the consolidation of the social power of corporate capital." The rights regimes and the legal or juridical orders associated with the non-human persons are both national and global. Any flight to rights as political potential, then, must take this fact into serious account and must cope with the ubiquitous and proliferating problem of zombies in our midst.

Hai Ren

How do we theorize the Chinese state, a state both transforming itself rapidly through economic rationalism and yet standing firmly through governmental authoritarianism? Where and how is the figure of the middle class situated in this Chinese state? How does a critical understanding of the Chinese situation offer insights into problems of risks associated with the middle class in the current global economic crisis/recession? To address these questions, I look at both the politics of the Chinese state and its transformative relations to the people, the subject of the Chinese nation. More specifically, I examine the evolving relationship between the Chinese state and the middle class. My argument is that the historical transformation of the People’s Republic of China from a socialist country to a neoliberal state, which corresponded with the fundamental changes of the state’s political representation of its people during the historical events of the Chinese government’s resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong, leads to the development of Chinese society into a risk society, a society in which the state reforms governmental institutions to redirect responsibilities and redistribute risks to the individuals. It is in this context that the idea of the middle class was conceived as an insurance measure to address the emerging and enduring risks of the Chinese neoliberal state. These changes in the relationship between the Chinese state and its population controls shed light on the understanding of some of the major risks associated with the middle class, a prominent figure in the current global economic crisis.

The State and the People

One of the most critical and enduring operations of the modern nation-state is the classification of its populations into governmental subjects, both as individuals and as a group. Since Hobbes and Spinoza, there have been two major lines of political thinking about the counting of the state's subjects. One addresses the relationship between the state and the people, and the other the relationship between the state and the multitude. The first line of thought follows Hobbes to maintain that the only relevant political subject of the modern nation-state is "the people." Those who are excluded as "the people" are stateless from the perspective of a particular state; and those without any state are "uncivilized" and thus "barbarians." This line of thinking became dominant in the times of colonialism and imperialism. It still underpins the formulations of immigration policies throughout the world.

In contrast, the second line of thinking, first developed by Spinoza, is equally influential and enduring. Instead of the people, the central figure in the politics of counting the state's subjects is the multitude. An influential contemporary development of this line of thought argues that the relative decline of the nation-state and the rise of empires under recent conditions of globalization and the development of culture industries have led to the formation of a new kind of political subject, "the multitude," that displaces the old political subject, "the people." Spatially, the multitude fights against empire by demanding "global citizenship," that is, "the general right to control its own movement." Meanwhile, temporally, the multitude "takes hold of time and constructs new temporalities" that enable the multitude's potential to make "its action coherent as a real political tendency." The multitude as "a form of social and political existence for the many," or for the multitude, is not supposed to be commensurable with the one; and thus, it should not be converted into the One, which is the state.4

2. Hardt and Negri, Empire, p. 400.
3. Ibid., p. 401.
4. Virno, A Grammar of the Multitude, p. 21. This issue is not only subjective but also objective. For example, as Jean-Luc Nancy points out, "the unique and incommensurate emergence of a singularity, an absolute, singular sense," associated with the multitude, is obviously "not measurable in terms of any signification of 'rights' and 'freedoms,'" which

The above distinction between these two lines of thinking on the relationship between the state and its subjects fundamentally raises the question of the state, not only as a political but also as an ontological issue.5 Alain Badiou, in his discussion of the political ontology of counting the multiples, differentiates between the state as a situation in which elements are grouped into parts (or sets) and the state as the meta-structure of that situation.6 This insight enables us to consider a special characteristic of the state. The state functions as the government that rules a country through juridical means. Simultaneously, the state also operates as something above or beyond the government, in that the state's meta-structure enables state sovereignty through the legal constitutional framework of the nation-state. As Giorgio Agamben points out, a sovereign state becomes possible only when the state establishes legal rules and norms while paradoxically placing itself outside them as an exception.7 In addition to exception, another essential element of sovereignty is decision. For Carl Schmitt, the formal qualities of the modern state (legal normativeness, rational regularity and evenness, and objective and technical refinements) are less important to sovereignty than its human quality of making decisions. He declares: "sovereign is he who decides on the exceptional case." Thus, both exception and decision are essential to the state's sovereignty.

Any change of the state's sovereignty entails the change of the state's government. Normally, the nation-state's governmental operations through juridical means aim at formulating groups that are consistent and coherent, and thus governable. These groups are determined by using such categories as class, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, religion, and political party. The addition of a new category or the subtraction of an old one may change the dynamics among the existing groups and thus their relationship to one another. However, when a decisive event of exception modifies the state's

5. For example, many scholars such as Hardt, Negri, Virno, and Gilles Deleuze regard the multitude as a new political ontology.
sovereignty. Hence, it also recounts (that is, redefines, reinvents, and recalculates) what constitutes the state's government and its governable subjects.

Change rarely leads to reassurance, especially of sovereignty and governmentality. For Schmitt, any sovereign decision upon exception bears risk. The decision itself may be risky as it may endanger the political. Meanwhile, the decision might bring about risks to the normal operations of the government. Risks are both spectral and real in the modification of the state's sovereignty and governmentality. Thus, the politics of the state include the management of risks. To address how the Chinese state manages its risks in its sovereign and governmental transformations, I first discuss historical changes of political representation by the Chinese Communist Party, the ruling party of the People's Republic of China, and consider how these changes took place through the historical event of Hong Kong's return to China, in which the Chinese state decided to become a neoliberal state. Then, I examine how the development of the middle class becomes a political operation of risk management in neoliberal China. This is followed by a general discussion of the middle class as a risk subject in the conclusion.

**Changes of Political Representation in China**

The development of contemporary China into “one country with two systems” (yiguo liangzhi), a Chinese state with both socialist and capitalist systems, has been based on fundamental changes in the way in which the Communist Party represents the people of China. From the establishment of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in 1921 to the Chinese government's resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong in 1997, the representation of the proletariat (via revolution and proletariat dictatorship) was the dominant politics of the Chinese socialist state. As early as 1919, Li Dazhao introduced the 1918 Russian Revolution to a Chinese audience, and interpreted China as a “proletarian nation,” part of the world proletariat. Under the influence of the Comintern (the 3rd International of the Communist Party), established by Lenin in 1919, and the publication of The Communist Manifesto in China in 1920, the establishment of the CCP and its development were strongly affected by Lenin's thoughts, especially his theory of the proletariat state—the way in which the proletariat could establish their own state through revolutionary struggles. The CCP incorporated the figure of the proletariat into its founding agenda: “In defining the tactics of the struggle in the transition period, it was pointed out that the Party not only cannot reject but, on the contrary, must actively call on the proletariat to take part in and to lead the bourgeois democratic movement as well” (1921). Zinoviev, a major Soviet leader, spoke to the Chinese delegates in Moscow in 1922: “Remember that the process of history has placed the question thus: you either win your independence side by side with the proletariat, or you do not win it at all. Either you receive your emancipation at the hands of the proletariat, in cooperation with it, under its guidance, or your are doomed to remain the slaves of an English, American, and Japanese camarilla.” This idea of taking sides in the sense of the political partisan later became one of the most important characteristics of Mao Zedong’s thoughts.

In the history of the CCP, Mao played the key role in theoretically articulating the CCP's role within the framework of the modern socialist state.

Mao extended Leninism to define the Chinese proletariat as the peasant in the 1920s. After investigating the living conditions of peasants in Hunan between 1925 and 1926, Mao wrote: “They can be divided into soldiers, bandits, robbers, beggars, and prostitutes. These five categories of people have different names, and they enjoy a somewhat different status in society. But they are all human beings, and they all have five senses and four limbs, and are therefore one. They each have a different way of making a living... But to the extent that they must all earn their livelihood and cook rice to eat, they are one.” In his 1929 letter to Li Lisan, a prominent leader of the CCP who believed that the CCP should focus on urban workers’ struggles, Mao argued: “For in the revolution in semi-colonial China, the peasant struggle must always fail if it does not have the leadership of

12. Quoted in Spence, The Search for Modern China, p. 312.
13. Ibid., p. 313.
14. Michael Dutton points out that Mao's distinction between the enemy and the friend in Chinese revolutionary practices came from Lenin and was originally influenced by Carl Schmitt's theory on the political. See Dutton, Policing Chinese Politics (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2005). That distinction was expressed as one between the capitalists and the proletariat.
15. Spence, The Search for Modern China, p. 386.
During the war against Japanese invasion, Mao published a long essay entitled “New Democratic Theory” (1940) in which he considered the Chinese revolution as part of a worldwide revolution. Compared with the bourgeois revolutions in Europe and the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, Mao argued, the Chinese revolution was unique because it took place in “a semi-colonial, semi-feudal state” (ban zhimindi, ban fengjian guojia), which had formed since the first Opium War in 1840. The CCP gradually emerged as the leader in this revolution after a series of failures by other groups, including the Nationalist Party under the leadership of Sun Yat-sen. For Mao, it was the CCP’s historical responsibility to take the lead in radically revolutionizing the “semi-colonial, semi-feudal state.” A key to the success of this revolution was to build a new state that completely replaced the old one. On the eve of the establishment of the People’s Republic, Mao wrote another important essay, “On the People’s Democratic Dictatorship” (June 30, 1949), to commemorate the twenty-eighth anniversary of the CCP. This article outlined two fundamental principles of the new socialist state: (1) it was organized under “the leadership of the working class”; and (2) it would ally itself with the world proletariat of the socialist countries. These two principles permeated the government policies of socialist China.

In 1978, the Chinese government began to focus on various national development projects through the “modernization” (xiandaihua) of four major areas: economy, culture, technology, and politics. In the name of “reforms and opening,” the government has allowed the development of new kinds of productive enterprises that are not state controlled and collectively owned. This policy change contradicts both the policies of Mao’s socialist government, which had eliminated all forms of private ownership and their associated productive relations, and the constitution of the CCP, the ruling party of China founded on commitment to the causes and interests of the working class. To resolve these two contradictions, Deng Xiaoping’s government first made a political decision to declare the Cultural Revolution (1966–76) a complete failure that caused chaos in the Chinese state. This was based on a governmental decision codified through passage of the Communique of the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Central Committee of the Communist Party of China. This decision excluded any possibility of a positive evaluation of any aspect of the Cultural Revolution. Once the Cultural Revolution was completely rejected, a whole sequence of political practices associated with Mao as a political leader, Maoism, and Mao’s socialist experiment were reevaluated.

Building on this decision, Deng and his successors gradually modified the CCP constitution and incorporated key changes as amendments to the national constitution. Thus, in 1998, less than a year after Hong Kong’s return (on July 1, 1997), Jiang Zeming, the secretary general of the CCP and the president of China, asked the party members to propose new theories to account for the new political representation. In May 2000, he proclaimed “three represents” as the new theory of political representation. According to it, the CCP represents “the developmental requirement of the advanced productive forces in China,” “the progressive direction of the advanced culture in China,” and “the fundamental interest of the vast majority of the people.” In 2003, the Third Plenum of the Sixteenth Central Committee of the Communist Party of China formally incorporated this theory into the revised party constitution. Meanwhile, the Chinese government formally changed its English translation from the Chinese Communist Party to the Communist Party of China (CPC), marking a shift of the status of the party from a revolutionary party to a ruling party. Therefore, the formal institutionalization of the three represents and property rights completes the transformation of the Communist Party–led state from a state of the working class to one that may legitimately represent historically excluded groups such as the capitalist class.

The changes of political representation by the Communist Party and the Chinese government were inseparable from addressing the national reunification issues, which revolve around the status of Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macau. The reincorporation of capitalist Hong Kong into socialist China has, I argue, done what no other contemporary event could have done: it provided both the historical precondition for and the primary process of China’s radical neoliberal transformation. Under British rule Hong Kong was recognized not simply as a capitalist economy but

16. Ibid., p. 388.
19. For an in-depth analysis of this process, see Hai Ren, Neoliberalism and Culture in China and Hong Kong: The Countdown of Time (London: Routledge, 2010).
as one of the freest market economies in the world.\(^20\) The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984, which set out the conditions for Hong Kong's return to China, called for Hong Kong to retain its capitalist system and a measure of political autonomy for a period of fifty years, a provision commonly referred to as "one country, two systems" and viewed by the Chinese as a potentially long-term arrangement. This framework was first proposed by Deng Xiaoping during the Sino-British negotiation process. It was later extended to create various types of special zones, enabling the practical coexistence between socialist and capitalist spaces. Thus, the legal framework of one country, two systems, upon being translated into political and economic practices in China, shaped the transformation of the Chinese state into a neoliberal state. By casting reunification as an uncompromisable issue of national sovereignty, the Chinese government made this a default justification for all political, economic, social, and cultural changes. Anything incompatible with regaining sovereignty over Hong Kong was to be modified, changed, or rejected—including Maoist practices of mobilizing and empowering ordinary people, political representation of the working class, socialist productive relations, economic policies, and nationalism.

In addition to justifying the rejection of the Maoist political representation of the working classes, Deng's theory of one country, two systems was used to legitimize the creation of a series of four special economic zones (beginning in 1980) in Guangdong and Fujian provinces, where non-socialist systems—not only private markets but also private controls of the economy and the population\(^21\)—were developed. In 1984, the year of the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the government expanded the special economic zone concept to another fourteen coastal cities and to Hainan Island. In the 1990s, many priority development regions and export processing zones were established across the country. In 1997, Hong Kong became the first special administrative region of the People's Republic of China, and two years later, Macau became the second. Each region is supposed to operate for fifty years according to its own mini-constitution.

Similar to the idea of a special economic zone is the proliferation of numerous privately controlled zones through urban real estate development projects. Some past and present Communist Party officials and their relatives could use their access to political capital and networks for accruing wealth in the new economy. For them, neoliberal policies like privatization of land uses open up a horizon of "freedom" to pursue the good life, whether in terms of a "relatively comfortable life" (xiaokang shenghuo, in Deng Xiaoping's words) or a lifestyle oriented toward cosmopolitan or international norms.\(^22\) Zhang Yuchen's prior status as the head of Beijing's construction bureau, for example, gave him the opportunity to accumulate vast wealth.\(^23\) By contrast, those who lack access to social and political capital are affected negatively by privatization and the erosion of social welfare institutions. As their life chances are sealed off, they become marginalized as subjects in need, whether as landless peasants or laid-off workers.

The neoliberal transformation of the Communist Party-led state has led some Chinese scholars to consider its consequences. The Chinese economist Yu Wenlie, for example, mentioned four major problems in 2004: (1) the increasing gap between the rich and the poor presents a challenge to the socialist distribution system (fenpei zhida); (2) the privatization of state-owned enterprises and "state-owned assets" (guoyou zichan) damages the socialist "collective ownership system" (gongyouzhi); (3) the government's "malfunctions," or "misbehaviors" (shiwai), in the market damage the socialist market economic system; and (4) "the urban-rural twofold economic structure" (cheng xiang eryuan jingji jiegou) and the increasing economic gaps among regions damage the balanced development of the

\(^{20}\) Hong Kong's economy has generally ranked very high by major international economic indexes of free-market practices and competitiveness, such as the Economic Freedom Index, the World Competitiveness Yearbook, the Global Country Forecast, and the Global Competitiveness Report. From 1996 to 2009 the Economic Freedom Index has consistently ranked Hong Kong as the world's freest economy. Milton Friedman, the world's leading neoliberal economist, argues that since the end of World War II, Hong Kong has been the only world economy close to his ideal of a private free-market system (Friedman, "The Hong Kong Experiment," Hoover Digest 3 [1998]).

\(^{21}\) Aihwa Ong argues that special economic zones and their expansion have created a phenomenon called graduated sovereignty, meaning that in these zones, populations are governed by techniques and laws different from those used in non-special economic zones and their expanded areas. See her Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2006), especially chaps. 3–4.

\(^{22}\) See the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) television special on "China's Vast Consumer Class," October 5, 2005. The show's transcript is available at the PBS website, at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/ob/asia/july-dec05/consumers_10-05.html.

national economy. These shifts have changed Chinese society from one of the world’s most equal societies to one of its most unequal. China has become a risk society in which responsibility for employment, welfare, education, health, poverty alleviation, and the environment have become redistributed from government to nongovernmental organizations and from the collective to the individual.

"The Middle Class" as an Insurance Measure in Neoliberal China

During China’s neoliberal transformation, governmental and social policies have shifted from regarding peasants and workers as model citizens to "disadvantaged groups" (ruoshi qunti). Their lack of various kinds of capital (political, economic, and cultural), unequally redistributed during the economic reforms, has made them less able to take responsibility for livelihood, health care, and education. Forming the largest segment of China’s population, they are viewed as a threat to the stability of Chinese society in the case of a state emergency, such as an economic or political crisis or even a crisis of biosecurity, as in the case of an outbreak of SARS or Avian Flu. To address these problems of security, government officials, policy experts, and scholars advocate for the growth of a middle class as necessary for balancing the contradictions between economic growth and social stability produced by the economic reforms. Although the middle class is still statistically small in size, it is anticipated to grow and to become the predominant social class, so that the pyramidal shape of the present social structure will be transformed into the ideal olive shape.

The conceptualization of the category of the middle class to address the structural problem of Chinese society has built on an extensive sociological and journalistic literature on China’s new class strata since the early 1990s. Many of these studies were proleptic in nature: representing something that has not yet come into view as if it already existed in fact. This figure of prolepsis suggests the performativity and productivity of the discourse on the middle class. It also marks the practical development of the middle class as a project involving many actors, including governmental and nongovernmental organizations, corporations, educational institutions, and individuals (government officials, businesspeople, and ordinary citizens). The development of the category of the middle class reflects a fundamental policy change in understanding cultural transformations in China’s economic reforms.

The middle class cannot be developed as a normative category until it becomes intelligible through systematic uses of statistical surveys, or what Susan Greenhalgh calls “numerical inscriptions,” such as tables, figures, charts, and equations used by population scientists, state planners, and government bureaucrats. One key event in developing the middle class through statistical thinking is a systematic survey carried out by some of China’s leading sociologists at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS). Between 1999 and 2001, they conducted the first systematic nationwide sociological study of China’s social stratification since the end of the 1970s. The CASS project, under the full support of the central government, surveyed over 12 provinces and 72 cities, counties, and districts. Major “findings” were included in a 411-page report, entitled The Report on the Social Stratification Research in Contemporary China, ed. Lu Xueyi (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenshi Chubanshe, 2002).


28. In this sense, the middle-class norm is inseparable from the governmental discourse of human capital on suzhi, as examined in detail by Ann Anagnost in "The Corporeal Politics of Quality (Suzhi),” Public Culture 16, no. 2 (2004): 189–208.
on the Social Stratification Research in Contemporary China (Dangdai zhongguo shehui jieceng yanjiu baogao) (hereafter: the CASS report).  

Prior to the publication of the CASS report, socioeconomic aspiration was expressed through the term xiaokang (relatively comfortable), first proposed by Deng Xiaoping to establish a national goal for economic development. In 1984, he concretized xiaokang as the achievement of a per capita GNP of 800 U.S. dollars by the end of the century, which, according to the exchange rate at the time, would place China within the ranks of lower-middle-income nations. In the late 1980s, the term xiaofei jieceng (consuming class) was used to refer to those high income earners who had the ability to pursue a consumer lifestyle. The identity of this class was marked as different from gongxin jieceng (working class), who needed to calculate on a daily basis how to make ends meet and whose pastimes were limited largely to viewing television or movies. In the 1990s, Chinese scholars and media used various terms to refer to the middle-class subject, including bailing (white-collar), zhongchan (middle-level income), and xiaozi (petty bourgeois).

The publication of the research by the CASS sociologists represents one of the most important and most systematic efforts by policy-oriented scholars in conceptualizing the middle class. The formal use of the term shehui jieceng ("social stratum") in the CASS report also marks a historical movement, begun in the early 1990s, in which the Maoist term jieji ("class") has been displaced by the term jieceng ("stratum"). The emphasis on affluence and prosperity as qualities of achievement has replaced the focus on wealth as evidence of exploitation. Moreover, the CASS research also systematically deployed statistics both to develop a particular way of thinking about social differentiation and to construct the middle class as a norm to measure the future development of Chinese society.

The CASS report envisions the middle class within the context of classifying the Chinese population as a whole. The report concludes that Chinese society can be classified into a total of ten "social groups" (shehui qunti), called "social strata" (shehui jieceng), according to their positions within the division of labor and access to resources (political, economic, and cultural). These social strata are organized into the categories of state and social managers, private entrepreneurs, professionals and technicians, clerks, the self-employed, salespeople and service workers, industrial workers, agricultural laborers, and the unemployed or underemployed.

China's new class structure ideally should assume the form of an "olive shape" (ganlan xing)—robust in the middle and pointed at both ends. Based on this ideal, a model of the social structure desired for the future includes five "socioeconomic levels" (shehui jingji dengji): the upper, the upper-middle, the middle-middle, the lower-middle, and the lower strata. While the classification of the ten social strata emerges out of empirical findings, the construction of the five socio-economic classes is based on a projection of the best possible social structure for China as a governmental objective. The CASS report connects the two schemes together. The current situation of Chinese society based on the ten social strata is measured by a robust middle class, which includes three sub-classes. Moreover, nine out of the ten social strata are conceived as connected to the middle class. Thus, the middle is treated as a statistical law through which the population of the nation is to be evaluated and distributed.

Although the CASS researchers include nine social strata in the middle class, they do not argue that all nine social strata should become the middle class. The CASS report describes the middle class or the "middle stratum" (zhongjian jieceng) as follows: "[The middle stratum is] the group of people who do knowledge-based work, earn salaries, and possess not only the capacity to find a profession that is relatively high paying, with a good working environment and conditions, but who also have the capacity to consume and maintain a quality of life in leisure; who hold certain degree of control over their work; and who possess a consciousness of citizenship and public morality as well as associated accomplishments." According to this description, the ideal middle class would exclude four of the ten social strata (salespeople and service workers, industrial workers, agricultural laborers, and the unemployed or underemployed).

How do we understand the discrepancy between the current state of the middle class, which includes nine social strata, and the projected future state of the middle class, which only includes five social strata? This question underscores the construction of the middle class as a category of

34. CASS, Dangdai zhongguo shehui jieceng yanjiu baogao.
36. CASS, Dangdai zhongguo shehui jieceng yanjiu baogao, p. 9.
37. Ibid., pp. 23-24.
38. Ibid., p. 9.
39. Ibid., p. 252.
understanding (rather than being an intuition or sensibility) for rendering social reality into calculable form. Not only does the CASS report reveal the Chinese middle class as an empirical reality through providing an understanding of both the historical and geographic distributions of the middle class, but it also establishes a statistical form of knowledge that makes the middle class thinkable for the purpose of government. The middle class, according to the CASS report, has developed significantly since 1952, and particularly since 1978. In 1999, the total population of China that could be classified as belonging to the middle class reached 15 percent. Among the nine social strata belonging to the middle class, the stratum of private entrepreneurs increased from 0 in 1978 to 0.6 percent in 1999. Notably, this historical information constructs the trace of the middle class in the past but fails to mention that the middle class as a social group was never discursively defined in the socialist period (1949–78). This historical sense of the middle class is based on a reinterpretation of the history of Maoist class struggle (an issue to which I return below).

In addition to revealing the Chinese middle class as an empirical reality, the CASS report also refers to the middle class as an ideal class. Based on Weber’s “ideal type,” the study’s notion of the middle strata is a synthesis of multiple social groups under one scheme. The middle as an ideal type can be used to order social reality. The CASS report identifies five elements to measure the life of the middle class, which include mode of work, authority of work, income, education, consumption and lifestyle, and civility (such as citizenship, public consciousness, and corresponding accomplishment). The element of consumption and lifestyle, for example, refers to a distinctive measure of a middle-class family, including not only the capacity to consume durable goods (such as private houses or apartments and cars) and symbolic goods (like arts), but also to have regular vacations. The development of this middle class will optimize China’s social structure. Once a robust middle class is developed, it will shape economic behavior, social values, morality, and social norms while also balancing social polarization and conflict.

The construction of the middle class represents an important effort for inventing a new logic of government in managing current and future risks and uncertainties. The middle class as part of a new social classification system, according to the CASS report, results from the transformation of government since the time of Mao Zedong. Governance in Mao’s China aimed at “the transformation of the [old] social system, mobilizing the masses to overthrow the capitalist society and semi-feudal, semi-colonial society.” Because of this goal, government classifications tended to “especially emphasize the conflicting nature of class and reveal exploitation and repression caused by the irrational social system.” Chinese society in the Maoist period included “two classes and one stratum”—the worker and peasant classes and the intellectual stratum. The new logic demands a different system of social classification that aims at “the unification and mobilization of many more social forces to reach socioeconomic developmental goals and to construct successfully a modernized socialist state.”

The CASS study’s classification of Chinese society into “ten social strata” and “five socio-economic classes” advocates a change in social classification to correspond to these new objectives of government. It also reorients the regulation of social differences as a politics of the multiple (that is, the heterogeneous production of social differentiation as a politics of the state) rather than as a binary politics of class struggle.

It is in this context of a new politics of governance caused by China’s neoliberal transformation that President Hu Jintao in 2005 proposed the idea of the “harmonious society” (hexie shehui) as the emphasis of the government. It covers six aspects: democracy and rule of law, fairness and justice, sincerity and friendliness, full-scale vitality, stability and orderliness, and harmony between humans and nature. Scholars and policy makers use this formulation to debate the proper way to address the problems of increasing socioeconomic inequality. Neoliberal economists argue that the current existence of inequality, despite being a problem of social

40. Ibid., p. 44, table 14.
41. Ibid., p. 73. The figure of 15 percent is highly contested. Other estimates put it far lower.
43. CASS, Dangdai zhongguo shehui jieceng yanjiu baogao, pp. 252–53.
44. Ibid., p. 253.
45. Ibid., p. 254.
46. Ibid., pp. 6–7.
47. Ibid., p. 4.
48. Ibid., p. 7.
49. Hu’s idea was first announced publicly in early 2005. For a detailed explanation, see Xinhua News, “Hu Jintao chanshi huxie shehui jibeng tezheng [Hu Jintao elaborates the basic characteristics of harmonious society],” Harbin ribao, February 20, 2005.
harmony, should be maintained for the sake of developing a more “efficient” society, even if this means that some must be sacrificed. Scholars on the left, by contrast, argue for the elimination or amelioration of the effects of inequality in order to pursue the idea of the harmonious society.46 Despite holding different positions on the problem of social inequality, both sides generally share a common concern, that is, the deployment of the middle class as the ultimate social norm in governing Chinese society.

In China, the question of who can become middle class is different from that of who represents the middle class. The emerging “nouveaux riches” (xin furen) have a special interest in advocating the term “middle class,” along with associated concepts such as “public sphere” (gonggong kongjian) and “individualism” (ziyou zhiyi).51 They use “middle class” to characterize their experience and lifestyle as a “successful person” (chenggong renshi), typically portrayed by the mass media as a married middle-aged businessman. He wears designer labels, owns an apartment with a garden, drives a car, socializes in bars, nightclubs, and hotels, plays golf, and attends concerts.52 He enjoys a “practical existence” (shizai) of comfortable life, the “freedom” (ziyou) of consumer choice, a “stylish appearance” (qipai), the “prestige power” (zunyan) of his wealth, and a “cultivated appreciation for the finer things” (mei).53 Such a celebration of a person’s success in achieving middle-class status embraces a cosmopolitan experience at the expense of the Maoist historical experience.54

50. For example, the debate was clearly shown in the seminar on “how to interpret the idea of the harmonious society,” organized by China’s Newsweek on March 17, 2005, presented online at http://news.sina.com.cn/c/2005-03-17/12246111762.shtml.
52. Ibid., p. 29.
53. Xiaoming Wang vividly describes this lifestyle: “Among tens of thousands of matters in the world, money is the most important. Lots of money in his pocket defines ‘practical existence’; Once having money, do whatever he wants to do and buy whatever he wants to buy. This is the meaning of ‘freedom’; Spending generously, treating money like dust, attracting beautiful young women, this is the meaning of style or ‘respect’; Wearing expensive and luscious clothing, following fashion trends, this defines beauty or ‘aesthetic’” (ibid., p. 34).
54. A number of important studies have affirmed this. Jing Wang’s critical study of “Bobo” (bourgeois bohemians) argues that marketing professionals construct the middle class through their cosmopolitan taste and lifestyle rather than through their structural class position (“Bourgeois Bohemians in China? Neo-Tribes and the Urban Imaginary,"

The representation of the middle class as the experience of the nouveaux riches, however, must not be confused with the engineering of a new middle class through the regulative function of the middle-class norm. Whether the nouveaux riches and successful people are necessarily proper middle-class subjects is open to debate. Both domestic and international media have recently published stories about successful mainland Chinese citizens traveling overseas, whether as students, shoppers, businesspeople, or tourists. Some compare the spending habits of Chinese shoppers with Americans, Japanese, and Germans in the post–World War II period, while others discuss the impact of their behavior in the host countries. One major issue repeatedly raised concerns the uncivil behavior of Chinese tourists.55 In September 2005, for instance, pictures and reports of mainland Chinese tourists spitting, sprawling on the ground, allowing their children to urinate in public, and smoking in prohibited areas at Hong Kong’s newly opened Disneyland triggered scathing criticism in the Hong Kong, mainland, and overseas media. Such an event underscores the ways in which middle-classness is defined as a cultural category in terms of the new norms of civility and responsibility for the actions of one’s self.

Chinese commentators on this news story argued that Chinese citizens need to improve their “human quality” (suzhi) by changing their old habits and learning to conduct themselves in a more civil manner.56 China’s tourist industry and the Chinese government responded by launching a series of campaigns to promote courteous behavior. In September 2006, the China National Tourism Administration released two detailed lists of behaviors recommended for the civilized Chinese traveler: one addressing domestic travel and the other for overseas. Meanwhile, ordinary Chinese also try to do their part. In April 2007, for example, Beijing resident Wang Tao recruited volunteers in major cities to launch the Green Woodpecker...
Project to curb public spitting. They offer tissues to people as an alternative to spitting on the ground and try to convince the offender, usually male, to change his ways. Wang also carries a small camcorder and posts action shots on his website.\(^{57}\) These measures show that the development of a middle class is a project of constructing properly behaved responsible subjects, constituting a new norm to discipline those who have not yet learned how to be responsible.\(^{58}\)

**Conclusion:**

**The Middle Class as a Risk Subject in Neoliberal Globalization**

To summarize, the political operations of managing risks caused by China’s neoliberal transformations unfold through the ways in which the state recounts its populations as a consistent and coherent collection of proper citizens. This operation favors the category of the middle class as the key measure of citizenship. In socialist China, citizenship was a category of the collective, of the working class. In this situation, any individual belonging to the working class did not need to look for or develop his or her own trajectory of life extension (that is, life-making and life-building). With respect to the socialist state’s “work unit” system, the life of an individual worker and the life of the worker as a collective were spatially reproduced to coexist in the same work unit. Thus, the state’s control of the individual and that of the collective coincided with each other. Meanwhile, the individual and the collective, in the name of the working class represented by the CCP-led state, could also maintain various degrees of control over the way in which the state operates, as in the case of the Cultural Revolution.

In neoliberal China, in contrast, citizenship becomes the category of the individual, who is commonly characterized as the consumer in the practice of everyday life. As a result of the dissolution of the collective systems (such as the work unit and the commune systems), the life of an individual citizen is no longer tied to the collective. This citizen is now responsible for his or her own well-being and life extension; he or she now has to become active in creating a “do-it-yourself” trajectory for his or her life, which takes the form of an entrepreneurial subject by following the neoliberal norm of economic rationalism. Thus, for an individual living in neoliberal China (or any other neoliberal state), life-building is not only an individualized process but also an economic way of life.

Becoming middle class certainly contributes to the state’s political project of managing risks caused by the transformation of the socialist state into a neoliberal state in which the CPC marginalizes the working class and treats it as a major category of risk subject in such terms as “the new poor” (xin qiongren) and “the disadvantaged group.” The achievement of middle-class status, however, does not mark the successful completion of the life-building process. In light of the current global economic crisis and recession, in which the middle class emerges as a central figure of risk, I suggest we ask whether the middle-class subject has the option of not taking any risks despite the fact of the middle class’s subjection to the neoliberal norm of becoming an entrepreneur. If being middle class is not a secure position, what types of risks does the figure of the middle class exemplify? Where does consumption, a dominant field of everyday life that is closely tied to the practice of the middle-class way of life, fit in the answers to these questions?

With respect to the relationship between risk and the bourgeois in the late nineteenth century to the early part of the twentieth century, Schmitt argues: “The bourgeois is an individual who does not want to leave the apolitical riskless private sphere. He rests in the possession of his private property... He is a man who finds his compensation for his political nullity in the fruits of freedom and enrichment and above all in the total security of its use.”\(^{59}\) Compared with Schmitt’s figure of the bourgeois, who was tied the historical context of liberalism in Europe, I argue that the contemporary figure of the middle class has no choice but to take risks.

Risk-taking as a middle-class way of life is related to consumption’s crucial role in the ongoing neoliberal process. Consumption bridges the gap between many aspects of human life. It connects a range of activities, such as waged work, leisure and travel, and family activities. It is in the realm of consumption that economic constructivism, the expansion of economic calculation into other fields, becomes practical in relation to state intervention, policy implementation, and citizenship. Moreover, whether in developed or emerging economies, consumption-based economy plays a critical part in economic growth and its health. Thus, a government’s

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57. See the Jintan.org website at http://www.jintan.org.
The second major type of risk that the middle class absorbs is explicitly tied to consumption practice. Despite consumption’s complex relationship to the economic process, governmental and social policies promote consumption through the teleology of inexhaustible capital accumulation. This is often done using such names as “economic development,” “growth,” “positive outlook,” and “positive forecast of earnings”—the kind of language associated with that commonly used in narrating corporate earnings. In practice, one of the important ways of enhancing consumption focuses on consumer engineering, a growing field of not only learning and understanding of the consumer through scientific tools but also implementing strategies, tactics, and specific techniques in cultivating and manufacturing consumers’ buying capacities and other related practices. A new development in consumer engineering, for example, relates to “neuromarketing,” which takes advantage of developments in neuroscience to track the brain activities of a person as he or she consumes specific commodities.63

In China’s rapid urbanization and urban redevelopment, new spaces such as mega shopping malls, theme parks, master-planned communities, and high-rise apartment buildings have been developed across the country to promote and enhance consumption in various ways. This shift represents an international trend toward integrating the combined practices of shopping, entertainment (through cinema, arcades, game, and amusement rides), education (through stories and themes), merchandising (through copyrighted images and logos), performative labor (of the front-stage employees), and control and surveillance (of both employees and consumers).64 China, despite its image in the mass media as “the world’s factory floor,” now has the world’s largest shopping malls.65 This relatively new emphasis on domestic consumption aims at balancing China’s production-oriented economy, reducing the rising risks of depending upon exports to major consumption-driven economies in North America and Europe. Meanwhile, these new spaces have also become used as an important means for differentiating their users according to whether they have the capacity to make appropriate consumer choices, that is, to follow proper

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61. For example, the Shanghai-based Hurun Report group ranks the philanthropic activities of individuals and corporations every year.
62. For an excellent case study of charity that involves the participation of the masses, see Samantha King, *Pink Ribbons, Inc.: Breast Cancer and the Politics of Philanthropy* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2006).
65. Ibid.
But it also may take the form of negative agency when delinquency is recognized as a failed exercise of calculation. That is, instead of a project of future anterior (anticipating the coming of the future), this form of life-building accumulates risks and liabilities to social prosperity of one sort or another. Self-formation in this situation becomes sidetracked or lateral: life chances emerging at the horizon are deferred. Thus, delinquency is a practical application of neoliberal calculation of the rules. As such, the life-building process divides into two paths, one leading to success and the other to failure. In governmental and social policies, the middle class as a responsible group is an abstract idea. Only through the life-building process does a middle-class person discover whether he or she can claim a sovereign agency as recognizably middle class and therefore not subject to the kind of social scrutiny that applies to the “disadvantaged groups.”

Ironically, this discovery is, nonetheless, made at the expense of the rules and laws that regulate the social order.

Because of the fact that the three major types of risks exemplified by the figure of the middle class are system-wide, we must question the relationship between the neoliberal economy and the state. In his explanation of why Schmitt was polemically against economic rationalism, Michael Marder argues: “The outcome of the subsumption of the political under economic rationalism is the administration of things that replaces political representation with the authority of technical exactitude and with the actual presence of things.” As a result of this change, the state’s risks shift to “the likelihood of failure in the nuts and bolts of the state-economic machinery.” The fact that national governments around the world have recently made a series of efforts in rescuing troubled financial companies, especially those responsible for the current economic crisis, illustrates a close link between economic crisis and political risk. Prominent neoliberal thinkers like Milton Friedman argue that the expansion of economic freedom leads to the development of political freedom. The way in which


the governments deal with the current economic crisis seems to support Friedman's assertion. For whom and at what price does the neoliberal expansion of economic freedom into the political realm create political freedom? Certainly for those who are ultimately responsible for creatively generating economic crisis and at the expense of risking the reduction of the political to merely economic representation.

From the Iron Rice Bowl to the Beggar's Bowl: What Good Is (Chinese) Literature?

Haiyan Lee

In June 2009, the Chinese mediasphere was abuzz with the announcement that the octogenarian writer Jin Yong (Louis Cha) was slated to join the Chinese Writers' Association (Zhongguo zuojia xiehui, CWA). Jin Yong is a beloved martial arts fiction writer who made his career in the freewheeling ex-British colony of Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. His joining the association known for its stodgy conformism struck many as ironic, or at least as blog-worthy. Indeed, just a few years ago, the playwright Sha Yexin had quipped: "How can you ask a writer like Louis Cha to write martial arts novels according to the spirit of the 'Three Represents'?" This was probably in reference to the CWA mission statement that it is charged to "organize writers to study Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, and the theory of the 'Three Represents.'" Following the news about Jin Yong's induction, some commentators brought up Wang Lixiong's controversial withdrawal from the organization in 2001. Author of the apocalyptic political thriller Yellow Peril (1991), Wang has

1. For a literary historical study of Jin Yong and martial arts fiction, see John Christopher Hamm, Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel (Honolulu: Univ. of Hawai'i Press, 2005).
2. "The Three Represents" (Sange daibiao) was then Party General Secretary Jiang Zemin's contribution to the canon of Sino-Marxist theory. In a 2001 speech, Jiang stated that the Party must always represent advanced productive forces, advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the Chinese people. The formulation played down the Party's role as the vanguard of a proletarian revolution, thus opening the Party's door to capitalists and private entrepreneurs.
3. See the CWA website, online at http://www.chinawriter.com.cn/zxjg/. The charter can be found under "Organizational Structure" (Zuoxie jigou).