

Introduction

In my 2017 book *The China Order*, I attempted to reread and analyze Chinese history and worldviews to ascertain the Chinese political tradition and ideation with an examination of the Qin-Han polity and the China Order of *tianxia* (all under heaven).¹ This book, *The China Record*, the sequel to *The China Order*, focuses on contemporary China, the People's Republic of China (PRC), with an assessment of the record of the PRC state as an alternative mode of political system and a distinctive model of socioeconomic development.

As China's economy and military are both racing to become the largest in the world, the political system of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) that governs the PRC is increasingly impacting all of humanity, beyond shaping the fortune and future of the Chinese people. In 2021 and again in 2022, the US-led West openly concluded that the rising power of the PRC had become a systemic challenge and even an existential threat to world order and world peace.² A solid understanding of the Chinese mode of governance and model of socioeconomic development, therefore, has become imperative for the world, including the Chinese people. In the contemporary era of globalism and multiculturalism, it is also theoretically and practically critical to ascertain both the strengths or merits and weaknesses or flaws of the PRC system. To that aim, I hope that I am presenting a concise analysis that the reader will find holistic, accurate, and useful for understanding the achievements, deficiencies, strengths, and weaknesses of the PRC under the CCP. In addressing both the issues of viability and desirability of the CCP-PRC, I wish to develop a positive, factual statement and a normative, critical analysis of the party-state. The findings of this book I hope will aid in a policy-oriented consideration about the reality of and the strategy for the world's response to the rising Chinese power.

The assessment of the PRC in this book is based on an analysis of its organizational characteristics and operational performance in four areas: political governance, socioeconomic development, people's life, and culture and the environment. The purpose of this four-part examination is to ascertain the feasibility and appeal of the rising PRC power as a contender and substitute for the current world leadership, its ability to replace the West and particularly the United States, and the viability and desirability of Beijing's pursuit of the China Order as an alternative to the West-led Westphalian world order. Over the past seven decades, the PRC has gone through many epic ups and downs of reforms, advances, successes, failures, and reversals, with countless heroes, villains, survivors, and victims. I am fully aware that all this remarkable continuity and great changes make my immodest efforts in this book truly a task with many fascinating yet humbling challenges.

I will first examine the political governance in the PRC, the "people's democratic dictatorship" under the CCP, particularly its record of protection of the lives and rights of the Chinese people, provision of social order and security, and public services and governmental efficiency. Then I will attempt to report and assess the Chinese economy, especially its achievements and problems during recent decades, before analyzing Chinese social life and the spiritual and physical ecology of the PRC. The emphasis of this book is on the operation and impact of the CCP governance in such areas as political representation, criminal justice, fiscal and monetary policies, the state-led growth model, innovation, academia and education, inequality and poverty, disaster relief and pandemic prevention, culture and ethics, social tranquility, and the preservation of antiquities and the environment. Through the combined application of normative evaluation and comparative study of both quantitative and qualitative data, this book aspires to ascertain the nature and characteristics of the PRC. It especially intends to help address questions about the efficacy, efficiency, power, sustainability, and desirability—or the lack thereof—of the CCP-PRC as an emerging superpower and a potential world leader with a set of alternative values and norms. As a small effort to advance China studies, this book has chosen to focus on the overall record, in order to offer an assessment and diagnosis rather than attempting an all-encompassing and detailed narrative of PRC history.³

More specifically, this book seeks to demonstrate what the CCP-PRC has really been and truly represents. It finds political suboptimality,

socioeconomic underperformance, and cultural and environmental devastation, which the PRC state has brought to China to achieve a remarkable CCP optimality that provides longevity and power for the regime. The first three decades of PRC history (1949–1979) constituted a bona fide tragedy of monumental proportions. The CCP, driven by its inner logic and compounded by the personal ambition and incompetence of its dictatorial leader Mao Zedong, forcefully rolled back many of the gains and changes of the pre-PRC century (1840s–1949). The PRC became the vehicle for the CCP's power and its simultaneous attempt to recenter and reorder the whole world for the sake of its ultimate regime security. For that, the CCP imposed a long and disastrous detour on China, failed the Chinese people in many ways, and faced a much-deserved demise.⁴

The post-Mao CCP responded by retreating to the pre-PRC nationalist trajectory and policies for its own survival. Henceforth, over the past four decades, in an instance of great historical irony, the CCP has been both saved and enriched by the West-led Westphalian System it always sought to displace. The Chinese people regained considerable, albeit still limited, socioeconomic freedom and autonomy. The Chinese economy consequently experienced prodigious, explosive growth to lift hundreds of millions of people out of abject poverty. The PRC gained a wide-ranging technological sophistication (mostly imported) to obtain a fairly complete and competitive modern industrial system. Chinese society and daily life improved and transformed significantly, largely in the general direction of modernization and Westernization. As will be reported in detail in this book, a large “middle class” has emerged with significant disposable income and properties, traveling extensively at home and abroad. The development of written laws and the proliferation of norms of individual rights, especially in the commercial sphere, have enhanced predictability and trust to facilitate market-oriented businesses. Religions and socioculture in general have experienced a reinvigoration. The PRC has also actively participated in international cooperation, from its weighty position in the global chain of production and massive foreign aid, to sending large troops for UN peacekeeping missions.

However, much of the Maoist governance aimed at ensuring the security and power of the CCP autocracy has continued in China. The DNA of the party-state has largely remained intact. The PRC became a giant by the numbers, strengthening itself through a gargantuan extraction of the riches of a booming Chinese economy that has been made possible by the freer and hardworking Chinese people, and critically fueled

by the massive import of capital and technology. In aggregate, the PRC record of governance and socioeconomic development is at best average, and mostly suboptimal, if qualitatively and quantitatively assessed by the criteria of life, civil and human rights, freedom and tranquility, living standards and health care, economic efficiency and innovation, ethics and cultural development, socioeconomic justice and equality, management of natural disasters and epidemics, and preservation of antiquities and the environment. Beyond the systemic deprivation of rights and freedoms, the CCP has imposed tremendous opportunity costs on the Chinese people, causing profound and multifaceted ramifications for the Chinese social fabric, moral codes, intellectual creativity, and ecology. Some of this great impact may still be mendable and reversible, but some of it appears to be incurable if not untreatable, and has already profoundly affected peoples beyond the PRC. As the CCP continues at home and attempts to reorder other nations in its image abroad, the rising Chinese power expropriated and expended by the CCP represents a suboptimal and undesirable but feasible and formidable alternative to the existing Western leadership of the international community, impacting the future of human civilization.

Games of Numbers: A Note on Methodology and Epistemology

A distinctive feature of the PRC state and also a profound consequence of its governance has been the systematic and widespread monopoly and manipulation of information in general and statistics in particular.⁵ This has been a major hurdle to assessing China, especially with quantitative data. A short discussion of epistemology is presented here to familiarize the reader with this critical issue of methodology in the study of China, which often hampers and misleads even the most diligent observers. This quick note may also serve as an appetizer for the rich, raw, taste of the record of the CCP-PRC party-state.

In the same well-documented Qin-Han imperial tradition of information censorship for political purposes, the CCP always forcefully monopolizes all information in China, with the latest declaration of the “Party’s management of [all kinds of] data.”⁶ By means of this monopoly, the party-state constantly and sometimes farcically omits, hides, falsifies, and destroys many records, especially quantitative data. In March 2022,

for instance, Beijing released its official readout on the content of a two-hour virtual meeting between Chairman Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden “three and a half hours” before the event actually took place.⁷ As omnipresent and omnipotent as it is, the PRC state does not publish many of the kinds of statistical information other states routinely do, let alone in a precise, timely or useful way, if it bothers to collect and track the data at all. As incredible as it is strange in a country of longtime central planning, the PRC State Statistical Bureau told official media that it “has stopped collecting” data on the size of the government payroll since 2008; so far, Beijing has released the grand total number of its “civil servants” only once ever in history (in 2016).⁸ This is perhaps the inevitable result of the Party’s long tradition of secrecy and stern discipline for keeping the countless opaquely defined, often ad hoc, secrets; it has become second nature for officials always to strive for less transparency. To be sure, political pressure often incentivizes a government to unduly hide or twist sensitive data, even in a democracy like India or the United States. But, just like the rather usual impulses and actions of government censorship of history writing, which have long been unusually comprehensive, effective, and malevolent in the Chinese World because of its “worldwide” monopoly of information and centralized, singular censorship with force, the politicized games of numbers in the PRC are both quantitatively and qualitatively unrivaled in the world.⁹ In China, the systemic totality, centralized style, and deeply internalized tradition of the CCP’s number games basically face no meaningful scrutiny and challenge; while in other countries, especially in open, democratic societies, with multiple and open sources of information and fact-checking, the competition from a free media nullifying the censorship efforts often tends to speedily and significantly mitigate the problem.

Given that many international organizations like the United Nations and its affiliates mostly rely on Beijing as a source for official statistical data, the international pollution of information by the CCP’s number games is a chronic problem seriously hampering and even disabling China studies and international comparison. It is an elementary but critical mistake to read and accept official PRC data as the equivalent of the much more contested and verified data from other countries. Epistemological limits, propaganda, and biased punditry tend to mislead observers, especially casual data consumers like politicians and the public, to misread and caricature the Chinese “like Voltaire’s mandarins or the happy peasants of Maoist propaganda.” The official Gini Coefficient in the Mao era, for

example, was only 0.32, which has prompted many to still misjudge the PRC of that time as poor but equal; however, a PRC study in 2013–2014 proved that the real number of Gini Coefficient in the 1960s and 1970s was more than twice as high at the world record of 0.6–0.7.¹⁰

Politicized creative accounting and reporting of financial data, even for publicly traded companies, sometimes by the autonomous Chinese franchises of international accounting firms, appear to be common in the PRC. The government itself seems equally inundated by bogus data.¹¹ One study in 2013 asserted that the PRC GDP figure itself might have been artificially inflated by \$1 trillion, or 12 percent. Two studies in 2017 and 2019 suggested that the PRC GDP was probably “overstated,” while in 2021 another study using satellite-based data indicated that the PRC GDP numbers could be inflated by as much as 35 percent.¹² Official PRC media concluded in 2014 that local governments have the tradition of constantly “injecting water” into statistics at all levels, chiefly the promotion-determining GDP figures. In the fourth quarter of 2019, the officially reported GDP growth rate of 6.2 percent might in fact have been only 3.2 percent. Many counties in the relatively backward Northeast added 20 to 127 percent “water,” reporting a local GDP larger than that of Hong Kong.¹³ A former CCP county secretary, based on the experiences of 120 peers, concluded that “statistics in China is just a myth [. . .] we commonly have to ‘technically reprocess’ the numbers [and] about 30% of all [economic] data contains water.” The CCP leadership itself is said to have long suspected the inaccuracy of PRC economic statistics, especially the GDP numbers. Similarly, the PRC State Statistical Bureau admitted in 2021 that its numbers about fixed asset investment in China contained a large amount of “water,” up to 20 percent, from 2007 to 2019.¹⁴ The PRC trading status may be a digital “mirage,” with trade figures and especially trade balance data that could be miscalculated and overestimated by as much as 36 percent.¹⁵ Chinese real unemployment rate is routinely “at least twice as high as” the published figure.¹⁶ The critically important numbers related to grain and food production are likely habitually inflated. The massive local government debts, highly consequential to national financial health, are often recorded and reported in two sets of books with underreporting by as much as two-thirds.¹⁷ Partially responsible for many disasters in the past, including the great famine in 1959–1962, the CCP’s structural problem of doctoring numbers clearly remains widespread today. In May 2021, the PRC State Statistical Bureau released the seventh once-a-de-

cade census data, after many delays, reporting a total population of 1.41 billion and other demographic information.¹⁸ Many Chinese immediately pointed out big holes and many signs of data-doctoring in the report; and officials were compelled to quickly come out to “dispel rumors and disbeliefs.”¹⁹ At the end of 2021, the former PRC Minister of Treasury openly criticized the uselessness of Chinese economic data. In 2022, the State Statistical Bureau reported national new births 16 percent (1.75 million) higher than that reported by the Ministry of Public Security.²⁰ In order to booster food security, the CCP decreed the country to “return [developed] land to grain farming” (*fugeng*) and used satellite imagery technology to verify that to promote or penalize local officials accordingly. As a result, local governments spent massive public funds in the 2010s–2020s to fool the satellites with fake rice paddies built on baren hills, yams and beans planted on cement pavement and roads, and grain farms tilled on filled fishponds and demolished fruit orchards, vegetable greenhouses and residential dwellings.²¹

As will be further discussed later, one of the CCP’s number games has been about poverty and its measurement. Beijing has long maintained a poverty line much lower than the international standard and thus greatly underreports the proportion of poor people in the PRC. Prior to 2009, the PRC set its poverty line at \$0.32 per day. In that year, it revised its poverty line to an annual income of ¥2,300, which equates to a daily income of \$0.50, and then revised it again to \$0.99 in 2015. This is far below the UN abject poverty line of \$1.25 (\$1.90 in 2015) and much lower than the poverty line set by China’s poorer neighbors such as the Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The 2009 poverty line was about ten times the ¥200 yearly poverty line of 1985 (equivalent to US \$25 at the time), while the PRC GDP grew more than fifty-six times greater and the underreported official inflation increased eleven times during this period. The PRC reported only 15 to 45 million people living in poverty in 2010 by its own standard, rather than over 200 million by the UN standard.²²

For career advancement, CCP officials appear to routinely massage their data, just as Beijing does to all information that it thinks may impact its political legitimacy or image. Other than financial data, which many observers and analysts are fully justified in treating with suspicion, even deaths by road accidents are underreported by more than three-quarters. Scholars working for the World Health Organization (WHO) concluded that traffic deaths in the PRC totaled 276,000

(20.5 per 100,000) annually in the 2010s, but Beijing reported only 65,000 (5 per 100,000). In 2021, a flood killed hundreds of people in Zhengzhou, and the government confirmed six months later that local officials “indeed” underreported the fatalities by more than one-third.²³ In 1987, the PRC central government started to report suicide rates in China to the WHO. At eighteen to twenty-three suicides per 100,000 people, that figure remained steady as among the highest in the world until around 2008. In 2009–2011, Beijing reported a “drastic decline” in that rate—a 58 percent drop—to eight to ten suicides per 100,000, and also a drop of 63 percent and 90 percent, respectively, for rural and female suicide rates. Since then, these sensitive figures have officially remained stable as among the lowest in the world (just below the world average), but always with no researchable or verifiable breakdowns and always inconsistent with fieldwork reports published in 2014 and 2018 by PRC scholars.²⁴ The “uniquely PRC” pattern of higher suicide rates that had persisted among rural residents (over urbanites) and women (over men) have both completely reversed since 2011 to match the world’s general pattern.²⁵ Needless to say, the reader would easily share my sincere wish that these profound changes, however curiously dramatic, are real. I will discuss this subject further in chapter 3.

Over the decades, comprehensive games of numbers have been both a prized tradition and a standard statecraft of the CCP. The monopoly on and selective dissemination of information help to powerfully mask the suboptimal performance in the PRC and to back up the CCP’s much propagated claim of the special “superiority and advantage” of socialism (or CCP leadership, Mao’s line, Deng’s reform, the Chinese “way of governance,” Xi’s reign, or whatever is unique about the CCP-PRC system).²⁶ PRC scholarship on the Chinese political economy, including the few serious and interesting studies such as the quasi-institutionalist explanation of the CCP’s “superior ability” to grow the Chinese economy quickly, tend to uncritically base arguments on the face value of official numbers and thus unfortunately end up mostly provisional and preposterous, even propagandistic.²⁷ The often applauded and admired Chinese educational system and its reliance on centralized, imperial-exam-like test scores and rote memorization are, in fact, neither superior nor beneficial to knowledge creation and economic growth, when using the real numbers of a complete dataset. Many of the official PRC numbers have been repackaged and endorsed by the Chinese franchises of Western consultancies like McKinsey Greater China.²⁸ Misleading and delusional

exuberance easily follows: in 2013, many publications, including *The Economist*, falsely forecasted that the PRC GDP (non-PPP) would surpass the US GDP by 2019.²⁹ As I will show in this book and its sequel, the reading by outsiders of the nature and strategy of the PRC has been even more prone to being misleading and misconstrued. Inundated by the CCP's crafty and endless games of numbers, many influential China observers seem to have malfunctioned in a way similar to that of some renowned Western scholars such as Paul Samuelson, the first American Nobel Laureate in Economics, who repeatedly made erroneous and even laughable but widely influential assertions and predictions about the Soviet Union as late as the 1980s. Indeed, uncritical use of the big numbers from the PRC easily leads to the influential conclusion that "China is Number 1," even though the wise message may still be "Never bet against America."³⁰

Both the collection and dissemination of some basic information for daily life in the PRC are also tightly controlled and often purposefully hidden or distorted. For instance, the government, in the name of national security, has monopolized map-making with its own geodetic datum called GCJ-02 (topographic map non-linear confidentiality algorithm), colloquially nicknamed the "Mars Coordinate." It uses an obfuscation algorithm to add random offsets to both the latitude and longitude of positions on maps, as opposed to using the real coordinates of the common WGS-84 (World Geodetic System). As a result, "all maps in China are inaccurate" and the coordinates of a location are commonly hundreds or even thousands of meters off on digital maps guided by GPS (Global Positioning System). With the blocking of apps like Google Earth and Google Maps, satellite navigation in the PRC has long been decoupled from the rest of the world at the expense of accuracy, convenience, and efficiency.³¹

The clever and systematic games of numbers have helped the CCP to rule with indoctrination at home and propaganda abroad. But the toll on truth, action, and morality is heavy and enduring, as I will discuss later in the book. Such games often also have disastrous and literally deadly consequences on an epic scale. For proof, one need only look at the hyperinflation of agricultural production statistics known as "launching satellites" in Mao's Great Leap Forward campaign to surpass the West in power; that numbers game caused and aggravated the Great Famine, which led to the world's worst-ever loss of human lives in peacetime, 37 million or more, in less than four years (fall 1958–spring 1962). Similarly,

the COVID-19 pandemic, which originated in China in December 2019 and has affected every nation, with at least 5.5 million related fatalities worldwide by early 2022, appears to once again demonstrate the potency and lethality of the CCP's second-nature games of numbers.³²

After the outbreak of a new coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) causing COVID-19 in central China, the PRC state failed to adhere to its international legal obligations, instead suppressing critical information for at least three weeks (December 30, 2019–January 20, 2020).³³ In 2019 and 2020, I heard from multiple independent sources (epidemiology managers, researchers, and clinicians in Beijing, Wuhan of Hubei, and Zhejiang) about an internal CCP rule of publishing no more than 10 percent of “bad” public health information, especially numbers.³⁴ Courageous Chinese whistleblowers, “truth tellers,” like Dr. Li Wenliang, have apparently been punished and silenced by the government from the very beginning.³⁵ The PRC Center for Disease Control, with its post-epidemic study of antibodies found a few months later in the population of 11 million in Wuhan (the origin of the pandemic), inadvertently provided the evidence that the PRC government indeed reported only 10 percent (50,340) of the half million infected there in early 2020.³⁶ Studies by the RAND Corporation and the University of Hong Kong estimated that the actual number of cases of COVID-19 infection in the PRC could be thirty-two to thirty-seven times higher than Beijing’s publicly announced figures.³⁷ Some have suggested that Beijing has “intentionally underreported” Chinese cases and deaths “by a factor of 100 or more”; the “true” number of excess deaths caused by the virus in China in 2020–2021 was “not [the officially reported] 4,636, but something like 1.7 million” or twice that in the United States; and the real “total case fatality rate in Wuhan [. . .] was 5.6%” or “4 times higher than the fatality rate of about 1.5%” in the United States, but not the PRC’s scarier, officially reported rate of 7.7 percent.³⁸ According to the official PRC time-series data, 14.22 million Chinese died in 2020, far more than the 9 to 10 million deaths each year from 2006 to 2019.³⁹ The 4.22 million or more excess deaths could be the result of gross statistical errors and discordant data manipulations, a huge spike of deaths by accidents and other diseases when the health care system was impaired by the pandemic (and the draconian quarantines), or a COVID fatality about 100 times higher than reported—or a combination of the three. A team of PRC researchers reported that, in Wuhan during a nearly three-month lockdown in 2020, “excess mortality” rose 56 percent with about 68,130 “extra deaths,” including 21,230

“from covid-19 related pneumonia” (or 5.5 times the official COVID mortality of 3,869 for the city) plus thousands more “from non-covid-19 related” pneumonias that shockingly jumped thirty-five times and a rise of deaths “from non-communicable disease” like cardiovascular diseases (29% increase), diabetes (83% increase), high blood pressure (100% increase), and “other diseases” (92% increase).⁴⁰ Using the American epidemiologic criteria of “death with” rather than just “death from/of” to assess the data, deaths related to the virus in Wuhan alone could be fifteen times greater than the PRC official numbers for the whole country. If proven as such, the CCP’s COVID-19 related numbers game would certainly rival those “satellites” it launched during the Great Leap Forward in both absurdity and infamy.

Even the WHO, heavily criticized for being in the CCP’s pocket, has complained about Beijing’s delays and poor cooperation in information reporting.⁴¹ China has nearly one-fifth of humankind and has endured the longest effects of the virus;⁴² yet the PRC’s official data about the pandemic has been an extreme outlier, with tight censorship and little verifiable proof or useable details, becoming sadly useless and irrelevant to the effort to fight the virus, and has likely misinformed and misled the world in profound ways. Per research led by the PRC’s own star doctor-official Academician Zhong Nanshan, the impact of the COVID-19 virus decreases by one-third for every five days earlier implementation of quarantine measures.⁴³ Studies from the United States and the United Kingdom have also shown that quarantine measures just a week earlier could have saved thousands of lives and even halved the death toll.⁴⁴ Therefore, if the CCP had not customarily suppressed the real information about the disease for those initial weeks, the global pandemic could have been just a local epidemic or a small endemic, with hundreds of times fewer infections and fatalities. The tenacious allegations that the virus was human-altered in and leaked from a Wuhan laboratory, due partially to the distrust aroused by CCP’s rather “common” coverup and numbers game that had gone haywire this time, have been threatening to fault the PRC state much more for the pandemic.⁴⁵

While it is impossible to assess the full extent of the CCP’s many games of numbers without a total opening of the party-state’s secret vaults, a general pattern and some notable characteristics appear to have existed for decades. For instance, if the numbers are perceived to be positive for the regime’s image and power, or just benefiting the officials in charge, lots of adding “water” or significant data inflation is fully expected, with

cases of complete fabrication frequently reported. If the numbers are deemed negative or simply unpleasant, including fatalities due to natural disasters, accidents, conflicts, and epidemics, systemic omission and massive underreporting, and even total denials, are commonplace.⁴⁶ Armed with that realization and with extra and informed efforts to judiciously select, authenticate, verify, and contextualize, I hope we may still be able to utilize official PRC data meaningfully in assessing China, with some guarded and issue-specific confidence.⁴⁷

Arrangement of the Book

Chapter 1 covers Chinese political governance through documentation of political history and reality in the PRC. The first thirty years of the PRC was a grand detour of epic proportions. The post-Mao CCP greatly retreated from both the economy and the society for its own survival. However, the Maoist governance of the “People’s Democratic Dictatorship” has continued with the same ideology of Mao Zedong Thought. A defining feature of this mode of polity is the CCP’s tight control of political life, the justice system, education, resource allocation, and sociopolitical mobility. Over the decades, this party-state has been resilient, extractive, powerful, and corrupt, delivering a mixed, mostly substandard, and often disastrous governance but a distinctively optimal service to the regime itself.

Chapter 2 assesses the record of the Chinese economy. It evaluates the socioeconomic development in the PRC over the past seven decades, especially the recent years. The PRC has emerged as the world’s second largest economy measured by GDP and top exporter after decades of impressive economic growth, driven and fueled by foreign capital and technology. However, the basics of the Chinese political economy, and especially the state–market and state–society relationships, remain politicized and CCP dominated. Contrary to conventional knowledge, the performance of the Chinese economy has been rather average and often suboptimal. A profound case is that the PRC fiscal and monetary policies have created a sea of red ink and countless bubbles, afflicting the economy and perpetrating inefficiency and lack of innovation. By capital return, energy consumption, and other measures, China remains a typical developing economy in the world. Two shining achievements, the

high GDP growth rate and the world's largest foreign currency reserve, are much less glittering under closer scrutiny.

Chapter 3 discusses the PRC's record in the areas of quality of life, political and socioeconomic equality, social tranquility, mobility, and emigration. It also examines such issues as disaster relief, pandemic prevention, public health, birth control, and the war on poverty. The chapter reports on the vastly different lives and life chances of the Chinese people and the Chinese elites in the PRC, and how they feel about and respond to the government. Measured by the living standard and overall quality of life, China under the CCP firmly remains a developing nation, despite the state and the ruling elites having obtained a world-class wealth and lifestyle.

Chapter 4 looks at China's culture and ecology. It describes and assesses the impact of the PRC state on the Chinese spiritual and physical ecologies, including cultural development, ethics, academia and education, antiquities, and the environment. The CCP has actively attempted to control and reengineer Chinese culture, Chinese demography, and the Chinese mind. Through documenting sociocultural symptoms such as the so-called moral vacuum, culture of corruption, and the devastation of the environment and antiquities, the chapter enhances the understanding of the nature and meaning of the CCP-PRC as an alternative, competing mode of governance.

The epilogue briefly summarizes the book's findings to set the stage for further studies on the rise of China and how that may be managed. The works and sources cited, together with the notes, lists the works and sources of information utilized in the book.