A reply to "The Chinese Corporatist System" (The Fascio Newsletter, 13 June 2026)

Neither Corporative State nor Fascism

中国既非法团国家，亦非法西斯

How the "Italian parallel" trades on two meanings of "corporatism," and why it fails in both once China's institutions are read in their own documents and their own scholarship

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——从当代中国视角对〈中国法团主义体制〉一文的逐条回应——

November 2026 · 二〇二六年十一月

Abstract. A recent essay argues that the People's Republic of China is "the closest existing large-scale parallel" to the state corporatism of Fascist Italy, resting its case on how the party-state supervises the organized representation of labor and capital. This reply answers the essay point by point from a contemporary Chinese standpoint, relying on the original Chinese-language texts—the Constitution of the PRC, the Trade Union Law, the Company Law, the Private Economy Promotion Law, the Party Constitution, and the speeches and resolutions that define the "socialist market economy"—and on Chinese scholarship in sociology, political science and political economy (张静, 康晓光, 顾昕, 吴建平, 陈家建, 纪莺莺, 游正林, 常凯, 杨光斌, 王绍光, 张宇, 费孝通 and others). It argues that (1) the essay equivocates between two meanings of "corporatism": it establishes resemblance using Schmitter's thin, descriptive sense (state-licensed interest intermediation) and then draws its conclusion in the thick, Fascist sense of the *stato corporativo*, in which corporations became organs of the state and replaced popular representation—and in that sense China plainly is not corporatist, having no corporations exercising state power and no chamber of producer categories; (2) even in the thin sense, Chinese scholars who tested the model against Chinese evidence rejected it, because China lacks the pre-existing, autonomous "functional groups" that corporatism incorporates; (3) even if the thin label were granted, it would not distinguish China from Austria, Sweden, Japan or Singapore, and so could not place it beside Mussolini; and (4) on every point that actually defines Italian Fascism—the constitutional primacy of private enterprise, the criminalization of strikes, the abolition of all other parties, racial law, and the glorification of war—the Chinese legal order says the opposite, in writing.

摘要：本文针对"中国是现存最接近意大利法西斯法团国家的大型体制"这一论断，依据中文原始文本（宪法、工会法、公司法、民营经济促进法、党章等）和国内学界研究，逐条作出回应。本文认为：该文在"法团主义"的两种含义之间偷换概念——以施密特意义上描述性的利益代表结构论证"相似"，却以法西斯意大利"法团国家"的含义得出结论，而在后一种意义上，中国显然不是法团国家；即便在前一种意义上，国内学者也早已检验并质疑法团主义框架对中国的适用性；退一步说，即使接受这一宽泛标签，它也无法把中国与奥地利、瑞典、日本、新加坡区分开来；而在真正界定意大利法西斯主义的各项要素上，中国的成文制度恰恰规定了相反的内容。

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1 Introduction: what the essay claims, and what it concedes

The essay "The Chinese Corporatist System" is not a crude polemic, and a reply should not pretend that it is. Its author is careful to say that the comparison with Fascist Italy rests on *function*, not on shared ideology, property relations, legal form or institutional genealogy. It corrects several numbers that circulate among China's online defenders—the confusion of state-owned enterprise *revenue* with GDP share, the over-reading of state-asset balance sheets, the mixing of firm counts with market capitalization—and on these narrow statistical points it is largely right. A Chinese reader has no reason to defend bad arithmetic.

But the care of the essay is also the source of its weakness. In order to make the comparison work, the author is forced to concede, one by one, almost every concrete similarity a reader would expect:

- the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (中华全国总工会) "is not a syndicate";
- the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (人民政协) "is not a corporative chamber";
- state-owned enterprises "are not IRI";
- no Chinese business body enjoys a legal monopoly comparable to the Italian syndical system;
- corporatism "is not exclusive to Fascism, communism or social democracy";
- historical conditions—interwar dictatorship, autarky, military mobilization on one side; Soviet inheritance, rural and export-led industrialization on the other—differ.

What remains after these concessions is a single abstract proposition: *in both systems, a political center supervises a differentiated and hierarchically ordered representation of labor and capital, and is the final arbiter of which channels count*. From this proposition the essay draws the conclusion —announced in the title of the newsletter itself—that China belongs in the Fascist lineage.

This reply does *not* accept that China is "corporatist" and then argue that corporatism is harmless. The Chinese position—official and scholarly—rejects the label itself. The reply makes four arguments, each a fallback from the one before.

1. **An equivocation on "corporatism."** The word has two meanings. In the *thick*, Fascist sense—the *stato corporativo* that Mussolini, Bottai and Rocco built—corporations became organs of the state, exercised delegated regulatory power, and replaced popular representation with representation by "category of production." In the *thin*, descriptive sense used by Schmitter, "corporatism" only names a pattern in which the state recognizes and consults privileged interest organizations. The essay proves resemblance in the thin sense and draws its conclusion in the thick one; a newsletter called *The Fascio* means the thick one. In the thick sense, China is plainly not corporatist: it has no corporations wielding state power and no chamber of producer categories.
2. **Even the thin label does not fit.** Since the late 1990s, Chinese sociologists and political scientists have tested whether 法团主义 (corporatism) describes China. The dominant conclusion is that it captures surface features but misses the generative logic of the system: in China the party organized society and built the state; it did not arrive as an arbiter

above pre-existing interest groups.

3. **Even if the thin label were granted, it would prove nothing.** A criterion that cannot separate Fascist Italy from postwar Austria, Sweden, Japan or Singapore cannot, by itself, place China next to Mussolini.

4. **The defining features of Fascism are reversed, in writing.** On private enterprise, the right to organize, other political parties, race, and war, the Chinese Constitution and statutes say the opposite of the Italian *Carta del Lavoro*, the Rocco laws and the *Dottrina del fascismo*. These are not rhetorical differences; they are differences in what the state is legally obliged to do and in whose interest.

The essay's claims are addressed in roughly the order in which they appear. Each section opens with a short statement of the claim being answered, followed by the original Chinese texts and the Chinese scholarship that bear on it. Translations of Chinese passages are our own; the originals are given so that readers can check them.

2 The method: two meanings of "corporatism," and the slide between them

> **The article's claim(s) 1–8, 25, 77, 80.** China is the closest large-scale parallel to Italian state corporatism because labor and capital are represented through state-recognized, hierarchically ordered, functionally differentiated bodies under party supervision (Schmitter, Cawson, Unger & Chan). Corporatism is not exclusive to any ideology; what matters is the distribution of power and the independence of organizations.

2.1 One word, two meanings

The essay opens by adopting Schmitter's definition: corporatism is "a system of interest representation." Note how little this requires. Any state that legally privileges some associations over others, consults them, and keeps the final say over who is recognized meets it. Chinese scholarship keeps this descriptive concept terminologically apart from the Fascist one: Schmitter's category is rendered 法团主义, 合作主义 or 统合主义—an analytical tool for comparing Western European democracies—whereas Mussolini's *stato corporativo* is discussed as a historical regime form, the Fascist corporative state (法团国家).

The Fascist meaning is much thicker. When Fascists spoke of the corporative state they meant a specific constitutional project:

- **Corporations as organs of the state.** Law no. 163 of 5 February 1934 created corporations for each branch of production, chaired by ministers or party officials, with power to issue binding norms on collective economic relations once approved by the head of government. They were not interest groups the state consulted; they were meant to *be* the state in economic life.

- **Representation by producer category in place of popular representation.** The project culminated in 1939, when the elected Chamber of Deputies was abolished and replaced by the *Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni*, whose members sat by virtue of their posts in the party and the corporations. Fascist theorists presented this as the replacement of

"inorganic" democracy based on individual citizens with "organic" representation of the nation's productive categories.

- **Class collaboration as doctrine.** The corporation was to dissolve class struggle by placing employers and workers of each branch in one body under the State. In Mussolini's formula, everything was within the State, nothing outside it, nothing against it.

This is what the comparison has to mean if the conclusion—China as Fascism's nearest living relative—is to carry the weight a Fascist newsletter wants it to carry. Measured against it, China does not qualify:

- **China has no corporations exercising state power.** Industry associations do not issue binding economic norms. Since 2015 they have been *formally separated* from administrative organs (Section 5). Economic regulation is made by the people's congresses, the State Council and ministries.
- **China's legislature is territorial, not occupational.** Under the Electoral Law (《全国人民代表大会和地方各级人民代表大会选举法》), deputies to county- and township-level people's congresses are elected directly by voters in territorial constituencies, and higher congresses are elected by the congresses below. Citizens vote as residents of a place, not as members of a "category of production." Nothing resembles the Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni.
- **The CPPCC is not a chamber of producers.** The essay concedes this. Its sectors (界别) are mostly political parties, people's organizations, ethnic minorities, religious communities and compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, not branches of production. It has no legislative power.
- **Class collaboration is not the doctrine.** The Constitution states that class struggle continues to exist "within certain limits" and names the working class as the leading class (Section 3).

In the sense that gives the word "corporatism" its Fascist meaning, then, China is simply not corporatist. The essay half-concedes this when it says the ACFTU is not a syndicate, the CPPCC is not a corporative chamber and SOEs are not IRI. Those concessions are not side remarks. They are a retreat from the thick concept to the thin one. The rest of the essay then argues in the thin sense, while its conclusion keeps the thick sense's moral and historical charge.

The remaining question is whether China is "corporatist" even in the thin sense, and whether that would matter.

2.2 The thin sense does not fit either: what Chinese scholars found

The essay cites Unger and Chan's "state corporatism" as if the application of the model to China were settled. Within Chinese scholarship it is anything but settled, and the main lines of the Chinese debate cut against the essay.

(a) China lacks corporatism's social foundation. The most systematic Chinese assessment is 吴建平《理解法团主义——兼论其在中国国家与社会关系研究中的适用性》, published in 《社会学研究》 (*Sociological Studies*, the flagship journal of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences) in 2012. The author examines corporatism along four dimensions—the problem it

addresses, its intellectual foundations, its institutional features and its social basis—and concludes:

> **《社会学研究》2012年第1期，第174–198页，摘要大意**
>
> 尽管中国在观念和制度上与法团主义高度相似，但后者缺乏前者所必需的社会组织基础，因而法团主义作为一种模式并不适合用来概括或预测中国的国家与社会关系。
>
> *Although China closely resembles corporatism in ideas and institutions, it lacks the social-organizational basis that corporatism requires; corporatism as a model is therefore unsuitable for characterizing or predicting state–society relations in China.*

This is exactly the essay's procedure turned upside down. The essay notes resemblances "in ideas and institutions" and infers kinship. The Chinese analyst notes the same resemblances and shows why they are misleading: corporatism is a way of *incorporating* interest groups that already exist and already have their own organizational life (the Swedish LO, Italy's pre-Fascist socialist and Catholic unions, the industrialists' Confindustria). Its core problem is how a state tames and coordinates powerful autonomous blocs. In China the order of genesis is reversed.

(b) "Classified control" rather than sectoral monopoly. 康晓光、韩恒《分类控制：当前中国大陆国家与社会关系研究》(《社会学研究》2005年第6期，第73–89页) studied the real treatment of different kinds of social organizations and rejected both the civil-society and the corporatist frameworks as imported "ideal types" that did not fit. Their finding was that the state treats organizations *differently according to what they do*—their capacity to challenge public order and the public goods they provide—rather than by licensing one monopoly representative per sector.[1] The essay itself concedes the empirical core of this: business federations, chambers and industry associations "do not all hold identical sectoral monopolies." Once that is conceded, the Schmitterian definition (singular, non-competitive, hierarchically ordered, functionally differentiated categories) no longer describes the Chinese business side at all.

(c) Where corporatist features exist, they come from professional regulation, not from Fascist design. 顾昕、王旭《从国家主义到法团主义——中国市场转型过程中国家与专业团体关系的演变》(《社会学研究》2005年第2期) found corporatist features in the regulation of *professional* associations—medicine, law, accountancy—where the state recognizes a single body for each profession. That is the corporatism of the bar association and the medical council, which exists in every regulated professional field in the world. It is not a mechanism for subordinating the working class.

(d) Beyond the binary. 陈家建《法团主义与当代中国社会》 argued that corporatist vocabulary has heuristic value for Chinese grassroots governance but insisted that the fit and the misfit both need careful analysis; 纪莺莺《当代中国的社会组织：理论视角与经验研究》(《社会学研究》2013年第5期，第219–241页) concluded that both the "civil society" and the "corporatist" perspectives trap research in a single-dimension debate about "autonomy" and called for explaining systematic variation across organizations and the actual group life inside them.[2]

The essay's test of autonomy—"whether an organization can select leaders, set priorities, mobilize members and sustain conflicts beyond official limits"—is exactly the single-dimension

[1] 康晓光、韩恒：《分类控制：当前中国大陆国家与社会关系研究》，《社会学研究》2005年第6期，第73–89页。作者在文中明确批评此前研究过度依赖"市民社会""法团主义"等西方框架。

[2] 纪莺莺：《当代中国的社会组织：理论视角与经验研究》，《社会学研究》2013年第5期，第219–241页。陈家建：《法团主义与当代中国社会》，《社会学研究》2010年第2期。

yardstick that this Chinese literature criticizes. It measures every society against an idealized Anglo-American model of adversarial pluralism and then labels the distance from that model.

2.3 And if the thin label were granted, it would prove nothing

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that the thin label were accepted. It still would not support the essay's conclusion, because in the thin sense corporatism is not a regime type at all. The standard Chinese-language introduction, 张静《法团主义》(中国社会科学出版社，1998年初版，2005年前后修订再版), presents corporatism precisely as the essay does—as a model of *interest intermediation* distinguished from pluralism—and stresses that its paradigmatic modern cases are the Western European democracies of the postwar period, not the interwar dictatorships.[3] The point of the model was to describe how organized labor and organized business were brought into stable bargaining with the state in Austria, Sweden, Norway and the Netherlands. Its Fascist ancestor is acknowledged and then set aside, because the analytical content of the term lies elsewhere.

This is decisive for the essay's method. If the test is *functional*—a peak labor organization with privileged legal standing, business bodies drawn into consultation, a central authority that decides which bodies count—then the following systems pass it at least as well as China:

- **Austria**'s *Sozialpartnerschaft*, in which compulsory-membership chambers of labor and of commerce, together with a single trade-union federation, negotiated wages and prices with the state for decades.
- **Sweden** after the 1938 Saltsjöbaden agreement, with one dominant blue-collar confederation closely tied to the governing party.
- **Japan**, where industrial associations were built around ministerial guidance and peak business organizations were consulted on national economic plans.
- **Singapore**, where the National Trades Union Congress is formally and personally intertwined with the ruling party, where the "tripartite" model fixes wage guidelines, and where one party has governed continuously since independence.

Nobody serious calls 1970s Austria or present-day Singapore "Fascist." The reason is obvious: *a pattern of interest intermediation does not tell you whose interests the state serves, what it is trying to build, or how it treats race, war and dissent.* The essay half-acknowledges this when it writes that corporatism belongs to no single ideology. But then the conclusion that China is "the closest parallel to Fascist corporatism" depends entirely on the author's choice of Italy as the reference case. Choose Singapore or Austria as the reference and the same evidence yields a quite different headline. In the thin sense, "corporatism" is a broad family that includes social democracies and developmental states. Fascism is one historically specific member of it, defined by things the thin concept leaves out: its class content, its ideology, and its relationship to race and war. You cannot get from membership of the family to identity with that one member.

[3]张静：《法团主义》，北京：中国社会科学出版社，1998年；修订版约2005年。张静本人在访谈中说明，该书最初是应出版社"思潮"丛书之约，作为介绍性著作撰写，后来修订主要服务于大学教学。参见爱思想网转载访谈（aisixiang.com/data/92003.html）。

2.4 Party-centrism: the party organized the state, not the other way round

The deepest Chinese objection to the corporatist reading comes from political science. 杨光斌《制度变迁中的政党中心主义》(《西华大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2010年第2期) argues that the two dominant paradigms of Western social science correspond to two Western historical paths: *society-centrism*, derived from the Anglo-American experience of a commercial class shaping the state, and *state-centrism*, derived from the Franco-German-Japanese experience of a bureaucracy leading modernization. Russia, China and many late developers followed a third path: a *revolutionary party* organized society and then built the state.[4]

Corporatism is a theory of the second path. It assumes a state standing *above* pre-formed social interests and arranging them. Mussolini's formula—"*tutto nello Stato, niente al di fuori dello Stato, nulla contro lo Stato*"—is the purest expression of that assumption. The Chinese case does not fit it, because:

- the All-China Federation of Trade Unions was founded in Guangzhou on 1 May 1925, at the Second National Labor Congress, under Communist leadership, twenty-four years *before* the People's Republic existed;
- the peasant associations, the women's federations and the youth league were all built as *revolutionary mass organizations* in the struggle against warlords, landlords and Japanese occupation, not licensed by a pre-existing state;
- the state itself, in 1949, was the product of this organized mass movement.

The essay's own source, Hasmath, says China "fashioned its corporatist template from the Soviet Union." Even if one accepts that Soviet institutional models were borrowed after 1949, the template was imposed on mass organizations that the Chinese revolution had already created through what the Party called the *mass line*—"from the masses, to the masses" (从群众中来，到群众中去), as Mao formulated it in 1943.[5] The relationship between the Party and the unions is therefore genealogically one of *a workers' party and its own mass organizations*, not of a supra-class state and the "categories of producers" it has licensed.

3 What Fascism actually was: the Italian texts and the Chinese reading

Before the institutional comparison can be judged, it must be clear what is being compared *to*. The essay tells us what corporatism was. It is much less explicit about what made Italian corporatism *Fascist*. The Italian primary sources leave no doubt.

3.1 The Italian primary sources

Private enterprise as the primary instrument; the state as subsidiary. The essay quotes Declaration VII of the 1927 *Carta del Lavoro* but stops halfway. The full logic runs across Declarations VII and IX:

[4]杨光斌：《制度变迁中的政党中心主义》，《西华大学学报（哲学社会科学版）》2010年第2期，DOI: 10.19642/j.issn.1672-8505.2010.02.002。杨光斌认为，现实问题不是"找回国家"，而是"找到政党"，因为是政党把国家组织起来的。

[5]毛泽东：《关于领导方法的若干问题》（1943年6月1日），《毛泽东选集》第三卷，北京：人民出版社，1991年。

Carta del Lavoro, 21 aprile 1927, Dichiarazioni VII e IX

VII. Lo Stato corporativo considera l'iniziativa privata nel campo della produzione come lo strumento più efficace e più utile nell'interesse della Nazione. …
IX. L'intervento dello Stato nella produzione economica ha luogo soltanto quando manchi o sia insufficiente l'iniziativa privata o quando siano in giuoco interessi politici dello Stato.

VII. The corporative State regards private initiative in the field of production as the most effective and most useful instrument in the interest of the Nation. IX. State intervention in economic production takes place only where private initiative is lacking or insufficient, or where the political interests of the State are at stake.

Destruction of independent labor. The Rocco law of 3 April 1926 (*Legge n. 563*) granted legal recognition to only one syndicate per category—in practice the Fascist syndicates—and made strikes and lockouts criminal offenses; the 1930 Penal Code (Articles 502 ff.) carried the criminalization of strikes into the general criminal law. The Palazzo Vidoni pact of 1925 had already given the Fascist syndicates exclusive bargaining rights with the industrialists' confederation, Confindustria, which itself survived intact as the employers' organization.

Abolition of all other parties and elections. The "*leggi fascistissime*" of 1925–26 dissolved all opposition parties; from 1928–29 national elections became a plebiscite on a single list; in 1939 the Chamber of Deputies was abolished outright and replaced by a *Camera dei Fasci e delle Corporazioni* whose members were not elected at all.

Race and war as values. The *Dottrina del fascismo* (1932) declared that Fascism "*non crede alla possibilità né all'utilità della pace perpetua*" (does not believe in the possibility or usefulness of perpetual peace). Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, intervened in Spain in 1936, annexed Albania in 1939, and enacted the racial laws (*leggi razziali*) in 1938, beginning with Royal Decree-Law no. 1728 of 17 November 1938.

3.2 How Chinese scholarship defines Fascism

Chinese historiography has always treated Fascism as a *class phenomenon* rather than as an organizational chart. Its starting point is the definition given by Georgi Dimitrov at the Seventh Congress of the Communist International in 1935, which entered Chinese textbooks through the *Selected Works of Dimitrov* and the standard university world-history curriculum (for example the multi-volume 吴于廑、齐世荣主编《世界史》现代史编, 高等教育出版社):

季米特洛夫，共产国际第七次代表大会报告（1935年），通行中译

法西斯主义是金融资本中最反动、最沙文主义、最帝国主义的分子的公开的恐怖独裁。

Fascism is the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital.

The essay's author has elsewhere written a polemic against Dimitrov's definition, and it is of course possible to reject the Marxist account. But it is not possible to reject it *and* borrow its moral charge. The word "Fascist" carries its weight because of what Fascism did: break the organized working class on behalf of property, glorify the nation and the race, and make war. A definition that drops all of this and keeps only "a hierarchy of represented interests under a supervising center" has kept the word and thrown away what made it meaningful.

From a Chinese standpoint the relevant question is therefore not "Is there a hierarchy of repre-

sented interests?"—every modern state has one—but the four questions that actually separated Fascist Italy from other systems with peak associations:

1. Is private enterprise the constitutionally primary form of production, with the state subsidiary to it?
2. Are independent working-class action and working-class parties destroyed by law?
3. Is the nation defined in ethnic-racial terms, with discrimination written into law?
4. Is war treated as a value and pursued as policy?

The rest of this reply shows that on each of the four, the Chinese legal order answers *no*, and does so in its foundational texts.

> **《中华人民共和国宪法》序言、第一条、第四条（2018年修正）**
> 在我国，剥削阶级作为阶级已经消灭，但是阶级斗争还将在一定范围内长期存在。……
> 第一条　中华人民共和国是工人阶级领导的、以工农联盟为基础的人民民主专政的社会主义国家。社会主义制度是中华人民共和国的根本制度。中国共产党领导是中国特色社会主义最本质的特征。……
> 第四条　中华人民共和国各民族一律平等。……禁止对任何民族的歧视和压迫，禁止破坏民族团结和制造民族分裂的行为。
>
> *Preamble: In our country, exploiting classes have been eliminated as classes, but class struggle will continue to exist within certain limits for a long time. Art. 1: The PRC is a socialist state under the people's democratic dictatorship, led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants… Leadership by the Communist Party of China is the defining feature of socialism with Chinese characteristics. Art. 4: All nationalities of the PRC are equal… Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited.*

Two features of this text matter for the comparison. First, the Chinese Constitution *affirms* that class struggle continues to exist; Fascism's founding claim was that class struggle was a Marxist fiction to be dissolved in the corporative nation. Second, it names a *class*—the working class—as the leading force of the state. Fascist doctrine named the nation, and above it the State, as an ethical absolute standing above classes. These are not two dialects of one corporatist language; they are opposed theories of what the state is.

4 Labor: a workers' party and its unions versus a regime that broke the unions

> **The article's claim(s) 9–10, 72.** The ACFTU holds a legally privileged position; independent unions lack recognition; grassroots unions need approval from the next-higher union body. Unions can pass on grievances but independent union formation is sharply restricted.

4.1 What the Trade Union Law says the union is for

The essay reads the Trade Union Law mainly for its organizational hierarchy. Read in full, the law defines the union's *purpose*, and the purpose is not the one a Fascist syndicate had.

《中华人民共和国工会法》（2021年修正）第二条、第六条

第二条　工会是中国共产党领导的职工自愿结合的工人阶级群众组织，是中国共产党联系职工群众的桥梁和纽带。……

第六条　维护职工合法权益、竭诚服务职工群众是工会的基本职责。工会在维护全国人民总体利益的同时，代表和维护职工的合法权益。

Art. 2: Trade unions are mass organizations of the working class, formed voluntarily by workers and led by the Communist Party of China; they are the bridge linking the Party with the masses of workers. Art. 6: Protecting the lawful rights and interests of workers and serving them wholeheartedly is the basic duty of trade unions. While safeguarding the overall interests of the whole people, trade unions represent and protect the lawful rights and interests of workers.

The Fascist syndicate's legal mission, by contrast, was the *collaboration* of producers in the higher interest of national production, under a law that forbade the strike. Here the union is defined as a *class* organization (工人阶级群众组织) whose "basic duty" is the protection of workers, and it is subordinate to a party that defines itself as "the vanguard of the Chinese working class" (中国工人阶级的先锋队, *Party Constitution*, General Program). One may disagree about how well this works in practice—Chinese scholars do, as shown below—but structurally the hierarchy runs from a workers' party to workers' organizations. In Italy it ran from a regime allied with Confindustria to syndicates whose job was to keep workers in line.

4.2 The strike: criminal in Rome, a bargaining event in Beijing

The decisive legal test is the strike. Under the Rocco law and the 1930 Penal Code, striking was a crime. Chinese law contains no equivalent criminal provision. Instead, the Trade Union Law instructs the union to represent the workers when a work stoppage occurs:

《中华人民共和国工会法》（2021年修正）第二十七条（节录）

企业、事业单位、社会组织发生停工、怠工事件，工会应当代表职工同企业、事业单位、社会组织或者有关方面协商，反映职工的意见和要求并提出解决意见。对于职工的合理的要求，企业、事业单位、社会组织应当予以解决。

Where a stoppage or slowdown occurs in an enterprise, public institution or social organization, the union shall represent the workers in consultations with the employer or other parties concerned, convey the workers' views and demands, and propose solutions. The employer shall meet the workers' reasonable demands.

The law treats a stoppage not as sedition against the corporative nation but as an event in which the union speaks *for the workers*, and it places the obligation to meet "reasonable demands" on the employer. The leading Chinese labor-relations scholar 常凯 (Renmin University) has argued for years that collective labor disputes are "normal economic disputes" to be settled through bargaining and market mechanisms, and criticized local officials who treat them as threats to stability—a position he could advance in mainstream Chinese media.[6] Such a debate inside the official academic system is unimaginable in the Italy of the Rocco Code.

[6]常凯接受中新网采访，2014年6月3日（chinanews.com/gn/2014/06-03/6236735.shtml）：集体劳动争议"就是一种正常的经济纠纷，完全可以用市场化的方式去解决"。另见常凯：《劳动关系的集体化转型与政府劳工政策的完善》，《中国社会科学》2013年第6期。

4.3 Chinese self-criticism is reform from within, not proof of Fascism

The essay is right that the ACFTU has often been criticized for being bureaucratic and distant from the shop floor. But this criticism is a staple of *Chinese* scholarship, and its direction matters. 游正林《60年来中国工会的三次大改革》(《社会学研究》2010年第4期) identifies three major reform waves—in the early 1950s, the late 1980s and the 2000s—each launched to overcome the union's "detachment from the masses" (脱离职工群众) by adjusting its relationship with the Party and the government and reducing its "officially run" (官办) character.[7] 常凯 likewise acknowledges the limits of the current "state-coordinated" (国家统合) model and argues for stronger government intervention to secure workers' rights and for genuine collective bargaining.

The pattern is that of a socialist labor regime repeatedly trying to bring its unions *closer to workers*—not of a regime designed to neutralize them on behalf of employers. Recent policy confirms the direction:

- The 2021 amendment of the Trade Union Law explicitly extended union organization to *new forms of employment* (新就业形态劳动者)—delivery riders, ride-hailing drivers and other platform workers whom market logic had pushed outside labor law.
- In July 2021 eight ministries led by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security issued the *Guiding Opinions on Safeguarding the Labor Rights of Workers in New Forms of Employment* (人社部发〔2021〕56号), and the State Administration for Market Regulation, with six other departments, issued opinions requiring food-delivery platforms to stop using "the strictest algorithm" (最严算法) as the basis for rider assessment.
- At the 18th National Congress of Chinese Trade Unions (October 2023), grassroots and front-line delegates made up 68.3% of the 2002 delegates and workers 26.7%, both higher than at the previous congress.[8]

4.4 "Approval from the next-higher union body"

The essay treats the requirement that a new grassroots union be approved by the higher union body as evidence of "protected consultation within the official hierarchy." Every unified labor federation has some such rule: a local of a national union is chartered by the national. The question is whether workers *may* unionize and whether employers may stop them. Chinese law answers both: workers have the right to join and organize unions, and "no organization or individual may obstruct or restrict" it (工会法第三条). In Fascist Italy, the only lawful union was the regime's; the others were dissolved.

5 Capital and business associations: incorporation without sovereignty

> **The article's claim(s) 11, 17–21, 50.** Business federations and associations are profoundly shaped by state and party; ministries were turned into associations (Hasmath); the party-state is "the final arbiter of institutional relations"; the Private Economy Promotion Law makes capitalist accumulation an explicit part of the order.

[7]游正林：《60年来中国工会的三次大改革》，《社会学研究》2010年第4期。
[8]新华社：《奏响最强音 建功新时代——中国工会第十八次全国代表大会侧记》，《人民日报》2023年10月13日。

5.1 The trajectory is decoupling, not fusion

The essay's evidence that business associations are extensions of the state comes largely from the 1990s, when several industrial ministries were turned into associations. Chinese policy since 2015 has run in the opposite direction. The *Overall Plan for Decoupling Trade Associations and Chambers of Commerce from Administrative Organs* (《行业协会商会与行政机关脱钩总体方案》), issued by the General Offices of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in July 2015, required associations to be separated from government agencies in their institutions, functions, assets, finances, personnel and party-building arrangements, and ended the practice of officials holding concurrent posts in them. From 2013, the State Council also allowed four categories—trade associations and chambers of commerce, science-and-technology bodies, charities, and urban–rural community-service organizations—to register *directly* with civil-affairs authorities, without a supervising state "sponsor."

A Fascist corporative system moves in the opposite direction: from associations toward organs of the state. The Chinese reforms do the reverse, which is why the essay is forced to concede that no Chinese business body enjoys a legal monopoly comparable to the ACFTU's.

5.2 "Final arbiter": every state is one; the question is for whom

The essay leans heavily on Hasmath's phrase that the state remains "the final arbiter of institutional relations." As an empirical description this is unobjectionable—and universal. The United States National Labor Relations Board decides which union is the exclusive bargaining representative in a workplace; European states decide which associations are "representative" for collective agreements to be extended. Sovereignty *means* final arbitration.

The Chinese Marxist tradition, following Lenin's *The State and Revolution*, asks a different question: final arbiter *in whose class interest*? Here the Chinese record since 2020 is instructive, because it is the period in which the Party most visibly exercised its "arbitration" over big capital:

- In November 2020 the record initial public offering of Ant Group was halted; in April 2021 the State Administration for Market Regulation fined Alibaba 18.228 billion yuan for abuse of market dominance; anti-monopoly guidelines for the platform economy followed.
- On 29 April 2022, at the 38th collective study session of the Political Bureau, Xi Jinping called for setting "traffic lights" (红绿灯) for capital and preventing its "disorderly expansion" (无序扩张) and "barbaric growth" (野蛮生长), while affirming that capital is an important factor of production in the socialist market economy.[9]
- The same period produced the platform-worker protections described above.

When the Chinese arbiter acts, it acts *against* the largest concentrations of private capital and *for* the most precarious workers. Italian arbitration did the opposite: the regime cut wages by decree after the 1927 revaluation of the lira and again in the early 1930s, while the industrialists' confederation retained its organization and its members kept their firms. Two "final arbiters" that rule in opposite directions are not the same institution.

[9]《依法规范和引导我国资本健康发展　发挥资本作为重要生产要素的积极作用》，中共中央政治局第三十八次集体学习报道，新华社2022年4月30日；《人民日报》评论员文章，2022年5月1日（cpc.people.com.cn/n1/2022/0501/c64387-32412825.html）。

5.3 The Private Economy Promotion Law: read Article 2, not only Article 3

The essay reads the 2025 Private Economy Promotion Law (《中华人民共和国民营经济促进法》, adopted 30 April 2025, in force 20 May 2025) as proof that "capitalist accumulation is an explicit part of the order." Chinese theory has never hidden this—the presence of private capital in the primary stage of socialism has been an open doctrine since 1987. But the law itself places private capital inside a hierarchy that no Fascist charter would have accepted:

> 《中华人民共和国民营经济促进法》（2025年）第二条（节录）
>
> ……坚持中国共产党的领导，坚持以人民为中心，坚持中国特色社会主义制度，确保民营经济发展的正确政治方向。……毫不动摇巩固和发展公有制经济，毫不动摇鼓励、支持、引导非公有制经济发展……
>
> *…uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China, uphold the people-centered approach, uphold the system of socialism with Chinese characteristics, and ensure the correct political direction of the development of the private economy… Unswervingly consolidate and develop the public-ownership economy; unswervingly encourage, support and guide the development of the non-public economy…*

Chinese commentators noted that this was the first time the "two unswervinglies" (两个毫不动摇) were written into a statute—and the first of the two is the consolidation of *public* ownership. Compare Declaration IX of the *Carta del Lavoro*: the state intervenes only where private initiative is "lacking or insufficient." The Italian charter made private enterprise primary and the state residual. The Chinese statute that most favors private enterprise still subordinates it to public ownership as the principal form (公有制为主体) and to an explicitly socialist political direction.

6 The Party inside the enterprise

> **The article's claim(s) 13–16.** The 2023 Company Law provides for party organizations in all companies; SOE party committees must discuss major matters before boards decide (Regulations on Primary-Level Party Organizations in SOEs, Arts. 13, 15); by 2017 over 73% of non-state enterprises had party organizations.

The essay rightly separates organizational penetration from control. But it never asks the question a Chinese reader would ask first: *what is the party organization in a private firm instructed to do, and on whose behalf?* The answer is in the Party Constitution and the Company Law.

> 《中国共产党章程》（2022年修改）第三十三条（节录）
>
> 非公有制经济组织中党的基层组织，贯彻党的方针政策，引导和监督企业遵守国家的法律法规，领导工会、共青团等群团组织，团结凝聚职工群众，维护各方的合法权益，促进企业健康发展。
>
> *Primary-level Party organizations in non-public economic entities shall implement the Party's guidelines and policies, guide and supervise the enterprise's compliance with State laws and regulations, lead the trade union, the Communist Youth League and other mass organizations, unite and rally the workers, safeguard the lawful rights and interests of all parties, and promote the healthy development of the enterprise.*

> **《中华人民共和国公司法》（2023年修订）第十七条、第十八条（节录）**
> 第十七条　公司职工依照《中华人民共和国工会法》组织工会，开展工会活动，维护职工合法权益。……公司依照宪法和有关法律的规定，建立健全以职工代表大会为基本形式的民主管理制度，通过职工代表大会或者其他形式，实行民主管理。……
> 第十八条　在公司中，根据中国共产党章程的规定，设立中国共产党的组织，开展党的活动。公司应当为党组织的活动提供必要条件。
>
> *Art. 17: Company employees shall organize trade unions in accordance with the Trade Union Law… The company shall, in accordance with the Constitution and relevant laws, establish and improve a system of democratic management with the workers' congress as its basic form… Art. 18: In a company, organizations of the Communist Party of China shall be established, and Party activities carried out, in accordance with the Party Constitution. The company shall provide the necessary conditions for the activities of the Party organization.*

Three points follow.

First, the party cell in a private firm is assigned to *lead the union* and *rally the workers*, and to supervise the employer's compliance with law. It is, in Chinese self-understanding, the organized presence of the workers' party inside private capital. The National Fascist Party had no statutory equivalent inside Fiat or Pirelli; the *Carta del Lavoro* instead affirmed that the entrepreneur was responsible to the state for the direction of production, and Fascist law made the employer the undisputed authority within the firm.

Second, the Company Law pairs the party article with an article on unions and the *workers' congress* (职工代表大会) as the basic form of democratic management. Fascist company law contains nothing of the kind; it would have contradicted the entire doctrine of the entrepreneur's hierarchical responsibility.

Third, the "prior deliberation" (前置研究讨论) rule for state-owned enterprises reflects a doctrine Xi Jinping stated at the National Conference on Party Building in SOEs in October 2016: upholding Party leadership over SOEs is a major political principle that "must be adhered to consistently," and building a modern enterprise system is the direction of SOE reform which "must also be adhered to consistently" (两个"一以贯之"). The purpose is to keep *publicly owned* assets oriented to public goals—employment, strategic security, regional development—rather than to managerial self-enrichment. That is a problem of socialist ownership, not of Fascist corporatism, in which large enterprises remained private and the state's holdings in IRI were treated as a temporary rescue to be re-privatized when possible.

7 Ownership, statistics and the "commanding heights"

> **The article's claim(s) 34–41.** SOE revenue is not GDP share; credible estimates put SOEs at 23–28% of GDP (2017); asset figures are balance sheets, not national wealth; listed-company counts and capitalization tell different stories; the real issue is concentration of strategic power.

7.1 Conceding the arithmetic

On the arithmetic the essay is largely correct, and a Chinese reply loses nothing by saying so. Revenue is not value added. Balance-sheet assets are not national wealth. Firm counts are

not capitalization. Chinese officials themselves describe the private sector with the "56789" formula—more than 50% of tax revenue, 60% of GDP, 70% of technological innovation, 80% of urban employment and 90% of enterprises—stated by Xi Jinping at the symposium on private enterprises on 1 November 2018. The Chinese system does not claim that the state produces most of the output.

7.2 Why "dominance" was never about GDP share

The essay ends this section by saying that the real question is "concentration of strategic power." That is precisely how Chinese political economy has always defined the leading role of the state sector. The Constitution:

> 《中华人民共和国宪法》第六条、第七条、第十条（节录）
>
> 第六条　中华人民共和国的社会主义经济制度的基础是生产资料的社会主义公有制，即全民所有制和劳动群众集体所有制。.....国家在社会主义初级阶段，坚持公有制为主体、多种所有制经济共同发展的基本经济制度，坚持按劳分配为主体、多种分配方式并存的分配制度。
>
> 第七条　国有经济，即社会主义全民所有制经济，是国民经济中的主导力量。国家保障国有经济的巩固和发展。
>
> 第十条　城市的土地属于国家所有。农村和城市郊区的土地，除由法律规定属于国家所有的以外，属于集体所有.....
>
> *Art. 6: The basis of the socialist economic system is socialist public ownership of the means of production, namely ownership by the whole people and collective ownership by working people... In the primary stage of socialism the State upholds the basic economic system with public ownership as the mainstay and diverse forms of ownership developing together, and a distribution system with distribution according to work as the mainstay. Art. 7: The State-owned economy... is the leading force in the national economy. Art. 10: Land in cities is owned by the State; land in rural and suburban areas is owned by collectives, except where the law provides otherwise.*

The 1999 Decision of the Fourth Plenum of the 15th Central Committee on SOE reform specified that the leading role of the state economy "is mainly embodied in its *control*" (主要体现在控制力上)—over sectors bearing on national security and the lifeblood of the economy: finance, energy, telecommunications, railways, ports, defense industry, major infrastructure. GDP share was never the yardstick. The 2023 annual report of the State Council to the NPC Standing Committee recorded non-financial SOE assets of about 371.9 trillion yuan and state financial enterprise assets of about 445.1 trillion yuan; whatever the caveats about balance sheets, these are the institutions that allocate the country's credit and own its networks.

Two facts in this constitutional text have no counterpart in Fascist Italy:

1. **Land.** China abolished the landlord class by land reform (《中华人民共和国土地改革法》, 1950) and placed all land in state or collective ownership. Italian Fascism rose with the money and the squads of the Po Valley agrarians and left the great estates of the South untouched. There is no landed rentier class in China; there was one at the center of Fascist Italy's coalition.
2. **Finance.** The core of the Chinese banking system is publicly owned and directed by state policy. In Italy, IRI was created in 1933 to take over the industrial portfolios of

failing private banks—socializing their losses—and the regime always described public holdings as an exception justified only by the failure of private initiative (Declaration IX).

7.3 Surplus: where does it go?

The essay asks a fair Marxist question: who allocates the surplus? Chinese policy gives concrete answers that the essay does not mention. In 2017 the State Council decided to transfer 10% of the state equity of central and local SOEs to the National Social Security Fund and provincial social-security bodies to cover pension shortfalls (《划转部分国有资本充实社保基金实施方案》，国发〔2017〕49号); and the 2013 Third Plenum Decision set the goal of raising the share of state-capital income remitted to the public budget to 30% by 2020 (提高国有资本收益上缴公共财政比例，二〇二〇年提到百分之三十). Public ownership here means that a fixed share of enterprise surplus is taken out of enterprise control and assigned to workers' pensions. No Fascist regime did anything comparable with IRI.

8 "State capitalism," the primary stage, and Lenin

The article's claim(s) 42–47. Naughton: reform discarded command socialism; Pearson, Rithmire & Tsai: "party-state capitalism." The socialist-transition defense (Lenin's state capitalism under proletarian rule) needs evidence on property, wage labor, surplus, class formation and popular control; disciplining capitalists proves party supremacy, not the end of capitalist relations.

8.1 The Chinese theory never claimed what the essay refutes

The essay attacks a position that Chinese theory does not hold—that markets have been abolished or that capitalist relations have ended. The Chinese position, stated since the 13th Party Congress in 1987, is that China is in the *primary stage of socialism* (社会主义初级阶段), a long historical period in which a backward productive base forces the coexistence of public ownership with private and foreign capital. Deng Xiaoping's formulation during his 1992 southern tour is the canonical statement:

> 邓小平：《在武昌、深圳、珠海、上海等地的谈话要点》（1992年），《邓小平文选》第三卷
>
> 计划多一点还是市场多一点，不是社会主义与资本主义的本质区别。计划经济不等于社会主义，资本主义也有计划；市场经济不等于资本主义，社会主义也有市场。计划和市场都是经济手段。社会主义的本质，是解放生产力，发展生产力，消灭剥削，消除两极分化，最终达到共同富裕。
>
> *More planning or more market is not the essential difference between socialism and capitalism. A planned economy is not equivalent to socialism, for there is planning under capitalism too; a market economy is not capitalism, for there are markets under socialism too. Planning and markets are both economic means. The essence of socialism is the liberation and development of the productive forces, the elimination of exploitation and of polarization, and the ultimate achievement of common prosperity.*

Naughton's observation that command-economy socialism was discarded is therefore not a discovery; it is the premise of Chinese reform. And the criterion Deng sets—elimination of exploitation and polarization, common prosperity—is a criterion of *direction*, which is exactly how Lenin argued about the New Economic Policy that the essay itself cites.

8.2 Capital in a socialist market economy: the Chinese debate

Chinese political economy has developed a substantial literature on the nature of capital under these conditions. 张宇《社会主义市场经济条件下资本理论再认识》, published in 《中国社会科学》 (*Social Sciences in China*) 2025年第8期 (pp. 22–41), distinguishes capital "in general" —a factor of production that any commodity economy must use—from capital "in particular," whose social character depends on the ownership system and the political power within which it operates; it argues for regulating and guiding capital to serve high-quality development rather than to dominate it.[10] This is not a hidden apology for capitalism; it is an open theoretical program, debated in the country's leading journal, about how to use capital without being ruled by it.

The essay's reply is that this defense "needs evidence." That is fair. Here is some of the evidence a Chinese reader would put forward:

- **Property.** All land is publicly or collectively owned; the commanding heights of finance, energy, telecoms and transport are in public hands (Section 6).
- **Surplus.** A fixed share of state equity has been transferred to the social-security system; a rising share of state-capital income is remitted to the public budget (Section 6).
- **Distribution.** The 2020 completion of the poverty-alleviation campaign lifted the 98.99 million rural residents still below the national poverty line in 2012 out of absolute poverty and removed all 832 designated poor counties from the list (国务院新闻办公室《人类减贫的中国实践》白皮书，2021年4月). Average annual wages of urban non-private-sector employees rose from 46,769 yuan in 2012 to 120,698 yuan in 2023 (National Bureau of Statistics).
- **Direction.** Xi Jinping's 2021 article "Solidly Promoting Common Prosperity" (《扎实推动共同富裕》, 《求是》2021年第20期) defines common prosperity as "the essential requirement of socialism" (社会主义的本质要求) and commits the state to regulating excessive incomes and expanding the middle-income group.
- **Power.** When the interests of the largest private capitals conflicted with public policy —in platform finance, private tutoring, real estate leverage—it was capital that gave way (Section 5).

None of this proves that China has completed the socialist transition; Chinese theory says plainly that it has not. It does establish that the system has a *direction* and a *class orientation*, and that both point away from what Fascism was.

8.3 "Workers do not govern directly"

The essay ultimately sets the bar at direct worker administration of production. By that standard no socialist experience in history—including the Soviet Russia of the NEP that the essay invokes through Lenin—would count. Chinese institutions provide for worker participation through the workers' congress, the union, and the people's congresses, and Chinese scholars are frank that these channels are uneven in practice. But an institution being imperfect does

[10]张宇：《社会主义市场经济条件下资本理论再认识》，《中国社会科学》2025年第8期，第22–41页。另见郭冠清、朱琳：《社会主义市场经济下资本性质及其作用机理研究——兼评关于公有资本争论》（爱思想网转载）。

not make it Fascist. Fascism did not have imperfect workers' congresses; it had none, and it imprisoned those who demanded them.

9 Anti-corruption and the billionaires

> **The article's claim(s) 48–49.** Prosecutions show political supremacy, not class analysis; rankings of punished billionaires mix incommensurable groups.

We agree that a list of punished tycoons is not a class analysis, and we do not offer one. The relevant point is narrower and stronger. The defining class content of Fascism, in the Chinese reading, is that the state becomes the instrument of the most reactionary sections of finance capital. A state in which the political leadership can halt the largest IPO in history, fine the largest e-commerce firm 18.2 billion yuan, close down an entire for-profit tutoring industry by policy, and force the largest property developers to deleverage at their own expense, is *not* the instrument of finance capital. It may be many other things; it is not that.

The essay also overlooks the *political* economy of anti-corruption. The campaign launched after the 18th Party Congress in 2012 targeted, above all, the fusion of official power and private wealth—the "collusion between officials and business" (官商勾结) and the "interest groups" (利益集团) that formed around local governments and state monopolies. This is the very process by which, in a corporatist or Fascist order, capital captures the state. The Chinese party-state has spent a decade attacking it.

10 "Local state corporatism" was collective property

> **The article's claim(s) 51–56.** Local governments acted as boards of directors of township and village enterprises (Oi, Walder); the result was growth plus protectionism and rent-seeking, leading to recentralization.

The essay's account of the 1980s and 1990s is broadly accurate, and the author rightly calls it period-specific. What it omits is the one fact that matters for a comparison with Fascism: the township and village enterprises were overwhelmingly *collectively owned* (集体所有制). The local official as "chairman of the board" was the manager of community property, and the profits went—in the classic southern Jiangsu model—to rural public goods, to subsidizing agriculture (以工补农), and to keeping surplus labor in the countryside rather than in urban slums.

费孝通, China's most eminent sociologist, analyzed this as the *Sunan model* (苏南模式) in his 1983 essay《小城镇　大问题》and later writings on small towns: collective rural industrialization as a path of "leaving the land without leaving the village" (离土不离乡) that spread industrial income across rural communities instead of concentrating it in private hands.[11] Western "local state corporatism" describes the same institutions in the language of the firm. A Chinese sociologist described them in the language of the community. Neither description matches the Fascist countryside, where the regime's "Battle for Grain" served the large landowners and rural wages fell.

[11] 费孝通：《小城镇　大问题》（1983年），收入《费孝通文集》，北京：群言出版社。

The recentralization after the 1994 tax-sharing reform, and again after 2012, is presented in the essay as a re-tightening of corporatist control. Chinese scholarship sees it as the correction of *local capture*: the rent-seeking, protectionism and land-driven debt that local discretion produced. Hasmath's own conclusion, quoted by the essay, is that the aim was "having the national interests and not local ones take precedence." That is the opposite of the corporatist dynamic, in which organized particular interests colonize the state.

11 The historical trajectory: Mao, "Three Represents," Xi

> **The article's claim(s) 22–24, 57–61.** China's template came from the Soviet Union; it moved from hard control under Mao, to flexible incorporation after 1978, to renewed party leadership under Xi; "Three Represents" legitimized incorporating entrepreneurs.

11.1 The united front is older than the People's Republic—and older than any borrowed template

The essay treats the incorporation of entrepreneurs as a late-reform innovation crowned by Jiang Zemin's "Three Represents." In Chinese political theory it is the continuation of a much older idea: the *united front* of the New Democratic revolution, which explicitly included the national bourgeoisie as a junior partner under the leadership of the working class. Mao's 1949 essay is unambiguous about the hierarchy:

> **毛泽东：《论人民民主专政》（1949年6月30日），《毛泽东选集》第四卷**
>
> 人民是什么？在中国，在现阶段，是工人阶级，农民阶级，城市小资产阶级和民族资产阶级。这些阶级在工人阶级和共产党的领导之下，团结起来，组成自己的国家……
>
> *Who are the people? At the present stage in China, they are the working class, the peasantry, the urban petty bourgeoisie and the national bourgeoisie. These classes, led by the working class and the Communist Party, unite to form their own state…*

Fascism also claimed to unite all classes—but by *denying* that classes have opposed interests and placing the nation above them. The Chinese united front does the reverse: it *names* the classes, acknowledges their different interests, and places one of them—the working class—in the leading position. The 2020 CPC Central Committee *Opinions on Strengthening United Front Work in the Private Economy in the New Era* (《关于加强新时代民营经济统战工作的意见》) continues this logic: private entrepreneurs are to be guided to "listen to and follow the Party" (听党话、跟党走), not the other way round.

11.2 "Three Represents" and the vanguard

The "Three Represents" admitted private entrepreneurs to party membership. It did not change the class definition of the Party. The Party Constitution, as amended in 2022, still opens:

> **《中国共产党章程》总纲（2022年）**

> 中国共产党是中国工人阶级的先锋队，同时是中国人民和中华民族的先锋队……党的最高理想和最终目标是实现共产主义。
>
> *The Communist Party of China is the vanguard of the Chinese working class, and at the same time the vanguard of the Chinese people and the Chinese nation… The Party's highest ideal and ultimate goal is the realization of communism.*

A Fascist party was the vanguard of the nation *against* Marxism, and its final goal was the ethical State. The ultimate goal named here—communism, a classless society in which the state withers away—is the negation of everything the *Dottrina del fascismo* stood for.

11.3 Recentralization under Xi

The essay presents the post-2012 period as renewed supervision over a differentiated field. From the Chinese perspective, the core of that period was the reassertion of party leadership *over capital and over local interest groups*, combined with the largest anti-poverty program in history and the expansion of social insurance to over a billion people. The 20th Party Congress report (2022) defined "Chinese-style modernization" by five features, two of which are directly relevant here: it is "modernization of common prosperity for all the people" (全体人民共同富裕的现代化) and "modernization following a path of peaceful development" (走和平发展道路的现代化). Each of these is the antithesis of the Fascist program of class collaboration under capital and expansion by war.

12 Social organizations: classification, not corporative licensing

> **The article's claim(s) 62–67.** Dual management, the Charity Law and the Overseas NGO Law amount to "differentiated state supervision"; social organizations' capacities are used while their independence is limited.

The essay's own conclusion here—"differentiated state supervision"—is essentially the Chinese sociologists' *classified control* (分类控制), arrived at fifteen years later. Its corollary is the one Kang Xiaoguang and Han Heng drew in 2005: this is a mode of governance that deals with different social organizations differently according to their function, not a corporative system licensing monopoly representatives of the "categories of production." China today has close to 900,000 registered social organizations, the large majority of them small, local and service-oriented; since 2013 several categories register directly without a state sponsor; and since 2015 trade associations have been decoupled from government agencies (Section 5).

Fascist Italy's policy toward civil society was not classification but elimination: the regime dissolved independent associations, absorbed youth and leisure organizations into party bodies such as the Opera Nazionale Balilla and the Opera Nazionale Dopolavoro, and in 1931 fought the Church over the continued existence of Catholic Action's youth groups. Regulating 900,000 organizations differently according to their function is not the same act as abolishing every association outside the party.

13 Representation: congresses, the CPPCC and the minor parties

> **The article's claim(s) 12, 78–79.** The CPPCC is consultative and the people's congresses are not independent counterweights; the United Front's "pairing-up" with minor parties is "clientelistic state corporatism."

13.1 Multi-party cooperation versus the abolition of parties

The essay's final empirical example—the "pairing-up" of party officials with leaders of the eight democratic parties—is offered as one more corporatist mechanism. The most striking thing about it, for the comparison with Fascism, is that *the eight democratic parties exist*. They hold seats in the people's congresses and the CPPCC, their members serve as vice-chairs of the NPC Standing Committee and as ministers, and the Chinese system defines itself as "multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC," described by Xi Jinping in March 2018 as a "new type of party system" (新型政党制度). Fascist Italy dissolved every party except its own in 1926 and abolished elected parliament in 1939. A system that keeps eight other parties inside its representative institutions may be criticized, but it cannot be the closest living parallel to a regime that abolished them.

13.2 Representative democracy in the Chinese sense

Chinese political scientists have argued that the comparison of the people's congresses with Western parliaments misreads their function. 王绍光 distinguishes *representative democracy* (代表型民主), concerned with whether the substance of policy responds to the people's needs, from *electoral-representative democracy* (代议型民主), concerned with competitive elections; he argues that China developed the former in theory and practice and that this accounts for the system's high legitimacy.[12] The 2021 white paper *China: Democracy That Works* (《中国的民主》) describes the same idea as *whole-process people's democracy* (全过程人民民主), uniting "process democracy and results democracy, procedural democracy and substantive democracy, direct democracy and indirect democracy." Concrete mechanisms include the grassroots legislative liaison points (基层立法联系点) through which draft laws are circulated for comment in neighborhoods—the concept itself was first articulated by Xi Jinping at the Gubei liaison point in Shanghai's Hongqiao subdistrict in November 2019.

Readers need not accept this theory to see that it is a theory of *popular* representation, rooted in the Chinese revolutionary tradition of the mass line. Fascist theory explicitly rejected popular sovereignty: the *Dottrina del fascismo* attacked democracy as the rule of number and asserted the primacy of the State over the people.

[12] 王绍光：《代表型民主与代议型民主》，2014年（爱思想网转载，aisixiang.com/data/73405.html）；《中国的"代表型民主"》，2014年。

14 Development, legitimacy and the survey data

> **The article's claim(s) 68–71.** High satisfaction with the central government (Harvard Ash Center surveys, 93–95%) is not a referendum on socialism; popular approval and the classification of production relations are separate questions.

We accept the logical distinction. But the essay draws the wrong conclusion from it. Legitimacy *based on what* matters for classification. Fascist legitimacy rested on nationalist mobilization, imperial conquest and the cult of the leader, while real wages in Italy stagnated or fell through most of the Fascist period. Chinese legitimacy, by the Chinese account and by the survey evidence the essay cites, rests on performance in exactly the areas a socialist state claims as its own: poverty eradication, wages, housing, health care, pensions and infrastructure. The Ash Center report the essay cites also found that respondents in poorer, inland regions were comparatively more likely to report rising satisfaction—the very groups that a state serving finance capital would have least reason to please. A regime whose support comes disproportionately from its poorest citizens, because their material conditions have improved, is not behaving like the dictatorship of finance capital.

15 Comparison and conclusion

> **The article's claim(s) 72–77, 80–81.** Neither unlimited capitalist rule nor the end of capital, China is a "differentiated order" in which interests are expressed within limits set from above—the closest existing parallel to Italian Fascist state corporatism.

15.1 The decisive comparison

The table below sets out, side by side, the features that defined Italian Fascism and the corresponding provisions of the Chinese legal order. Every entry on the Chinese side is drawn from a text quoted earlier in this reply.

Dimension	Fascist Italy	People's Republic of China
Leading class named by the state	None; the nation and the ethical State stand above classes	"Led by the working class, based on the worker–peasant alliance" (宪法第一条)
Class struggle	Denied; to be dissolved in the corporative nation	"Will continue to exist within certain limits for a long time" (宪法序言)
Private enterprise	"The most effective and most useful instrument" (Carta VII); state intervenes only where it is lacking (Carta IX)	Public ownership as mainstay; state economy is the "leading force" (宪法第六、七条); private economy guided under "two unswervinglies" (民营经济促进法第二条)
Land	Great estates preserved; agrarian elites in the ruling coalition	All land state- or collectively owned after land reform (宪法第十条)

Dimension	Fascist Italy	People's Republic of China
Strikes	Criminal offense (Rocco law 1926; Penal Code 1930)	No criminal prohibition; union must represent workers in stoppages, employer must meet reasonable demands (工会法第二十七条)
Unions	Only the regime's syndicates lawful; collaboration for national production	"Mass organizations of the working class"; basic duty is protecting workers' rights (工会法第二、六条)
Party cells in private firms	None; employer's authority over the firm affirmed	Lead the union, rally workers, supervise legal compliance (党章第三十三条; 公司法第十八条)
Workers' congress	None	Basic form of democratic management (公司法第十七条)
Other parties	All dissolved (1926)	Eight democratic parties in congresses and CPPCC; "new type of party system"
Elected legislature	Plebiscite list (1928–29); Chamber abolished (1939)	Multi-level people's congresses; grassroots legislative liaison points
Race	Racial laws (1938)	"Discrimination against and oppression of any nationality are prohibited" (宪法第四条)
War	Perpetual peace neither possible nor useful (Dottrina 1932); Ethiopia, Spain, Albania	Modernization "following a path of peaceful development" (二十大报告)
Final goal	The ethical, totalitarian State	Communism: a classless society (党章总纲)

15.2 What remains of the parallel

In the sense Fascists themselves give the word, China is not corporatist. It has no corporations exercising state power, no chamber representing producer categories in place of citizens, and no doctrine that class struggle has been abolished. The essay effectively admits this when it says the ACFTU is not a syndicate, the CPPCC is not a corporative chamber and SOEs are not IRI.

Retreat to the thin, Schmitterian sense, and the Chinese scholars who tested it against Chinese evidence still reject it as a description of China (Section 2). Grant even that, and what remains is a strong center that decides which organizations count. Every modern state has that. In the specific form of a dominant peak labor federation tied to a governing party, Austria, Sweden, Japan and Singapore have it too. It is not a fingerprint of Fascism.

The essay's final paragraph says that what gives the corporatist comparison its explanatory value is "the political coordination of differentiated class relations." The Chinese reply is that *every* state politically coordinates differentiated class relations. Marxism calls this the class nature of the state. The question that separates socialism from Fascism is not *whether* the state coordinates classes, but *which class leads, in whose favor the coordination runs, and toward what end*.

On each of these the Chinese Constitution, the Trade Union Law, the Company Law, the Party Constitution and four decades of policy give answers opposite to those of the *Carta del Lavoro*, the Rocco laws and the *Dottrina del fascismo*.

Chinese scholars do not claim that their institutions are perfect. They have criticized the bureaucratization of unions (游正林, 常凯), the inadequacy of imported frameworks (康晓光, 韩恒, 吴建平, 纪莺莺), and the rent-seeking that local discretion produced. But an honest comparison has to place China where its own texts and its own record place it: a socialist state in the primary stage, using markets and private capital under the leadership of a party that calls itself, in its founding document, the vanguard of the working class, and that has spent the last decade disciplining the very capital that Fascism existed to protect. China is not a corporative state in the Fascist sense, is poorly described as corporatist even in the academic sense, and would not be Fascist even if it were. It is neither a corporative state nor a Fascist one.

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