ally with the business community to push for greater accountability and transparency, thus lowering corruption in the long term.

Ang's proposed solution to the Chinese corruption-growth puzzle is provocative and deserves serious scholar attention. It suffers, however, from a number of drawbacks. First, her use of a textual analysis of *People's Daily* and *Xinhua* to demonstrate a significant drop in petty and grand theft yields suspect results. Both sources largely focus on high-level corruption. By and large, grassroots corruption goes unreported, even in the Chinese press. Ang's textual analysist thus likely measures shifts in the high-level discourse on corruption, not necessarily changes in the nature or severity grassroots corruption.

Nor is there convincing evidence that anarchic petty theft – or what has been described as "looting" – has been supplanted by what Ang describes as organized and regulated "profit sharing" in the form of fee-taking that is used to fund off-the-books "bonuses" in lieu of uncoordinated bribes and shakedowns. On the contrary, the heyday of "organizational corruption" during the 1990s (ie, the *san luan*) was characterized by the very sort of uncoordinated, "grabbing hands" predation that Ang points to the fatal enemy of golden geese. Ang certainly supports her claims with impressive interview data. It is not clear, however, that those interviewed did not gloss over the predatory nature of their illegal extractions and paint a more benign picture. Data drawn from court judgements, moreover, suggest that anarchic plunder and individualized bribery are still the norm, not benign profit sharing.

Finally, Ang's claim that Chinese corruption is qualitatively different because of the greater prevalence of access money corruption does not seem to resolve the core paradox. This qualitative difference should, *ceteris paribus*, reduce the negative impact of corruption on growth. Ang's data, however, appear to show that the qualitative differences between China's access money corruption and corruption in other counties at similar level of development were relatively slight. China thus still seems to represent an outlier to the negative corruption–growth correlation because of its enormously high growth rate. It is thus not clear that Ang has conclusively solved the China corruption–growth puzzle by showing that corruption is either benign – and hence not a barrier to high-speed growth – or that high levels of access money corruption have acted as a growth steroid. Nor is it clear that access money corruption has artificially boasted growth rates in ways that will push China through its current gilded age and into a new progressive era with Chinese characteristics. Ang has, nevertheless, made an important scholarly contribution to our understanding of the puzzles and paradoxes of the political economy of contemporary China.

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Unending Capitalism: How Consumerism Negated China's Communist Revolution
KARL GERTH
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With the publication of *Unending Capitalism*, Karl Gerth completes his engagingly written trilogy on the history of consumerism in 20th-century China. In *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Harvard Asia Centre, 2003), Gerth documented the spread of mass-produced commodities and rise of

consumer culture that attended the birth of nationalism during the Republican era. His second monograph, *As China Goes, So Goes the World: How Chinese Consumers are Transforming Everything* (Hill and Wang, 2010), detailed the explosion of consumerism and resplendent proliferation of markets for everything in the post-Mao era, from counterfeit "Reebek" sneakers to human infants and second wives.

In the final volume of the series, Gerth returns to the time period between the two to argue that consumerism – "the mass production of consumer products, the proliferation of a discourse about these products in popular media, and the use of such products to create and communicate identities" (p. 1) – persisted during the Mao era, not as a troublesome vestige of, or a reluctant concession to, pre-revolutionary practices, but instead as an integral part of an ambitious state-led strategy of capital accumulation. Maoist political economy is thus best understood not as a form of socialism, he proposes, but as state-capitalism: "a variety of industrial capitalism in which state power dominates the accumulation and allocation of capital" (4). This in turn gave rise to a phenomenon he dubs "state consumerism" through which the state controlled not only the production and distribution of consumer goods, but also – through socialist advertising and other mechanisms – generated discourses about the products, as well as the social and political identities it attached to the consumption of such goods.

State consumerism was both "self-expanding" and compulsory, with Mao-era Chinese citizens compelled to purchase three commodities in particular: wristwatches, bicycles and sewing machines (pp. 7–8, 10). Thus, Gerth argues, the Party-state's "early policy choice" to reproduce capitalism instead of abolishing it gave rise to a profound contradiction between the Party's rhetorical claim to be building socialism *en route* to communism, and the policies it actually enacted: an integrated and labour-exploitative system of state capitalism and state consumerism (p. 41). This discrepancy would come to a dramatic head during the Cultural Revolution, when tens of millions of people expressed – sometimes violently – their dissatisfaction with the system and its outcomes, and openly challenged them. Yet, Gerth endeavours to show, ultimately even the most radical elements of Chinese society could not but reproduce the very consumerist practices they professed to despise, creating markets for mass produced items like Mao badges and old army uniforms, negating "daily, hourly, spontaneously, and on a mass scale" the very socialist revolution they had pledged their lives to carry out and to defend (p. 9).

Unending Capitalism offers an unmistakable, albeit unacknowledged, *volte face* from the position the author espouses in the second book of the series. In *As China Goes*, Gerth maintained a distinction between the "*productivist*" priorities of the Mao-era state, which centred on the making of producer, rather than consumer, goods (2010, p. 6) on the one hand, and those of the state-supported "consumer revolution" of the post-Mao era on the other. Under the productivist paradigm, "consistency was much less important than supply," and consumer demand was "assumed and, thanks to shortages, ensured." It was only after the 1990s that Mao's successors initially began to understand "stimulating consumer desire not as a wasteful endpoint, the death of production, but rather the starting point of production" (2010, 8–9). "The rise of the Chinese consumer," Gerth wrote in 2010, "is first and foremost a story about changes in China over the last three decades" (p. 5); consumerism in China thus emerged as "a consequence of ongoing policy decisions by China's leaders, most notably the decision to join the WTO" (p. 114).

Unending Capitalism upends this interpretive framework by proposing instead that "throughout the entire twentieth century, the Chinese state attempted to harness expanding consumerism and manage its reserve army of consumers to serve rapid state-led industrialisation," even during what is generally seen as the "socialist

revolutionary detour" of the Mao era (p. 230). Gerth now asserts that the Party not only failed to build socialism; it chose early on "to reproduce private capitalism rather than abolish it" (p. 41). He argues that "building socialism" during the Mao era "primarily meant facilitating the expansion of industrial production *rather* than doing so while concurrently transforming the social relations of production" (p. 42, emphasis added). Gerth in fact capitalizes "Socialist Transformation" throughout the book in order to "flag it as the ubiquitous CCP term for a policy [that the author] would otherwise call 'state capitalist expropriation'" (p. 51). In so saying, he "calls into question the utility of continuing to think of China during this period as socialist" at all (p. 231).

This is not merely a cynical reading of the Mao era: the claim that the Party's commitment to building socialism amounted to little more than a mantle of rhetorical claims resting lightly upon a set of policies leading the country in a rather different direction is grim to say the least. As Mao himself famously acknowledged on more than one occasion during the Cultural Revolution, his efforts to realize a radical break with the pre-revolutionary past would probably result in defeat, because "revisionism" would likely win in the end. But Gerth's conclusion is even more pointed: the state's persistent tinkering with market mechanisms did not merely undermine, but "continually *negated* the central goals of the revolution itself" (p. 4, emphasis added). Mao-era Party elites may have debated "whether or to what extent a 'socialist' country should use markets and materialism to aid accumulation"; Gerth notes that even Mao himself expressed his doubts, although he spends little time on these (p. 231). Notwithstanding such theoretical infelicities, the Party nevertheless continued to shift the country back and forth along the "state-to-private spectrum of industrial capitalism" to aid its relentless programme of capital accumulation, negating the revolution that brought it to power.

There is a great deal of theoretical and conceptual slippage in this book. The title, for example, claims that it was consumerism – and, in particular, state consumerism – that negated China's revolution. However, as his analysis proceeds, we see Gerth arguing that it was actually the relentless process of state accumulation that drove state consumerism, thereby undermining socialist revolutionary transformation. At points he seems to read consumption and the desire to consume itself as consumerism, which he also describes as both self-expanding *and* compulsory, raising the question of why the Mao-era state needed to mediate it. At close examination, all that seems solid about the analytical framework melts into air. But Gerth is at his best interweaving the breadth of the empirical detail of the range of materials he amassed for this study: read as an engaging history detailing consumer demand for products during the Mao era, instead of as a ringing indictment of the state's failures to deliver on its promises of revolutionary transformation, it shines.

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Borderland Infrastructures: Trade, Development, and Control in Western China
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In *Borderland Infrastructures*, Alessandro Rippa examines how the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), touted by the Chinese government as lifting poor areas out of