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State Transitions and Citizenship Shifts in China

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In China, the gist of the state and its essential mission have shifted, once just over two decades ago and secondly during the 1990's, especially in the past five years. The implications for citizenship and entitlement--mainly but not only for workers and migrants--have been vast. I focus in this paper on the outcome for membership in the city, for those who, with these shifts, have been thrown into the lower ranks of the populace. Those populating these ranks today, it must be recalled, were once the standard-bearers of socialist society, for they comprised the elements of the mighty proletariat. Others among these ranks belonged in the past to the peasantry (also a group exalted in rhetoric before "economic reform"), but have now transferred into town.

I take as proper and full urban citizens those who have a form of valid, official membership or affiliation in the city, and who consequently are the recipients of state-disbursed goods. We will see that, as of the century's turn, ruralites in big cities were still denied membership, the right to belong officially. And, with the progression in China from marketization and economic "reform" to globalization, socialist distribution steadily declined for all residents of the nation's municipalities, with the direst impact upon the once- but no longer employed.

The first of the state's two shifts occurred in 1978, when the Chinese political leadership decisively foresook the basic tenets of the prior socialist regime. This switch occurred publicly at the much-celebrated Third Plenary Session of the Communist Party's Eleventh Central Committee.¹ That historic convocation saw the essential thrust of this new state mission announced, in the form of a substitution of "socialist modernization" (soon to be embodied in a steadily deepening marketization) for the political upheaval and dedication, under a planned economy, that had marked Maoist China.

Thereafter, this new thrust in policy became substantiated in a dual movement, part from below and part from above. On the one hand, an array of commercialist, individualistic, and migratory practices that surfaced with gathering force from below (gradually undermining and ultimately eliminating the planned economy of socialist days²), and, on the other, a set of ancillary measures from above encouraged and implanted an official imprimatur upon these behaviors. The overall outcome amounted to a societal-scale drive among politicians and the people alike to erase the past and emerge into a transformed future realm shining with domestic prosperity and prominence in the world. To abbreviate, this could be called the market transition.

One could point to China's leadership's choice to join the world, to plunge its populace and its economy into the throes of "globalization"--loosely, dramatic surges in the quantity and

¹ Harry Harding, China's Second Revolution (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 1987); Dorothy J. Solinger, China's Transition from Socialism (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1993).

² Barry Naughton, Growing out of the Plan (NY: Oxford University Press, 1995).

velocity of the flows of capital, persons, commodities and culture across national borders³--as the root of the second transformation. While China's entry into the international market, or, as some have termed it, its "opening its doors"⁴ began as early as 1979 just after the Third Plenum, the really powerful effects of this move upon much of the urban population began only after the mid-1990's.⁵ As a shorthand, we can label this shift the global one.

Both of these shifts have drastically affected the concept of the state in China, along with notions of its roles relative to the ruled, and, correlatively, its social preferences. The upshot is that since the time of Mao Zedong and his proletarian-centered communitarian collectivity, the content of citizenship has been fundamentally revolutionized. This revolution in citizenship has, accordingly, been accompanied by an elemental repositioning of the boundaries within China that count in determining who is included, who excluded, who belongs and who cast aside, a reforging of the standards that dictate who is prized and privileged and who is not.

In the remainder of this paper I develop this framework to delineate the ways in which the first shift disenfranchised a large portion of the peasantry; and how the second one disqualified and discarded much of the former urban workforce. First, however, I need to specify the sense in which I will be using the term "citizenship."

Citizenship

Much inquiry into the issue of citizenship and migration and their changing manifestations in the global age pinpoints the international border, the imaginary line distinguishing members of one country from those who are outside of it. Scholarship on these topics scrutinizes the new identity acquired by and the treatment accorded those who leave one territory and venture across a boundary, generally speaking those who do so more or less voluntarily, and usually in search of economic betterment. The focus is, nearly invariably, upon people whose passage entails crossing international transit points.

As against that approach, I want to appraise, instead, voyages, some of which, while not precisely the result of coercion, cannot be called fully free either; and where decline in economic condition is frequently the norm. Most importantly, I intend to inspect forms of navigation where the nodes across which the mover ventures are intra-nation, domestic, not international. And I see a decline in rights where others have observed an increment. I am also prepared to take

³ For a small but critical segment of the literature on globalization in recent years, see Suzanne Berger and Ronald Dore, eds., National Diversity and Global Capitalism (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996); James H. Mittelman, ed., Globalization: Critical Reflections (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1996); William Greider, One World Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997); Philip Gummett, ed., globalization and Public Policy (Cheltenham, U.K.: Edward Elgar, 1996); Dani Rodrik, Has Globalization Gone Too Far? (Washington, D.C.: Institute for International Economics, 1997); and David A. Smith and Jozsef Borocz, eds., A New World Order? Global Transformations in the Late Twentieth Century (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).

⁴ Susan L. Shirk, How China Opened its Door (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 1994); Jude Howell, China Opens its Doors (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1993).

⁵ Domestic firms were protected from international competition through most of the 1990s (see Barry Naughton, "China's Emergence and Prospects as a Trading Nation," Brookings Papers on Economic Activity 2 (1996), p. 287).

"boundary" sometimes in a literal and sometimes in a figurative sense; after all, the shifts in the state can be imagined as displacements across time as well as across space.

My paper is in part a reply to an important current in the early 1990's study of globalization and its impacts upon citizenship. That trend investigated what happens to transients, sojourners, and migrants, once arrived in their new site of being, focusing not so much on their material welfare as upon their political prospects. It held that along with the sharply accelerated speed in the transit of goods, capital, and persons that marks globalization, has gone a worldwide spread of the concepts of economic liberalism and human rights. These global streams, this literature avers, have eventuated in a novel notion of citizenship, one that is surprisingly generous.

In this view, what has been termed a "postnational" citizenship, granted "on the basis of personhood," has increasingly offered to immigrants the rights and privileges once granted just to nationals. Whether the mechanism at work is said to be principally ideational--as, by "changes in the institutional and discursive order of rights at the global level"⁶--or ideational-cum-material--as, in the words of another author, through the dissemination of notions of social justice and human rights which accompany the spread of market relations, both domestically and internationally--this analysis purports to see underway an "extension of rights to individuals who are not full members of the societies in which they reside."⁷

In another, similar formulation, the proliferation of international human rights law, which "recognizes the individual as an object of rights regardless of national affiliations or associations with a territorially-defined people," has meant in recent years that "states [have] had to take account of persons qua persons as opposed to limiting their responsibilities to their own citizens."⁸ So both these views claim that those who transverse a spatial, territorial, international boundary can hope to be admitted more or less as constituent elements--or at least treated as such--within the unfamiliar realm where they have landed.

Though I emphasize instead here the negative outcomes of such passages, my Chinese cases of crossings do share three critical features with other migratory transitions elsewhere that also raise the issue of citizenship. These are: crossing boundaries; changes in identities (both self and official); and inclusion, exclusion, and membership, along with associated rights. My cases also, like much migration, typically entail a shift in economic standing and of social status, but in my cases these are more often imposed than chosen.

So I proceed now to present a framework for examining citizenship that goes beyond the usual postulates. I go on to speak of migration as forfeiture--of border-crossing not just in terms of incoming to a foreign place, but also in terms of forfeiture and loss, of outgoing from a familiar site and abandoning its benefits. This vantage point, I argue, can assist in capturing the downside

⁶ Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, pp. 3, 12.

⁷ James F. Hollifield, Immigrants, Markets, and States: The Political Economy of Postwar Europe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 170, 216; there is a similar argument made in Wayne A. Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, and James F. Hollifield, "Introduction: The Ambivalent Quest for Immigration Control," in Wayne A. Cornelius, Philip L. Martin, & James F. Hollifield, eds., Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), pp. 3-41.

⁸ David Jacobson, "New Border Customs: Migration and the Changing Role of the State," UCLA Journal of International Law and Foreign Affairs 3:2 (Fall/Winter 1998-1999), p. 453; and idem., Rights Across Borders: Immigration and the Decline of Citizenship (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996).

of migration for those who partake of it. I then outline the incidence of this phenomenon of forfeiture in crossings and status switches across not just spatial but also temporal sites.

These sites are all within the contemporary and recent past Chinese internal context. In the steps away from and to them, will and volition may frequently play less of a role than in many movements elsewhere (and sometimes play no role at all); economic loss is often substantial; and, insofar as granting rights are involved, miserliness is more the mean than is largesse. And yet the border-crossings I discuss are not those of refugees or fugitives, despite the unfortunate outcomes their subjects commonly endure. For these are people moving across landscapes within their own motherland.

Citizenship has been variously defined.⁹ Generally speaking, the bulk of the literature on this topic has been dominated by Westerners, and evinces a Western perspective. That is, writers have anchored their definitions on a European/American understanding, connecting its practice primarily with participation in the political life of the community. Thus, they emphasize one's ability either directly to join in decisionmaking or else, at a minimum, to engage in the electoral process, thereby rooting the concept in a civil and legal status and the rights attendant upon that status.¹⁰

But in China's case, the chance for meaningful political participation in law-making or even in the electoral process is yet negligible to nonexistent for the urban resident. Consequently, I find it more useful to start with the formulation of Brian S. Turner, who emphasizes the identity/membership and distributive components of citizenship. As he has framed it, "the modern question of citizenship is structured by two issues." The first of these has to do with social dimensions, or, one might say, with belonging to a community; the second concerns the right to an allocation of resources [emphasis added].¹¹

Others have focused upon different attributes of the situation of the citizen: For Yasemin Soysal and others, the defining hallmark of citizenship is exclusivity, as it "confers rights and privileges" just to those legally living within specifically designated borders [emphasis added].¹² Similarly, Rogers Brubaker identifies "social closure"--an institution that is "internally inclusive..externally exclusive"--as the core component of what citizenship is about.¹³ Targeting these more abstract traits that lie at the crux of citizenship makes possible an extension of the concept beyond its more usual home in political participation and civil liberties.

⁹ The following paragraphs selectively draw upon, but update and scramble, some parts of Chapter One of my recent book, Contesting Citizenship in Urban China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

¹⁰ For instance, see J. M. Barbalet, Citizenship: Rights, Struggle and Class Inequality (Milton Keynes, Open University Press, 1988), 2; Elizabeth Meehan, Citizenship and the European Community (London: SAGE Publications, 1993), 18; Derek Heater, Citizenship: The Civic Ideal in World History, Politics and Education (London: Longman, 1990), 246; and Gary P. Freeman, "Migration and the Political Economy of the Welfare State," Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science 485 (1986), 53.

¹¹ Bryan S. Turner, "Contemporary Problems in the Theory of Citizenship," in Bryan S. Turner, ed., Citizenship and Social Theory (London: SAGE Publications, 1993), 2.

¹² Soysal, op. cit., 119; Meehan, op. cit., 22; 21; Zig Layton-Henry, "The Challenge of Political Rights," in Zig Layton-Henry, ed., The Political Rights of Migrant Workers in Western Europe (London: SAGE Publications, 1990), 12.

¹³ Rogers Brubaker, Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), Chapter One.

Some scholars too have recognized that the meaning of the concept and the nature of its specific substance can vary from one place to the next¹⁴; and also that the phenomenon of defining the citizen is part of or subject to larger, changing processes¹⁵ in accord with the nature and prevailing conception of the political community in which it is located.¹⁶ Over time, alterations in the context within which a community finds itself, whether due to social, political, or economic factors, may result in contractions or expansions of the eligible population or else in the breadth of the treatment its possession accords.¹⁷

Thus, the values, behaviors, and roster that citizenship encompasses in a society at any point will reflect the norms of whatever might then be the dominant participatory and allocatory institutions in the community with which the citizen is affiliated. But wherever or whenever the notion appears, citizenship is a category which in its true and practical sense must first of all apply just to those conceived as "included," those within the walls of the socially enclosed community.

Forfeiture

Understanding the concept of "citizenship" in the broad, social sense of membership and participation in all the dominant institutions of a particular community, or inclusion, that I am employing, I make a claim that in the past two decades two classes of Chinese people currently residing in the municipalities--the immigrating peasants seeking urban jobs and wealth since the '80's and those workers laid off in the '90's who are bereft of the education, youth, skills, funds or the connections necessary to finding reemployment--have had to relinquish a sort of citizenship they once possessed. Their migration, then, from one site to another, has been at least in part a process of loss and deprivation, whatever else may be entailed.

To assert that these two categories of individuals have been divested of their "citizenship," then, is to say this: that they are no longer receiving whatever social or economic rights and privileges members of the societies in which they once resided (such as themselves) used to receive from the state and/or from dominant social institutions. Defined thus, only those who are fully members of a community can be said to enjoy genuine citizenship or participation in it. For, in the words of T. H. Marshall, who terms citizenship "a status bestowed on those who are full members of a community," a constitutive part of citizenship is the social dimension, which includes

¹⁴ Meehan, op. cit., 17; T.H. Marshall, Sociology at the Crossroads and Other Essays (London: Heinemann, 1963), 87.

¹⁵ Soledad Garcia, "Cities and Citizenship," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 20, 1 (1996), 8, 9; Hollifield, Immigrants, 18.

¹⁶ Barbalet, op. cit., 2; Meehan, op. cit., 20.

¹⁷ Turner (1993), 9; Soysal, op. cit., 12, 137; Barbalet, op. cit., 72, 77; Garcia, op. cit., 7-8; Hollifield, op. cit., 18.

the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare and security to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society.¹⁸

The Peasant Migrant

The state's first shift, the market one, opened the gates for the peasant to exit his/her rural home. Cityward farmers, much like their migrating confreres around the globe, select to leave home sometimes for want of the possibility of making a living there, sometimes for lack of anything to do at home, sometimes because of inadequate arable land, and sometimes just to test their mettle in what promise to be enticing circumstances in the city.¹⁹ But in the process, they forfeit community, social standing, and whatever welfare services/mutual help long-time neighbors may share among themselves.

All of these goods, of course, had already been considerably winnowed away from the folk in the countryside over the decade of the 1980s with the elimination of the rural, socialist-era communes. Most observers have lauded the collapse of the communes in the Chinese countryside after the early 1980s, and the simultaneous contracting out of the land to individual families--plus the right given families to dispose of a large portion of the crops they produced on that land.

But the concomitant ending of such benefits as costless rudimentary health care and education and jointly arranged irrigation, reclamation, and infrastructure construction that were the fruits of commune labor, and that died along with it, constitutes an undeniable social deficit.²⁰ Where, one could say, for better or worse, once citizens obtained, living as members of a community and engaging in joint activities while obtaining more or less egalitarian outputs and benefits, now there are simply discrete individuals and households.

In addition to the effective termination of his/her membership upon leaving, once s/he emigrates to the municipalities, s/he faces immediate outsider status. The old pariahhood of his/her social status in the city, which was based simply upon the baldly inferior rural household registration s/he carries along, has only been amplified by the nature of the state's new mission. For the concept of "modernization" embodied in the 1978 Third Plenum's "socialist modernization" was not really socialist at all. What it actually alluded to was not only breakneck industrialization and a growth-at-any-cost style of economic strategy.

At the same time it envisioned creating an urban China attractive to the eye, glistening and unblemished. It meant forging world-class showcase metropolises, with the declassé banished from sight to the extent possible. For urban dwellers and their political leaders find the rural incomer unsightly, even as they charge him/her with constructing a well-serviced, state-of-the-art, "modern" city. So even up to the year 2002, despite a vast array of reforms in the socialist

¹⁸ Marshall, *op. cit.*, 87, 73-77.

¹⁹ I cover this topic at length in my 1999 book, *Contesting Citizenship*.

²⁰ In 1998, just one to three percent in the poor [read poor rural] areas were covered by cooperative medical facilities, whereas these services were widespread in the countryside before 1978. and while the state's financial commitment to rural health service constituted 22 percent of the total medical and health expenditure in 1978, it had declined to just 10 percent in the 1990s. so about 90 percent of rural households have to pay directly for almost all of the health services used. See Tony Saich, "China's New Leadership: The Challenges to the Politics of Muddling Through," *Current History* 101, 656 (September 2002), 252.

economy, a person's social standing remains blighted by virtue of his or her having been born in the countryside.²¹

Indeed, the site of one's household registration, or hukou, in short, is still the only place where s/he can have any type of citizenship. The elemental fact of the urban hukou, the lack of possession of which not only bans former-farmers from receiving benefits in the city, but also segregates and denigrates them, turning them into virtual foreigners within the cities of their own country. Their labor is valued even as the elite vision of the modern city does not include them, and thus does not count them among the citizenry there.

The exclusion of peasants from state-sponsored benefits in cities²² has entailed their rejection from what Harry Eckstein has termed "civic inclusion," or "access to institutions that provide capacities and resources"²³; alternatively, in the words of Rogers Brubaker, from the "goods and opportunities that shape life chances" which only citizenship can guarantee.²⁴ Indeed, the hukou--very much as a badge of citizenship in a Western society would do--to a very large extent continues to determine one's life chances, including one's work opportunities, social rank, wage, welfare, and housing.²⁵

So a child living in a Chinese city without urban registration there must either pay exorbitant charges for schooling, settle for grossly inferior classes, or do without; an adult is most apt to be hired only for demeaning positions without any contract or security.²⁶ And s/he is excluded even in principle from the incipient welfare schemes being designed for poor, unemployed, or retired urbanites.²⁷ Just as residence requirements aimed at excluding foreign immigrants from political participation in liberal states,²⁸ the Chinese hukou even serves as a

²¹ For a very recent report bearing this out, see Issue No. 2 (2002) of China Rights Forum (dated July 2002) (hereafter CRF), especially the articles, "Shutting out the Poorest," pp. 4-13; and Nicolas Becquelin, "Enforcing the Rural-Urban Divide," pp. 22-27.

²² Under the communes, set up in the late 1950's, but dismantled with the onset of economic reform by 1982, peasants in their rural homes got a share of farm production, mutual assistance in labor, and, in most localities rudimentary schooling and medical care. In most of rural China after the early 1980's, households were on their own or paid for these benefits.

²³ Harry Eckstein, "Civic Inclusion and Its Discontents," in Harry Eckstein, Regarding Politics: Essays on Political Theory, Stability, and Change (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 346.

²⁴ Brubaker, op. cit., 24. In ibid., 180 he lists as crucial elements of citizenship "not only political rights but the unconditional right to enter and reside in the country, complete access to the labor market, and eligibility for the full range of welfare benefits."

²⁵ Guan Xikui, "Perspective on China's Present Household Registration System," Shehui kexue [Social Science] 2 (1989):32-36.

²⁶ See my article, "The Chinese Work Unit and Transient Labor in the Transition from Socialism," Modern China 21, 2 (1995), 155-83; and Anita Chan, China's Workers Under Assault: The Exploitation of Labor in a Globalizing Economy (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 2001).

²⁷ See Michael Dutton, "Editor's Introduction," in Zhang Qingwu, "Basic Facts on the Household Registration System," Chinese Economic Studies, 22, 1 (1988), 8 for a description of the situation a decade ago. This situation looks rather different today, as urban people's benefits have markedly declined.

²⁸ For Western Europe, see Jan Rath, "Voting Rights," in Layton-Henry, op. cit., 128, where he states that, "In most European countries, foreign residents do not have the right to vote or to run for office in local, regional or national elections."

means of preventing what are known as "floating" farmers from exercising the franchise in a city (for whatever it is worth in today's China), no matter how long they may have lived there, and thus from being genuine members of the municipality.²⁹

The Laid-Off Worker

With the global shift, the ordinary, middle-aged, under-educated manual worker has been furloughed in droves since 1997. Because of the limited--or perhaps, better put, the nonexistent--labor market for such people, they have been deprived of income, community, welfare and security along with the termination of employment. Loss in case, as with the urban migrant farmer, has come as a result of the members of these two classes having passed over a boundary, whether in the form of a purposeful advance across space for the peasants, or, in the case of the dismissed workers, from having been hoisted against their choice across a divide in time (a divide separating their job-holding days from their present jobless state).

Two great social theorists--T. H. Marshall and Judith Shklar--both posited a linkage between working and citizenship, between the loss of a job and the loss of membership or social citizenship. In presenting his trichotomous understanding of citizenship, Marshall held that, "In the economic field the basic civil right is the right to work."³⁰ And in Shklar's characterization of American citizenship, she grounded the notion in two essential features, the first one the more typically emphasized equality of rights, but secondly, also "the opportunity to work and to be paid an earned reward for one's labor."³¹ She alleges that those without work are less than citizens, for they are not a part of the functioning community. Similarly, as Tony Judt penned in a 1990's issue of Foreign Affairs,

This term [what the French call the `excluded'] describes people who, having left the full-time work force, or never having joined it, are in a certain sense only partly members of the national community..Such people--part-time or short-term workers, immigrants..or prematurely and forcibly retired manual workers--cannot live decently, participate in the culture of their local or national community..³²

A mid-1990's volume on social policy takes such reasoning one step further. It designates the mass unemployment, pressures to reduce welfare benefits, and decreased receptivity to migrant

²⁹ Dutton, op. cit., 8, notes that the right to vote is denied those residing in a locale in which they are not permanent residents. According to China Daily, August 19, 2002, 1, in a recent election in a Beijing residential area, migrants were allowed to participate in an election for community head and officials. This was certainly a novel and exceptional incident.

³⁰ Marshall, op. cit.

³¹ Judith N. Shklar, American Citizenship: The Quest for Inclusion (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), pp. 1-3.

³² Tony Judt, "The Social Question Redivivus," Foreign Affairs 76, 5 (1997), 98, 100. On the French "exclus," also see Mark Kesselman, "Does the French Labor Movement Have a Future?" in John T.S. Keeler and Martin A. Schain, eds., Chirac's Challenge: Liberalization, Europeanization, and Malaise in France (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 154.

labor in Europe, along with the marked restriction in social inclusion these processes have spelt, as a deterioration in "social citizenship rights."³³

The Chinese state's second shift--the one that pushed the common laborer out from the zone of the included--ran more or less in parallel with the regime's choice to strive for entry first into the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs beginning in 1986 and later into the World Trade Organization when that body replaced the GATT in 1995. Whether or not this decision was necessitated by serious structural weaknesses in the Chinese economy and among state-owned enterprises, it nonetheless has amounted to a major assault on the proletariat and its citizenship.

In preparation for entry, throughout the late 1980's and 1990's, China's leaders initiated structural changes in its foreign trade system, including phasing out direct subsidies for exports, cutting tariffs on thousands of categories of merchandise, and eliminating quotas on the import of many products.³⁴ By 1997, the country's average tariff rate had been brought down from about 43 in 1994 percent to 17 percent in just three years; by the time of entry at the end of 2001, the overall average was just 15 percent.³⁵ With China's entry into the WTO late 2001, reduced tariffs are surely set to expose producers to severely intensified international competition.³⁶ The impact on domestic industry of these steps was summed up neatly by one of my unemployed informants in the medium-sized Sichuanese city of Zigong.³⁷ He bemoaned in late 2001 that, "A lot of factories have gone bankrupt because people prefer foreign-made electronics."³⁸

Besides these structural transformations in the conduct of trade, there also began to appear in the China of the 1990s the selfsame search for developing flexible labor, competitive strategies, and efficiency that countries already members of these bodies preach and practice.³⁹ For instance, even China's conservative then-Premier Li Peng, speaking to the Ninth National

³³ McFate, "Introduction," p. 13, and Roger Lawson and William Julius Wilson, "Poverty, Social Rights, and the Quality of Citizenship," in Katherine McFate, Roger Lawson, William Julius Wilson, Poverty, Inequality and the Future of Social Policy (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1995), 712.

³⁴ Margaret M. Pearson, "China's Integration into the International Trade Regime," in Elizabeth Economy and Michel Oksenberg, ed., China Joins the World: Progress and Prospects (NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999), 169, 176; *idem.*, "The Case of China's Accession to GATT/WTO," in David M. Lampton, ed., The Making of Chinese Foreign and Security Policy in the Era of Reform, 1978-2000 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 343.

³⁵ David M. Lampton, Same Bed, Different Dreams: Managing U.S.-China Relations, 1989-2000 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 181-82; Nicholas Lardy, Financial Times, March 15, 2002.

³⁶ See my article, "Jobs and Joining: What's the Effect of WTO for China's Urban Employment?" The China Journal (hereafter CJ), forthcoming.

³⁷ Its population was 1.057 million at the end of 1999 (Zhongguo chengshi fazhan yanjiuhui [Chinese urban development research committee], Zhongguo chengshi nianjian 2000 [Chinese urban yearbook 2000] (Beijing: Zhongguo chengshi nianjian chubanshe [Chinese urban yearbook publisher], 2000), 110.

³⁸ Interview, November 3, 2001.

³⁹ Mary Gallagher, "An Unequal Battle: Why Labor Laws & Regulations Fail to Protect Workers," CRF, Summer 1997, p. 12. See also Minghua Zhao and Theo Nichols, "Management Control of Labour in State-Owned Enterprises: Cases from the Textile Industry," CJ 36 (1996), pp. 1-21; William A. Byrd, The Market Mechanism and Economic Reforms in China (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 112-19.

People's Congress in March 1998, picked up the global jargon without a flaw. In various segments of his speech, he stated that,

The government will encourage the establishment of large enterprise groups in order to increase their competitiveness in both domestic and foreign markets..We should continue to implement..preferential policies that support enterprises when they carry out mergers and bankruptcies and try to increase efficiency through reducing staff size..We should take sure that..small enterprises..can adapt themselves to the market in a more flexible way."⁴⁰
[emphasis added]

Around the same time, the official domestic media proclaimed that, "Market competition has forced state enterprises to discharge large numbers of workers."⁴¹

And so the management of Chinese labor became increasingly "flexible" over time, beginning (at least on paper) with a 1986 Regulation on Labor Contracts. This ruling represented an initial move away from the permanent, full-employment system for urban workers that had obtained since the 1950s, as China made more and more of a move away from socialism. That measure, though slow to be fulfilled, was followed by a Regulation on the Employment of Staff and Workers that was intended to reform the job recruitment system from the long-term socialist one based upon the administrative allocation of labor to arrangements that would offer firms more autonomy in defining criteria for hiring; and a Regulation on Discharging Employees, for the first time giving the enterprises the power to dismiss workers,⁴² though relatively few of them took such a step at that time.

In July 1994 the Eighth Session of the Standing Committee of the Eighth National People's Congress passed a new Labor Law, which granted firms freedom to fire: its Article 27 stated they could shed workers if near bankruptcy or in serious difficulty,⁴³ a power which by that time had begun to show some teeth. The crowning cap on this progressive "regularization" of Chinese labor management occurred at the September 1997 Fifteenth Party Congress, when a policy calling on firms "to cut the workforce and raise efficiency"⁴⁴ became the watchword in labor relations. At the close of that year, the Ministry of Labor's National Work Conference announced, apparently with much chagrin,

⁴⁰ Summary of World Broadcasts (hereafter SWB), FE/3168 (3/6/98), S1/9, from Xinhua [New China News Agency] (hereafter XH), 3/5/98.

⁴¹ SWB, FE/3136 (1/28/98), p. S/2, from Liaowang [Outlook], 1/5/98.

⁴² Lin Lean Lim and Gyorgy Sziraczki, "Employment, Social Security, and Enterprise Reforms in China," in Gregory K. Schoepfle, ed., Changes in China's Labor Market: Implications for the Future (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, 1996), p. 50.

⁴³ Translated in U.S Foreign Broadcast Information Service, July 19, 1994, 18-26, from XH, July 5, 1994. See also James V. Feinerman, "The Past--and Future--of Labor Law in China," in Schoepfle, op. cit., 119-34.

⁴⁴ At a January 1997 State Council National Work Conference on State Enterprise Staff and Workers' Reemployment, attendees were told that solving their firms' difficulties depended upon enterprise reform, system transformation, cutting staff, normalizing bankruptcies, and encouraging mergers. This is noted in Yang Yiyong et al., Shiye chongji bo [The shock wave of unemployment] (Beijing: Jinri zhongguo chubanshe, n.d. (probably 1997)), 220.

Dismissing and laying off workers is a move against our will taken when we have no way to turn for help, but also the only way to extricate ourselves from predicament.⁴⁵

In the wake of this meeting, in the period since, probably 50 millions of workers, at a minimum, have lost their positions;⁴⁶ perhaps a majority of these have landed on the streets, forced to eke out a meager pittance from hawking junk or selling small meals.⁴⁷ Because of the massive difficulties in establishing and installing a social security network to support them, and because their unemployment--along with the shocking numbers of their similarly-placed colleagues--has rendered them as vulnerable to abuse, insecurity, and lack of welfare benefits in the eyes of employers as ever, the peasant migrants have been, they too must be regarded among the excluded, those whose citizenship has been relinquished. In their case, they have transited across a temporal divide, not a spatial one.

As all this transpired, the very idea of what "work" is, and thus of which "workers" matter has been totally reconfigured. That is, "work" has been reconceptualized in accord with the kind of efforts and abilities now deemed necessary to achieve the goals of the current leadership. And in addition, the demands first of the market transition, and, later, the global one, have summoned up new social categories--or, more precisely, have recalled to the scene groups submerged, extinguished, or villified for decades in the domain of Mao Zedong.

During the Maoist era the term we translate as "work," gongzuo, specifically designated labor for wages in the formal sector in a work unit for which urban household registration was required. In the words of the editors of a recent book on work in China, this type of activity, especially in a state-owned enterprise, "topped the job status hierarchy."⁴⁸ And those filling such posts were likewise the lords of the laboring world.

But with the globalization of Chinese society, which is accompanying the globalization of its economy, the Communist Party for the first time in the spring of 2002 actually went so far as to award the title of "China's Model Worker" to several private entrepreneurs at its May Day celebrations.⁴⁹ And no one doubts that Party leader Jiang Zemin's "theory of the three

⁴⁵ Ming Pao [Bright Daily], December 19, 1997, in SWB FE/3107 (December 20, 1997), G/7.

⁴⁶ Dorothy J. Solinger, "Why We Cannot Count the 'Unemployed,'" China Quarterly (hereafter CQ), No. 167 (September 2001), using data available to me through the autumn of 2000. The highest published figure as of early 2002 was one based on the State Economic and Trade Commission's summary of the developments in employment during the Ninth Plan period (1995-2000), when, it noted, nationwide, 31 million fewer people were working in the state-sector firms and over 15 million fewer in the urban collectives (see "Jiuye jiegou zhuanbian, jiuye xingshi yensu: 2001 nian shengyu laodongli 1400 wan ren" [Transformation of the employment structure, the employment situation is serious: in 2001 there were 14 million surplus laborers], Liaowang zhoukan) [Outlook Weekly], 46 (November 12, 2001), 15). But even these figures are far from complete, as I discuss in "Jobs and Joining."

⁴⁷ I have just published an article on this, entitled, "The Plight of the Laid-Off Proletariat," CQ, No. 170 (2002), 304-26.

⁴⁸ Gail E. Henderson, Barbara Entwisle, Li Ying, Yang Mingliang, Xu Siyuan, and Zhai Fengying, "Re-Drawing the Boundaries of Work: Views on the Meaning of Work (Gongzuo)" in Barbara Entwisle and Gail E. Henderson, eds., Re-drawing boundaries: work, households, and gender in China (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 35.

⁴⁹ China Labour E-Bulletin, No. 7 (June 7, 2002), editor's note.

represents," first aired in the year 2000, is meant to enshrine the labor of "advanced social forces" (those partaking in the "most advanced culture" and those involved in operating the "most advanced productive forces") at least on a par (at the level of discourse, at any rate) with--but practically speaking well above that--of the simple, ordinary laborer.⁵⁰

So with the shifts in the state, a vertiable reversal has virtually upended the class order and the structure of stature from what they had been in the past. Changes in elite policies led in turn to new types of charges and, hence, new tasks, for the state. This then shed different meanings on the kinds of labor that deserved value and thus upon those capable--and not capable--of performing that sort of work. Only the former earned the state's respect and rewards. The others have been not just downgraded, but often forgotten altogether, sacrificed on the twin altars of the marketplace and the global stage, excluded and denuded of their citizenship, I argue. The final outcome has been a wholly novel delimitation of the borders that encase the worthy members and shut out the undeserving, the expendable. And these, I would argue, are the borders that effectively separate the operative citizen from the outsider in China today.

⁵⁰ Joseph Fewsmith discusses the "three represents" in his new book, China Since Tiananmen (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2001).