipei, Nanjing, and Shanghai. Each city is a major urban center with a large population, a rich history, and ambition. In addition, the highly contentious nature of the relationship between Taiwan and the People's Republic of China (PRC) demanded of us to heighten our curiosity and sharpen our cultural sensibilities. In the end, we found all three cities and their surrounding regions splendid platforms for our learning explorations. In these brief notes, I will offer a few meditations on both Taiwan and the PRC in the hope that the reader will then move on to the commissioned essays and faculty papers.

By world standards, Taiwan is old, small, and big. The original settlers of Taiwan, who came from Australasia and the southern regions of China, are said to have lived on the island for nearly 15,000 years. This long history is punctuated by both local/regional shifts and colonial intrusions. The first is best exemplified by the transformative pressures of the twentieth century and the victory of the Chinese communist revolutionaries. The latter is most associated with the Dutch and Spanish in the seventeenth century and, from 1895–1945, with Japanese rule. An island, its landmass is about 13,887 square miles (35,967 sq. km), and its total population is estimated to be about 23 million. If geography and population make Taiwan relatively small, its economic profile makes the island a comparatively major force in the region and the world. With a gross national product (GNP) of \$364 billion, per capita income of over \$16,000, a real annual growth rate of 4.3 percent, and an unemployment level of less than 4 percent, Taiwan stands among the world's most successful economies. The case is even more impressive if one adds these other factors: in less than five decades, Taiwan, originally an underdeveloped agrarian island, has become a leading producer of high-technology commodities such as personal computers;

has established an admirable educational system with over 150 post-secondary institutions and more than 100,000 students eager to enroll; has acquired a serious reputation as a generous provider of aid to less fortunate countries; has become a major investor around the world and particularly in Asia; and, most notably, is now a credit economy that holds the third largest stock of foreign exchange reserves, estimated at around \$261 billion. Despite serious differences on a number of issues, the PRC has become Taiwan's largest trading partner.

If there is little dispute about overall Taiwanese economic success, there are still critical concerns facing the people of the island and their leaders. First is the relationship with the PRC, or the Mainland. It is true that cross-Strait interaction has grown enormously in the past ten years. Trade, travel, and postal communications have been relaxed. Overall Taiwanese investment in the PRC has surpassed the \$100 billion mark and nearly a million Taiwanese now live there. Notwithstanding these important links, interpretations of twentieth-century history and political identity are two of the most contumacious issues between Taiwan and the PRC.<sup>1</sup> How this item is handled over the long term will have enormous ramifications for the people of the island. Another linked factor is the evolving nature of domestic politics. After long domination by the defeated and retreating Chiang Kai-shek's Guomindang (KMT), 1986 saw the emergence of alternative parties. With the elimination of the emergency decree that constrained political activities since 1948 and, in the process, turning the island into a virtual one-party state, the new Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), a coalition of different individuals and groups, was born. After a number of victories in local and legislative elections, in March 2000 the Democratic Progressive Party won the presidency, the first time that an opposition candidate to the KMT scored such a victory. Two notable aspects of these developments are that the membership of the DPP is primarily native Taiwanese; and, secondly, that the political ambience of the island has entered the era of democratic multi-party and open political culture. A consequence of this sea change is a vast improvement in the area of human rights and, dialectically, a crass commercialization and corruption of the civic arena. A final issue for Taiwan relates to global competitiveness. Given the speed with which innovation is moving, Taiwan's place in the age of super-information technology, miniaturization, and genetic engineering could well depend on a few but crucial decisions, such as deep investment in research and development—a most pivotal factor in establishing Taiwan as a

generator rather than a mere transmission belt of transformative and lucrative ideas of universal appeal.

In the end, Taiwan is a crowded but beautiful island. Its people are generous, self-aware, and hard working. As one of the original "Asian Tigers," they have become models for others caught in the cruel downside of the long journey of development and social change.

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The People's Republic of China is a country of many stunning superlatives. It is the most populous country, with nearly 1.3 billion inhabitants; it boasts the oldest continuing civilization; it encompasses the third largest landmass, totaling 3.7 million square miles (nearly 9,597,000 square kilometers); it features a varied climate that ranges from tropical in the southern regions to tundra-like zones in the extreme north; it is the site of one of the two greatest social revolutions in the 20th century, with the largest Communist Party in the world (70.8 million members); it has the most numerous workforce (estimated at around 712 million); it controls the potentially biggest hydroelectric power source; it has the fastest growing economy (9.9 percent); it has the most men and women under arms; and it possesses some of the most exciting and rapidly expanding cities (e.g., Shanghai).

There is no dispute that the combined epochal transformative impact of the anti-feudal struggle, communist revolution,<sup>2</sup> and the market reforms of the last two-and-a-half decades has propelled the PRC to become the fourth largest economy (after the United States, Japan, and Germany), with a Gross Domestic Product of \$2.26 trillion. Blessed with industrious people and natural resources that range from coal, iron ore and crude oil to manganese, the PRC is one of the world's largest producers of wheat, rice, peanuts, tea, barley, corn, and potatoes. In the last twenty years, it increasingly turned into one of the most explosive sites of industrial processing and production—from textiles, apparel, armaments, toys, and electric goods, to chemicals. One other notable result of this growth is this fact: the PRC's trade surplus grew to the tune of \$102 billion in 2005. In short, this cultural and historical heavyweight has the makings of a dominant giant for the 21st century,<sup>3</sup> perhaps surpassing the United States as the world's biggest economy around 2050 with a Gross Domestic Product of over \$40 trillion.

The roots of the renaissance of the PRC go back to the reactions to a chain of defeats and humiliations. In 1842, it was British imperial-

ism that struck a blow, followed by joint French and British aggression between 1856 and 1860. In 1894, the Japanese had their turn. For the following generation of Chinese nationals, these series of defeats demonstrated the acute vulnerabilities of Chinese institutions and leadership. With this realization, a new spirit of national awakening began to germinate. Among the most notable of these early and young nationalists were the scholar Kang Youwei and Sun Yat-sen. The first is most impressive in his prescient observation to link the precarious condition of the average Chinese at the time, a major source of national weakness, to a growing global polarization between the poor and the rich driven by an aggressive capitalism—a point equally applicable to the neo-liberal universe of our own age.

The disparity between poor and rich will be like the distance between sky and sea...Those who are unequal, cry out. This is a natural consequence, and hence recently there have been increasing battles between labor unions and capitalists in Europe and America. Only the sprouts have appeared as yet, but soon more and more unions will be formed, and I fear we will have tragedies of blood and iron. This struggle will not be one of strong states confronting the weak, but between those who are poor and those who are rich. A hundred years hence this will be the problem demanding the whole world's attention.<sup>4</sup>

If the PRC has succeeded in exorcising the tangible demons of external domination, this beckoning age of unprecedented greatness is already exhibiting its own internal contradictions.<sup>5</sup> Several challenges stand out: uneven income distribution, environmental despoilment, and limits to democratic and human rights-based practices. A fourth and external issue is the PRC's attitude to the condition of the Global South. A word on each is in order.

The massive and speedy growth of wealth in the PRC is creating conspicuous accumulators and entrepreneurs, as well as the world's largest middle and voraciously consuming class. No immediate signals capture this success better than the domes of the Bund and the glittering and smart streets of Shanghai, and the new industrial parks across the southeastern areas of the country. But there is, as it were, a big fly in this ointment. A quick glimpse of the national vital statistics shows that all is not well. Per capita GDP for 2006, at the exchange rate, was estimated at around \$1,700, and heavily skewed towards large urban areas. In the sharp observation of a recent report:

The fruits of China's export-driven economy are only partly apparent to most Chinese. More than 150 million of them still survive on a dollar a day; some 200 million have left the countryside to look for work in the world's most polluted cities, and the life they lead there is mean and desolate. Four million took part in the 87,000 protests recorded last year, mainly against illegal land seizures. In the vast showrooms of Armani and Ferrari, new elite shops hard to prove that, as Deng declared, "to get rich is glorious." Once you're there, the other China, where local Party officials impose arbitrary fees and taxes on taxes, and where public health and primary education systems deteriorate because of a lack of state investment, seems pretty remote.<sup>6</sup>

This polarization is noted by the leadership of the PRC. Awakened by the surge of mass grievances, the state has drawn a five-year plan, now ostensibly underway, which is intended to sustain the phenomenal rate of growth yet balance it with measures to reduce the income gap. This will be a most difficult task, but one well worth watching for its theoretical and public policy implications.

Though almost all countries face some environmental problems, the PRC's pace of economic production, pressures from its immense population, and geographical settlements have produced a cluster of ecological concerns. Chief among these are pollution and a diminishing supply of water. In a White Paper released by Environmental Protection in 2006, it was announced that, "the conflict between the environment and development is becoming ever more prominent." More instructively, the deputy chief of the State Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) estimated the cost of the neglect to the environment at about 10 percent of the GDP, or nearly \$220 billion. Among the most significant dangers are water pollution; urban pollution and sulfur dioxide discharge; and soil pollution. Some of the coastal zones of the PRC, such as the sea off Shanghai, are now heavily damaged. Finally, coal consumption is still among the country's most crucial sources of energy. Despite some efforts to reduce the use of coal, most industrial plants and households rely on it. It is cheap but a culprit with regard to the poor quality of air. This dilemma is one of the reasons behind the PRC's intense global drive to identify and secure a source of imports of oil and gas. Perhaps no one project crystallizes the clash between the PRC's appetite for energy and the protection of environmental health than the humongous Three Gorges Dam. This is by far the world's biggest water control project. The dream goes back to Sun Yat-sen in 1919. In 2011, the 32 generators will be up and running, with a yearly

output of 100 billion kilowatt-hours. The ambition is to save 50 million tons of coal a year. This is impressive. However, it is important to note that by early 2010, at least 1.13 million people will be removed and resettled in new locations. In addition, the implications for the regional environment are still to be fully assessed. One last point here is this: the water table that sustains most of the PRC's major urban centers is dropping. The combination of industrial demands, household use, and recreational pressures (e.g., multiplying golf courses) will continue to impinge on the supply of water.

If the PRC has relaxed the management of the economy by introducing a variety of market-related policies, the same can't be said about democracy and the protection of human rights. In the first case, the Communist Party is still the only legitimate political authority in the country. Some would emphasize the mistakes of the CCP, but for many others the achievements of the Party eclipse the shortcomings. In other words, the PRC's current rise is, to a great extent, as a result of the work of the CCP to "clean up," as it were, the old and accumulated weaknesses of the country. These included feudalistic warlordism, highly gendered social relations, acute and widespread underdevelopment, and, perhaps most of all, external humiliation and occupation. Be that as it may, how to sustain the disciplined purposefulness and supremacy of the Party and yet expand individual freedoms of expression, association, and, ultimately, choice seems to be an unavoidable political innovation—one that many in the rest of the world could benefit from. Add to this point the condition of the minority communities. Two of the most conspicuous groups whose human rights status raises serious worry are the Tibetans and the Uighur. On cultural, political, and economic indices, both communities continue to be under severe stress. In Tibet, the dispute over the nature of the territory's and its peoples' integration into the PRC is alive and relatively complex. For the Uighur, their marginalization and the vulnerabilities that accompany it, even for the highly qualified, are perhaps best underlined by the overall grimness of their situation in Xinjiang province.

Since this is China's largest province in area, and home to the largest Muslim minority population, what happens here is crucial to the country's future stability. As with Tibet to the south, China's hold on Xinjiang is recent. Elements of the Uighur and Kazakh minorities have long yearned for independence and have sporadically engaged in terrorism.

Beijing has cracked down harshly on separatists and has banned religious schools in Xinjiang, for fear they will foment Islamic radicalism and separatism. But for now, as elsewhere in China, the government seems to be betting that strong economic growth is the best way to consolidate its control.<sup>7</sup>

Until very recently, the PRC was identified as a central member of what used to be categorized as the "Third World." To be sure, the PRC's galloping economic power and general political stability have greatly modified its earlier status in the world. Though the PRC, since its birth, has demonstrated material and perspectival solidarity with decolonization efforts and basic welfare in many regions of the world, this time of new capabilities poses the question of the PRC's role in the continuing struggle for political, cultural, and economic justice by what is now called "the Global South." There is some promising evidence that the PRC is raising its aid to some poorer countries, including scholarships for students. Since the creation of the China Scholarship Council (CSC) in 1996, the PRC state has allocated funds for more than 7,000 students a year, nearly double the number before. Expressed another way, these scholarships bring students from 150 countries to the PRC's institutions of higher learning. Nearly 60 percent of the students are seeking a degree.

But there are issues with regard to the condition of the "Global South" that will test the PRC's role in a world of glaring inequalities. One such manifestation is the crushing confluence of poverty and urbanization. More specifically, more and more (in the hundred of millions) people are finding themselves condemned to slums riddled with hunger, disease, and violence. Cities such as Mumbai, Nairobi, Cairo, Manila, Sao Paulo, Calcutta, Decca, Lagos, Lima, and Bogota, are examples of the syndrome of urbanized impoverishment or "Favelization." In the eyes of a keen observer, the future is even more foreboding.

Thus, the cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring toward heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement, and decay. Indeed, the one billion city-dwellers who inhabit postmodern slums might well look back with envy at the ruins of the sturdy mud homes of Çatal Hüyük in Anatolia, erected at the very dawn of city life nine thousand years ago.<sup>8</sup>

In sum, both the effort that went into the birth of the PRC in 1949 and its accomplishments since then are an inspiration for many societies marooned in the ghastly syndrome of underdevelopment. The full maturity of another Asian political economy could only belie one more time the old and still lingering racist assumption that only Europe and its racial epigones could successfully create prosperous societies as well as attain global power.

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At the sixth Macalester Faculty Development International Seminar, the keynote essay was delivered at the College by **Maurice Meisner**. His is this unorthodox premise: the successful communist political victory of 1949 and its subsequent public policy prepared the ground for the current “bureaucratic capitalist regime.” This “great irony” is the burden of paper.

**Allen Chun** raises a series of questions with regard to “Greater China.” Issues of diversity and the myriad relations between local life and the greater geopolitical context and forces are among the subjects of his meditation.

**Hong-Luen Wang’s** essay enters into the highly charged topic of national and state identity in the context of cross-Strait encounters. The reflections are articulated from Taiwan. His fundamental point is that the island’s national question can be best understood by applying an “institutional approach.”

**Jing Kaixuan** presents an essay that brings together a discussion of recent Chinese creative writing and contemporary history. The perennial encounter between human sentimentality in relation to others and politics guides the contribution.

The fifth paper is a collaborative work by **Qian Zhuzhong** and **Fang Desheng**. This essay discusses the historical evolution of one of the three supreme elements of Chinese artistic culture: Calligraphy. (The other two are painting and music.)

**Chen Shin-Horng** and **Wen Pei-Chang Pam** examine an aspect of the challenges of globalization that confronts Taiwan—technological innovation. This is also linked to the pull of the PRC in attracting investment in research and development from established global enterprises. The last, and seventh, commissioned assignment is by **Shu Gao** and explores the economic, social, and environmental dimensions of the Three Gorges Dam.

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Macalester faculty submissions begin with **Ahmad Atif Ahmad's** piece. The central concern of the contribution is the state of Chinese Muslims in the three cities that hosted the seminar. **Holly Barcus** reflects on the "zones of transition" that are undergoing some form of transformation. **Terry Boychuk** explores the PRC's non-profit sector and the variety of institutional and practical problems it faces. **Gary Krueger** examines, by way of comparative analysis, what he deems to be an "authoritarian market economy." **Erik Larson's** focus is on the Shanghai and Taiwan Stock Exchanges. Of particular interest to him are the tactics each uses to set itself in an internationally advantageous position. **Andrew Latham** focuses on the PRC's strategic thinking by attempting to dig up its roots, in particular Confucianism. **Weiwen Miao** offers a comparison between the methods used by the criminal courts in the PRC and the United States. **Soek-Fang Sim** presents a probe into the ways in which national and international news are put together by CCTV. **Vasant Sukhatme's** attention is on the fundamental changes that are occurring in the economy of the PRC, and the basis for the dizzying growth rates. **Yue-him Tam's** essay deals with an episode in the difficult relations between the PRC and Japan—the April 2005 attack on the Japanese Embassy in Beijing. Both **James von Geldern** and **Wang Ping** locate their contributions in the context of the Three Gorges Dam. Their concerns, though expressed differently, are with the consequences of this breathtaking engineering project. Finally, **Eric Wiertelak** reflects on what he learned about traditional Chinese medicine.

*The seventh Macalester Faculty Development International Seminar is scheduled for early summer of 2008. The sites will be in Israel and the Palestinian Territories.*

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## Notes

1. Ko Shu-Ling, "Cross-Strait Contact Needed, Report Says," *Taipei Times*, 21 May 2006, p.1. In the first National Security Report, the Taiwanese authorities underscore the importance of avoiding military conflict and the securing of international support for negotiations to reduce risks of armed confrontation. If such a stable and sustained concordance is reached, the Taiwanese estimate that they could at once reduce their military by about 100,000 and compulsory service to one year only.
2. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980* (New York: Penguin, 1982); and Maurice Meisner, *Mao's China and After* (New York: The Free Press, 1986).

3. Andrew Glyn, "Imbalances of the Global Economy," *The New Left Review*, Vol. 34 (2005) 5–37; and Ted C. Fishman, *China Inc: How the Rise of the Next Superpower Challenges America and the World* (New York: Scribner, 2004).
4. Quoted in Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace*, p. 67–68.
5. Minxin Pei, *China's Trapped Transition: The Limits of Developmental Autocracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Also, Chaohua Wang, ed., *One China, Many Paths* (London: Verso, 2003).
6. Pankaj Mishra, "Getting Rich," *London Review of Books*, 30 November 2006, p. 4.
7. Howard W. French, "A Remote Boomtown Where Mainly Newcomers Benefit," *The New York Times*, Tuesday, 20 December 2005, p. A4.
8. Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London: Verso, 2006), p. 19.