

# The Transformation of Chinese Socialism

Chun Lin

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**Chun Lin : The Transformation of Chinese Socialism** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Transformation of Chinese Socialism:

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Excellent study of modern China By William Podmore  
Lin Chun teaches comparative politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science. In this wide-ranging and intelligent book, she examines China's past and present and its future prospects. Chapter 1 places China's revolution in its context of imperialism and capitalism, using the concepts of nationalism, socialism and developmentalism. Chapter 2 studies China's political economy, Chapter 3 the idea and practice of 'people's democracy', and Chapter 4 the reform model. Right from 1949, the new government worked to end centuries of discrimination against women. As she writes, "Through legal and policy instruments the communists effectively banned foot binding, child-bride marriages, and forced widowhood chastity. Mercenary and arranged marriages without the consent of the individuals concerned were outlawed, so was the trafficking of women and wife beating." Amartya Sen praised 'China's excellent

achievements' in raising the quality of life for women in education, health care, employment and other aspects of gender equality, which also decisively lowered China's fertility rate. The government also worked to end discrimination against China's minority peoples. As she notes, "generally speaking, social gains for China's minorities since 1949 in education, poverty alleviation, population growth, and public welfare were real." And, "Since the 1951 'peaceful settlement' negotiated between the Tibetan elites and Beijing, life expectancy had increased from thirty-six years to sixty-seven years in 2003, and infant mortality and absolute poverty steadily declined." She cites Aiguo Lu and Manuel Montes who wrote, "Measured by social indicators such as life expectancy, infant mortality and educational attainment, China forged way ahead of most market economies at similar income levels and surpassed a number of countries with per capita incomes many times greater." By the late 1970s, the health service covered, according to the World Bank, "nearly the entire urban and 85% of the rural population, an unrivalled achievement among low-income countries." Between 1949 and 1980, life expectancy at birth nearly doubled, from 36 to 67, the biggest improvement in the world. By 2003, it was 71.8 years for men and 73 for women, compared to 64 years in India in 2002. As Maurice Meisner concluded, "few events in world history have done more to better the lives of more people." The Chinese people achieved all this by their own efforts, which included, crucially, building a people's state. As Lin Chun writes, "an effective public-serving state power is, everywhere, a key to development." She points out that the CCP from its beginning fought for social progress and national independence: "Fighting on two fronts to remove both a native ancient regime and foreign domination, communism in China was firmly a modern and democratic force." The party practised mass line democracy. She quotes political scientist Bernard Crick: "as long as the power enjoys a popular basis, the communists "do not pretend to be democratic" - "they are democratic" as a matter of factual judgment when the party was voluntarily followed by the majority of the people." She argues that capitalism is less democratic, and socialism is more democratic, than the myths would allow. She rejects the totalitarian model as adequate to explain China's reality. She writes, "the political organization necessary for a participatory citizenry can take forms other than competitive political parties. Nationally and locally instituted public forums backed up by legislation may coordinate autonomous associations and political participation. It is not inconceivable that many offices can be run, as they have here and there in history, by citizens in rotation or selected by votes or lot, rather than by professional politicians and bureaucrats. This could be part of a depoliticization of politics toward the withering away of the state." 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Socialism and democracy in modern China By M. A. Krul Despite what the title might suggest, "The Transformation of Chinese Socialism" by Lin Chun is not yet another political economic analysis of the changes between Maoist policy and the current course of the Chinese government, but rather a very extensive, brilliant and subtle analysis of the changing nature and interpretation of socialism as a political concept and ideal in that country. She describes how the fundamentals of the Chinese Communist push towards modernity rests on the three pillars of socialism, development, and nationalism, and discusses with great insight the meaning and importance of each of these as well as how their emphasis, interpretation and relative weight has changed over time since the Chinese Revolution. In this, Lin Chun uses her extensive knowledge of modern Chinese history to great effect. Contrary to many authors writing on this subject, she takes up a subtle and nuanced position which recognizes the positives and negatives of the Mao period and Deng period both, neither of which are seen as 'obviously' better than the other, but rather to be seen as successive stages in the transformation of China following from the political logic of the Chinese Revolution. The various meanings that one can give to concepts such as 'democracy', 'liberty' and 'development' in this context are given all the necessary attention and considered at length. Lin Chun does not shy away from criticizing many of the debatable or flawed assumptions of liberal outsider ideas about what course China should have taken, nor the neoliberal approach of the Jiang and Hu governments in China itself, which she clearly rejects. However, even there she does not simply dismiss that new approach as a power grab by the bourgeoisie or as a caving to Western pressure, as some would, but explains it in terms of the Chinese government responding to a crisis in legitimacy in the wrong manner, which in turn creates a larger crisis of this kind, causing a vicious circle. Lin Chun's own sympathies are clearly in favor of some form of 'democratic socialism', which as she describes it must both liberate people from the burdens of backwardness and from excessive domination by disempowering states (domestic or foreign), as well as being an explicit liberation from capitalism. This leans generally toward the market socialist side, although this is never stated explicitly. In any case, the approach of analyzing both the meaning and presence, or lack thereof, of democracy in China in the context of a purposeful rejection of Western capitalism as the road to development is particularly insightful in understanding the recent history of China. She admits in the introduction that she had to have an editor remove the worst jargon, but this has worked, making the book very information dense but by no means annoyingly hard to read. Much recommended to all interested in socialism in China.

In this significant contribution to both political theory and China studies, Lin Chun provides a critical assessment of the scope and limits of socialist experiments in China, analyzing their development since the victory of the Chinese communist revolution in 1949 and reflecting on the country's likely paths into the future. Lin suggests that China's twentieth-century trajectory be grasped in terms of the collective search by its people for a modern

alternative to colonial modernity, bureaucratic socialism, and capitalist subordination. Evaluating contending interpretations of the formation and transformation of Chinese socialism in the contemporary conditions of global capitalism, Lin argues that the post-Mao reform model must be remade.

“The Transformation of Chinese Socialism is a visionary and critical reorientation for social theory. It is a great reminder of what the stakes are just now and why socialism, far from being defunct, has as much to offer governance theories and policy planners as it always has.”—Tani E. Barlow, author of *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism*