CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

The ideology of Marxism, primarily as interpreted by Mao Zedong, has played a prominent role in shaping the course of the twentieth century Chinese history. China's two millennium old feudalism and nineteenth century semi-colonial subjugation were brought to an end by the long sustained and arduous liberation war of the Communist peasant army. The victory of the Chinese new democratic revolution in 1949 signifies not only the political and military overthrow of the Guomindang but also the ideological radicalization of the subaltern social classes. The Communist Party of China (CPC) successfully articulated the emancipatory aspirations of the oppressed masses. The revolutionary movement brought different social classes together as active participants of a new historical project. These classes, especially the vast majority of the rural peasantry, the industrial workers, the petty bourgeoisie, the students and the progressive intelligentsia, conjoined and gave birth to a grand social alliance against the political economy of feudalism, bureaucratic capitalism and semi-colonial rule. Apart from the exploitative social realities against which these classes were responding, what held this social alliance together was the ability of the CPC to articulate a new vision which proposed concrete solutions to their problems and to present a radical alternative for the future.

At one level, the revolution in 1949 represented the intellectual consolidation of the ideology of the CPC as the collective consciousness of the social alliance which made the revolution successful. The CPC's socialist project not only secured the popular consent but also the active involvement of the people. The Maoist interpretation of Marxian ideas became the dominant intellectual force in the Chinese society, and
adherence to it enabled different social classes to break forth the fringes of their own corporate interests.

However, these achievements, when viewed from the vantage point of the present, appear as temporary phenomena in the history of modern China. The intellectual legitimacy of the post revolutionary Chinese state declined in the years following the liberation. The incongruity between the social realities and its official ideological representations became too pronounced to be concealed. The intelligibility of Mao Zedong thought as a comprehensive theory was seriously contested by sections of people both within the party and outside. The alienation from the socialist project was strikingly visible in the society. The authoritarian attitudes of the various agencies of the state and the Party cadres in relation to the masses created an important contradiction in the society. All these factors endangered the stability of the nascent social alliance which supported the revolution.

The history of the twentieth century socialist revolutions offers little evidence to suggest that they produced a society as originally envisioned by Karl Marx. It has been the general historical case that great social revolutions, inspired by the grand emancipatory visions, perished after their victory. As Maurice Meisner has remarked, it is not simply a matter of revolutionaries in power betraying their professed ideals for a radically new society, but rather the political and economic circumstances compelling them to compromise with existing realities and with the traditions of the past.¹ As the grand vision about the future fades away and the limitations of the historical situations become more pronounced, the revolutionary state gradually accommodates itself to the

immediate social realities. Then begins the journey towards a different historical destination. To quote Meisner:

The process of the postponement and ritualization of utopian social goals, and the manipulation of utopian symbols to ideologically rationalize new forms of social inequality and political oppression, is of course an all too familiar pattern in the history of revolutions.

The radical conceptions about the future became ritualized ideological slogans. And they are deployed by the managers of the new state to rationalize the institutionalization of the unequal social order.

Indeed, the tragedy of the modern revolution resides precisely in the fact that utopian hopes do become transformed into philosophical platitudes rather than surviving as living sources of inspiration for social action. That such terms as ‘thermidor’, ‘Bonapartism’, and ‘deradicalization’ have become common place in descriptions of the life cycles of the revolutions is itself testimony to the unhappy fate of utopian hopes and revolutionary ideals. They suggest not the simple failure of revolution but rather a process of degeneration which seems inherent in its very success.2

From the vantage point of the present, any approach to socialist societies, not as grand projects proclaimed by its founders but as specific historical realities existed in the recent past, has to acknowledge the limitations of that theory and the constraints of the historical circumstances. It will be further emphasised that any inquiry or theorization of the question of transition to socialism has to consider those social realities as the point of departures. Such realizations have been suggested well before by Paul M. Sweezy.

In 1971, while commenting upon the transition to socialism, he made the following observations:

(1) There is no such thing as a general theory of the transition between social systems. This is not because relatively little attention has been paid to the subject - though this is undoubtedly true - but because each transition is a unique historical process which must be analyzed and explained as such.

2 ibid, p.214.
(2) Nevertheless, a comparative study of transitions can be extremely valuable. In particular the study of past transitions can help us to ask fruitful questions about present and possible future transitions, to recognize similarities and differences, to appreciate the histriocity and totality of the process under examination.

(3) Transitions are never simple or brief processes. On the contrary, they typically occupy and even define whole historical epochs. One aspect of their complexity is what may be called multidirectionality: the movement in one direction may turn back on itself and resume in a forward direction from a new basis. In some places the reversal may be prolonged or conceivably even permanent. 3

The practice of the ruling Communist Parties in the erstwhile "Socialist states" suggest that they lacked a perceptive understanding on the specificity of socialism, both historical and national. There had been a mindless insistence on homogeneity not only in the economic reorganization of the society, but also in the spheres of social and private life including politics and culture. The state demanded from the populace a rigid conformity to the official ideology. The Party had an architectonic conception and approach towards the popular culture, according to which the culture should be in strict correspondence with the relations of material production. No amount of autonomy, even in a relative sense, has been given to any of these two factors.

The Chinese revolution opened new vistas in the problems of transition to socialism. Until the World War II, it was a question of the "construction of socialism in one country". The universalism of the Soviet political model was accepted as one of the fundamental dogmas by the international Communist movement. Any departure from it, even if dictated by the most practical necessity, was regarded as an ideological treachery. The "People's democracies" of the Eastern Europe were too weak and politically, economically and militarily depended on the Soviet Union. Thus subservience

deprived them of the freedom to adopt a political model suitable to their national characteristics.

China's entry into the Socialist camp altered this situation radically. Despite its extreme economic backwardness, this state of more than eight hundred million people with ancient traditions constituted a problem too enormous to be solved by the methods applied to the countries of Eastern Europe. However, the theory and practice in China during the immediate post-revolutionary years offer little evidence to suggest that an independent path to a new kind of society and an organization of power were the objectives of the CPC. There were convincing reasons for this initial reluctance to depart from the Soviet orthodoxy. The revolution in China took place under the influence of the Soviet Union. Apart from the authority enjoyed by the world's first socialist country, the Soviet model appeared to provide the only solution possible in Chinese conditions. At a later stage, China broke decisively with the Soviet ideology on the theory of transition period. The movements such as the hundred flowers and the Cultural Revolution are eloquent testimonies of the shift in the Chinese approach. But, a more closer examination of the Chinese political structure and the practice of the Communist Party would reveal that China retained and even strengthened the organization of state power which was modelled after the Soviet Union. The dictatorship based on a semi-militarized party apparatus corresponded to both the possibilities and the requirements of the new leadership.

Mao Zedong's leadership of the Chinese revolutionary movement over a period of four decades invites serious considerations on his contributions to the Marxist theory in general and the concept of the transition period in particular. According to Paul M. Sweezy, the most important contribution of Mao Zedong to the advance of Marxism
was to break what may be called the tyranny of the Soviet model.\(^4\) The economic rationale and the ramification of the application of this model, as Paul M. Sweezy has put it, is as follows:

The very foundation of this model was 'primitive socialist accumulation' at the expense of the peasantry, and its dominant thrust was the building up of heavy industry and the production of consumer goods. The application of this model had (and has) many implications: the ending of all hope of an effective worker-peasant alliance and hence (in countries with peasant majorities) the necessity of a severely repressive state. And this in turn meant the renunciation of any possibility of transforming social relations in the direction of communism.\(^5\)

Mao's theoretical interventions in this regard offer a new perspective on the question of transition to socialism. Sweezy has also pointed out that the problem of primitive socialist accumulation and the repressive state was left unattended by the Marxist orthodoxy of the Stalin period.\(^6\) It was put off to an unspecified future when the forces of production would develop to the point of making general abundance a reality. To quote:

In this way, development of the forces of production was turned into sort of universal panacea for all the ills and contradictions of society, and from this it followed that for a socialist society the highest and overriding objective for the foreseeable future must be the most rapid attainable development of the forces of production.\(^7\)

These assumptions, remained in force in the Soviet orthodoxy for a long period, were re-examined by the CPC as early as mid-1950s. The Maoist ideas departed decisively from the Soviet perspective on political economy. At the level of policy formulations, the experience of the long years of governing the border regions and

\(^4\) ibid, p.85.
\(^5\) ibid.
\(^6\) ibid, p.86.
\(^7\) ibid.
conducting the wars against the Guomindang and the Japanese offered guiding sources. The priorities were reordered: the pre-eminence accorded to heavy industry in the Soviet model was abandoned. The agriculture, a sector on which the 80 percent of the population was dependent, was given greater importance among the nation's concerns. While reordering of priorities, Mao Zedong outlined a broad perspective on the overall economic development of China. It not only removed the special burden imposed on the peasantry for surplus capital extraction by the state, but also addressed the problems of uneven economic growth in different regions, and argued for a balanced developmental approach to the city and the countryside. To the Party these radically new ideas were instrumental in maintaining and even strengthening the worker-peasant solidarity.

The Maoist theory on the transition period, evolved during the Cultural Revolution, offers a unique perspective on the state, power and culture of the post-revolutionary society. The basic problem can at best understood if set in the orthodox Soviet political theory of the 1930s. According to this perspective, the proletarian revolution overthrows capitalism and/or other forms of class society with the elimination of the private ownership of the means of production. The tasks of the state which presides over this process are two fold; to develop the forces of production and repress the old possessing classes and prevent them from counter revolutionary activities. In relation to the working class and its peasant allies, the state is democratic - more genuine than the liberal democracies in the West. From these postulates it follows that with the disposition of the old bourgeois and feudal ruling classes, the development of productive forces and the progressive increase of the general standard of living of the people, the class struggle will recede in intensity and gradually disappear; and the state as a special apparatus of repression will, in the classical Marxian sense, 'wither away'. But, as long
as capitalism exists on an international scale and the world bourgeoisie continues to support the counterrevolutionary ambitions of the overthrown classes, the state will remain as a repressive apparatus against external interventions.

In fact, this did not directly evolve from the experience of the Soviet Union. From the early days of the Bolshevik regime a large section of the population was subjected to the state repression, not just the deposed exploiting classes. And with the passage of time, it became an increasingly prominent feature of the Soviet society. The Stalinist period remains a testimony to the combined tragedy of the bureaucratic deformation of socialism and to state repression against all sections of the society.

The Chinese experiences in transition to socialism had several distinct features. The most important among them vis-a-vis the Soviet model was the realization about and the acknowledgement of the existence of social contradictions in a presumably socialist society. The Soviet orthodoxy rejected social contradictions as alien to socialism. This view was the dominant ideological position maintained by most of the ruling communist parties at that time. Until its dissolution during the World War II in 1944, the Third Communist International proclaimed socialist countries as internally harmonious social formations. All successful revolutionary states repeated this view without considering the realities of power in their respective societies. However, the experience of the socialist states suggest that the Marxian revolutions will not automatically eliminate all sources of exploitation and inequalities.

The capture of state power by a Communist Party with the active involvement of a social coalition of peasants and workers can at best provide a juridico-political condition for the radical reorganization of power in the society. But it cannot be seen as synonymous with the realization of such transformations. And the new organization
of power and social relations are pregnant with contradictions and conflicts. And the fate of any revolution is depended on its ability to resolve these contradictions and not on its ideological concealment and political repressions.

After the death of Mao Zedong in September 1976, the debate over a transitional society acquired a new dimension when it became an issue within the leadership core of the CPC and other constituting elements of the Chinese state apparatus such as the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) and the bureaucracy. The notion of "continuing the revolution", formulated by Mao-Zedong in the mid 1960s and defended by the Cultural Revolutionary Left in 1975-76, remained as the official CPC ideology for a short period. With the arrest of Jiang Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan and Wang Hongwen in October 1976, this theory ceased to influence the CPC ideology. Later these leaders were caricatured as the "Gang of Four" and their programme was termed as "counter revolution" in the official CPC version. Thereafter, Mao Zedong’s concept of "uninterrupted revolution" which was reformulated by Hua Guofeng occupied a prominent position in the CPC ideology. However, Hua Guofeng’s formulation was finally rejected by the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the CPC in December 1978. Subsequently, Hua Guofeng was removed from all leading decision-making bodies of the CPC in 1980 and his views were categorised as "Left error".

The third plenum of 1978 thus marked a turning point in the ideology and policy of the CPC. Explicit indications were available in the subsequent resolutions to marginalize the influence of the Maoist worldview from the political statements of the Party. The most significant outcome of the third plenum was that some of the basic assumptions pertaining to the concept of "building socialism" in China, which had gone largely unchallenged for two decades, were questioned. From here onwards, the
economic and social reforms adopted in several stages by Deng Xiaoping exhibit a consistent and cohesive pattern. Within five years, collective agriculture was displaced in favour of private commercial farming, economic self-reliance gave way to an "open door" for foreign capital, and individual entrepreneurship replaced the mass movement as the essential instrument of socialist construction. With these policy reversals, the Chinese economy was integrated into the international capitalism. By the mid-1980s the expatriate bourgeoisie from Hong King and Taiwan began to play a major role in Chinese economic affairs. These policies seem to have altered the complexion of the Chinese society.

The political and economic policies of the post-Mao CPC leadership represent a decisive break with the historic course of the Chinese revolution till 1976. A preliminary survey of the CPC documents and other related literature would suggest that an explicit shift in the CPC's programme has occurred in the post-1976 period. The CPC's policies since 1978 have reintegrated Chinese economy into the very logic and structure of international capitalism. This has resulted in the widening of disparities between different social classes.

Against this backdrop the Chinese society underwent drastic transformations at all levels including ideology. The CPC reformulated the official marxism and introduced new ideological categories such as "socialism with Chinese characteristics", "socialist market economy" and so on. The Marxist theory was pressed into service to explain the new social and economic policies of the regime which were explicitly at variance with those of the former regime. Although the official rhetoric repeatedly announced the commitment to socialism, it remained, in essence, a ritualistic practice devoid of any programmatic implication.
The collapse of the socialist vision at the level of practice engendered a crisis of faith in the official ideology. As the aspirations of different sections of the society remained unfulfilled the open expression of protest and the resentment against the party-state began to surface more frequently. These dissent movements offered radical criticism of the Chinese state and presented alternative social visions. A prominent feature of the post-Mao Chinese dissent movements seems to be their distinctiveness in terms of ideology and social origins. In this sense there are perceptible differences between the movements of the students and intellectuals, the working class protest demonstrations and the peasant unrests in northern China.

The most notable source of the changing social consciousness of the Chinese society is provided by the underground journals which made their appearance in late 1978 in Beijing. These journals are said to be the offshoots of the liberal political climate of the third plenum, and express divergent ideas. April Fifth Forum, which is prominent among them, and Spring of Peking seem to have sided with the so-called pragmatists in the Party leadership. Whereas journals such as Exploration and China Human Rights criticized Marxism and advocated alternative political views. The ideology of these journals has to be examined closely since such practices are so uncommon in the People's Republic of China (PRC) and they provide vital sources for understanding the changing social and political consciousness of the people.

The publication of these journals by dissident activists was in confluence with the outbreak of an important people's movement which unravelled mostly between late November 1978 and March 1979. The principal feature of this movement, generally known as the "Spring in Winter" or "Democracy Movement" was the criticism against the undemocratic nature and functioning of the CPC. When the movement gained
momentum, especially when it openly challenged the official ideology, the party-state, with the use of security apparatus, suppressed the dissent activities centered around the Democracy Wall. The importance of the 1978-79 movement is that it indicates the emergence of an autonomous discourse critical of the CPC.

In parallel with the consolidation of power by Deng Xiaoping, the CPC's official rhetoric gradually shifted toward a major reassessment of the historical role of Mao Zedong and his ideas. In this regard, the 1981 central committee resolution on the "History of the CPC" constitutes an important document. The resolution, claimed as an "authoritative assessment" of Mao Zedong and the cultural revolution, offers a critical reading of the CPC's ideology and politics before 1976 from the point of view of the reformist faction within the Party. The Resolution rejected the fundamental theoretical premises from which Mao Zedong launched the cultural revolution. The concept of "continuing the revolution" was termed as a "left error" which is inconsistent with the system of Mao Zedong thought. Nevertheless, Mao's political practices and ideological postulates till 1957 were retained as positive contribution to the CPC and the state.

During the early years of 1980s, the official journals of the CPC unleashed a politically intolerant campaign against any attempt of dissent or a different articulation on the nature of the Chinese state power from the part of the intellectuals or the general public at large. This has been evident from the political and a theoretical developments around the debate on "alienation of power". The fundamental starting point of the theory of alienation of power is to regard all powers and all organs of the state as an alienated force that is placed above the society. Those who warned against the dangers of alienation spoke of the possible conflicts between the state and the Chinese society. Through this, they sought an explanation for some negative phenomena under Chinese
socialism. However, in 1983, the CPC and the official media resolved not to concede even a minimal space for a discourse on alienation of power and the debate was silenced by relentless official counter-propaganda.

It will be an endeavour of this study to see if these developments lead to what is referred to as the deradicalization of politics and the depoliticization of social life in the post-Mao China. An attempt is also made to relate the efforts of social forces, especially young workers, students, literati and academic circles, to assert their interests against the dominant position of the CPC.

The hallmark of the 1989 democracy movement was a liberal criticism of the authoritarian nature of the Chinese state and the CPC’s monopoly over political power. The movement brought to the fore some of the pernicious tendencies and practices of the regime like corruptions and abuse of power. The focus of the international media and most of the China observers has been on the role played by the students and intellectuals in the movement. As a result, the role of other social agencies in the dissent activities did not get adequate attention. Although, the students played a pre-eminent part in the Tianenmen protests, the involvement of the urban working class was also equally significant. Similarly the participation of the newly emerged commercial class should also be given serious consideration.

The crackdown on the protest movement by the PLA on 4 June 1989 and the subsequent arrests, detentions and executions of the activists across the country engender serious questions regarding the nature of the Chinese state and its relation to society. Keeping all these in view, the present study attempts to locate hegemony in the post-Mao Chinese society. For this purpose, the trajectory of the historical vision of the CPC will be examined. The theoretical developments and changes in the official Chinese Marxism
from a revolutionary idea, committed to an egalitarian radical future to an ideology of modernization, is the main loci in this regard. The ideology of popular and intellectual dissent movements will form one of the central concerns of this study.

In this study the concept of ideology will be used to mean (1) totality of forms of social consciousness of a society; (2) the political ideas and worldview linked to the interests of various classes, parties, groups etc. In the post-Mao China, the specific articulations of ideology are to be found in the CPC’s official Marxism and in the idea of democracy of the dissent movements. Taking into account the complex nature of the incipient non-official ideologies in the Post-Mao China, this study treats the concept of ideology in its broadest possible sense, rather than strictly defined comprehensive patterns which have a high degree of explicitness in formulation. The thematic organisation of this thesis is as follows:

Chapter II: Towards an Introduction to the Theory of Ideology is an attempt to formulate an appropriate methodology with which the problems of dissent, hegemony and legitimation in the Chinese society can be explained. This chapter has been divided into four areas of concern which primarily suggest an ordering of different aspects of the concept of ideology. It begins with a brief overview of the complicated history of the term ideology. The second part discusses as to why ideology forms a critical category in the writings of Karl Marx. The emergence of a positive/epistemologically neutral conception of ideology has been examined in the third part. This is followed by a discussion on the role of ideology in social reproduction.

Chapter III: Ideological Topography of the People’s Republic of China (1949-76) examines the ways in which the CPC consolidated its revolutionary power organised as the state after the liberation. It also documents the popular resentment against the CPC
displayed during the 'Hundred Flowers' campaign. The intellectual origins of the cultural revolution is investigated in the third part. This is followed by a discussion on Mao Zedong's views regarding the need to revolutionise the ideological superstructure. The concluding part deals with the anti-Confucian campaign and the conflict between the Shanghai group and the Party bureaucracy.

Chapter IV: Ideology in Post-Mao China, is an inquiry into the Chinese Marxism of the post-Mao era. The theoretical developments in the CPC ideology have been given more importance in this chapter. Unlike the Maoist period when the ideology of the Party was strictly defined and any deviation from the official line would attract serious criticism, the CPC in the post 1978 era maintained a relatively liberal approach to the broader intellectual questions of Marxism. In order to illuminate this point, this chapter discusses the debate on humanism and the Asiatic mode of production.

Chapter V: Dissent, Hegemony, and the State attempts to examine the location of hegemony in post-Mao China. It consists, mainly, of an investigation into the ideology of the dissent movements and an analysis of the Chinese state in relation to popular protests. The central concern of this chapter has entailed a detour to political theory. In this regard a brief introduction to Nicos Poulantzas's analysis of state power and the concept of hegemony of Antonio Gramsci has been included. This chapter offers a critique of the post-revolutionary Chinese state.

Chapter VI presents the main findings of this study and the concluding remarks.