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# Post Mao China and Social Structures of Accumulation

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## Résumé

Social Structure of Accumulation (SSA) theory is a theory of stages of capitalism. Capitalist stages consist of a long period of relatively stable capitalist accumulation, followed by a relatively long period of crisis and breakdown. Each of the periods of accumulation is underpinned by a set of institutions designated as an SSA. SSA analysis has been extended outside of the United States, and specifically to the global South. The contemporary SSA has been understood to centrally include a global dimension. This raises the question of whether an SSA framework would be useful in understanding China. We will contend that the post-Mao period can be characterized as consisting of two successive SSAs separated by the social crisis associated with the Tiananmen Square uprising. One major issue is the possibly socialist character of the Chinese social formation, and whether or not an SSA analysis is appropriate in a non-capitalist context. Prior to 1978, Chinese developmental strategies shifted between central planning on the Soviet model and more radical Maoist political mobilization of the populace. This long period was brought to an end in 1978 with the adoption of a market socialist strategy, where the bulk of the economy remained in state and collective forms of ownership, but economic decisions were increasingly subject to market motivations and market discipline. This period resulted in strong growth, but produced tensions and ended with the Tiananmen crisis. The Chinese Communist Party response to the crisis became clear when Deng Xiao Ping advocated further marketization during his Southern Tour in 1992. This marked the beginning of a transition to capitalism, though the Chinese state retained the capability of directing the economy. We will analyse these periods as two successive SSAs. The first is a social structure of accumulation with accumulation used in the sense of growth, only analogous to an SSA in the capitalist sense. The second SSA is a period of accumulation in the full Marxist sense.

**Mots-Clés:** China, social structure, accumulaton, market socialism

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