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Focus

Upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre:
Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement

Focus Issue Editors

Joseph Y.S. Cheng Emile K.K. Yeoh

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(continued inside back cover)
Focus – Upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre: Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement

This special focus issue consists of reviewed and revised papers among those presented at the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen international academic conference on “Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement” held by the New School for Democracy and the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China at National Taiwan University in Taipei on May 18-20, 2019.
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Foreword
Why We Remember June Fourth

Perry Link*
Princeton University / University of California, Riverside

Some people recently asked, “Why must you remember June Fourth?" Thirty years have gone by. It is history. Get over it. Move on.

A simple question, but there are many answers. No single answer is adequate, and all of the answers together still leave the question hanging in mid-air, asking for more.

We remember June Fourth because Jiang Jieliang was 17 at the time. He is still 17. He will always be 17. People who die do not age.

We remember June Fourth because the lost souls that haunted Liu Xiaobo until he died will haunt us, too, until we do.

We remember June Fourth because the glint of bonfires on bayonets is something one does not forget, even if one did not see it personally.

We remember June Fourth because it taught us the essential nature of the Communist Party of China when all of the clothes, every shred, falls away. No book, film, or museum could be clearer.
We remember June Fourth because of the ordinary workers who died then. We cannot remember most of their names because we do not know most of their names. We never did. But we remember them as people, and we remember that we never knew their names.

We remember June Fourth because the worst of China is there – but the best of China is there, too.

We remember June Fourth because it was a massacre – not just a crackdown, or an “incident”, an event, a shijian, a fengbo; not a counterrevolutionary riot, not a faint memory, and not, as a child in China might think today, a blank. It was a massacre.

We remember June Fourth because, as Fang Lizhi noted with his characteristic wit, it is the only case he has heard of in which a nation invaded itself.

We remember June Fourth because we want to know what the soldiers who did the killing remember. They were brainwashed on the outskirts of the city before they carried out their deadly orders. So they were victims, too. We do not know what their thoughts were. But we remember that we want to know.

We remember June Fourth because Ding Zilin is still alive. She is 82 years old. When she goes out, plainclothes police follow to provide security. Security for her? No, security for the state. That’s right, a regime with 100 trillion yuan in GDP and two million soldiers needs protection from an 82-year-old lady. Protection from her ideas. This is worth remembering.
We remember June Fourth in order to support others who remember. We remember alone. But we remember together, too.

We remember June Fourth because remembering it makes us better people. Remembering is in our personal interests. When politicians talk about “interests” they mean material interests. But moral interests are just as important – no, they are more important. More important than owning a yacht.

We remember June Fourth because it was an historic turning point for one-fifth of the world. A turning point in a frightening direction. We hope it won’t be so much of a turning point as to throw the whole world into a ditch. But we don’t know. We’ll have to see.

We remember June Fourth because, if we didn’t remember it, it could not be in our heads any other way. Could we possibly have imagined it? No.

We remember June Fourth because there are people who dearly want us to remember. It comforts them to know that we remember.

We remember June Fourth because there are also people who desperately want us not to remember. They want us to forget because forgetting helps to preserve their political power. How foul! We would oppose that power even if remembering massacres were the only way to do it.

We remember June Fourth in order to remind ourselves of the way the Chinese government lies to itself and to others. It says the Chinese people have long since made their “correct judgment on the 1989 counterrevolutionary riot at Tiananmen Square”. But each year, at
June Fourth, plainclothes police block people from entering the Square. Why? If the Chinese people all believe what the government says they believe, then why not let the people into the square to denounce the counterrevolutionaries? The presence of the police shows that the regime does not believe its own lies.

We remember June Fourth because shocks to the human brain last a long time. We would not be able to forget even if we tried.

我們為什麼記得六四
林培瑞

最近有人問，“為什麼你們一定要記住六四？”三十年過去了。已經是歷史了。忘了吧。往前看吧。

一個簡單的問題，卻有着許多答案。沒有任何一個答案是足夠的。所有的答案都加在一起，也不足。問題還留在半空中，尋求答案。

我們記住六四，是因為那時候蔣捷連才 17 歲。今天，他仍然是 17 歲。他永遠是 17 歲。死去的人不長歲數兒。

我們記住六四，是因為那些逝去的亡靈，始終困擾著劉曉波，直到曉波去世；亡靈們也將困擾我們，直到我們也去世。

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我們記住六四，是因為刺刀上閃爍的篝火，令人難忘；即使沒有親眼看過的人，也不會忘記。

我們記住六四，是因為它讓我們看清了中國共產黨的本質。在那會兒，這個黨所有的外衣脫落在地，毫無隱藏。沒有任何書籍、電影或者博物館，能夠讓人看得如此清晰。

我們記住六四，是因為普通的工人倒了下去。我們不可能記住大多數他們的名字，因為我們不知道他們的名字，從來也不知道。但我們記住了他們作為人的舉動，我們也記住了自己始終不知道他們的名字。

我們記住六四，是因為這是最壞的中國，但也是最好的中國。

我們記住六四，是因為它是一場大屠殺——不僅是一場鎮壓；不是一個事故、事件或風波；不是一次反革命暴亂，不是一個模糊的記憶；不是如同今天中國的一個孩子所能夠想起的，一片空白。不是別的，是一場大屠殺。

我們記住六四，是因為，正如方勵之以他的特有的幽默所說的：世界歷史上很少有大國侵略他自己。

我們記住六四，是因為我們想知道那些殺人的士兵們，自己有什麼記憶。在執行凶狠的命令之前，他們在北京的郊區被洗腦，以為是要平息暴徒。因此這些普通兵也是受害者。我們不知道他們頭腦中想過什麼。但是我們記得我們想知道。

我們記住六四，是因為丁子霖還活著。她 82 歲了。她走到哪兒，便衣警察跟到哪兒。為的是安全。丁教授的安全嗎？不是。為的是國家的安全。沒錯，一個擁有千億美元 GDP 和兩百萬軍隊的政權，竟然需要保護自己免受一個 82 歲老太太的傷害。怕的不是她的力氣，是她腦子裡的想法。那想法是有力量的。這是我們值得記住的。
我們記住六四，是因為要支持其他的想記住的人。我們單獨記得。但也是跟朋友們一道記得。

我們記住六四，是因為記憶對我們自己有好處。是我們自己的利益。政治提到 “利益” 總是物質利益。然而精神上，道德上的利益同樣重要——不，更加重要。比擁有一艘遊艇重要得多。

我們記住六四，是因為六四是五分之一世界的历史转折点。是一个朝向可怕的方向的转折。我们不希望看到，这也是把世界带到沟里去的那样一个转折。但我们不知道。真的不知道。得走着瞧。

我們記住六四，是因為六四是五分之一世界的歷史轉折點。是一個朝向可怕的方差的轉折。我們不希望看到，這也是把世界帶到溝裡去的那樣一個轉折。但我們不知道。真的不知道。得走著瞧。

我們記住六四，是因為有些人非常希望我們記住。我們記住，對他們是莫大的安慰。

我們記住六四，是因為另外有些人非常願意看到我們遺忘。遺忘有利於他們維持政權。多麼卑污！哪怕記住屠殺是我們抵制獨裁的唯一方法，我們還是得記住，還是得抵制。

我們記住六四，是因為記憶能提醒我們中國政府撒謊的方式。自己都不信自己的謊言。說中國人民早就對 “天安門廣場上的反革命暴亂作出了正確的判斷”。但是每年的六四，便衣警察阻止人們進入天安門廣場。為什麼？——假如中國老百姓真的做了政府宣揚他們做了的所謂 “判斷”，那為什麼不讓人家進入廣場去譴責反革命分子？警察的在場，說明政權不相信自己的謊言。

我們記住六四，是因為人腦受到巨大衝擊之後，需要很長很長的時間才能開始恢復。哪怕我們下決心從明天開始遺忘，也肯定忘不了。
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Prologues
Thirty Years after Tiananmen: The PRC as an Emerging Global Threat to Freedom

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Abstract

The article emphasizes the importance of memory, thirty years after Tiananmen, and truthful rendering of history, and discusses the sustaining of the struggle for freedom and democracy in the context of the inseparability of the Chinese Communist Party-state’s, symbiotically and inextricably linked, domestic repression of political dissent and international projection of covert and corrupting influence.

Keywords: Tiananmen, memory, Chinese Communist Party-state, authoritarianism, freedom, democracy, united front, sharp power

1. The Historical Moment: Thirty Years after Tiananmen

I want to begin this article by making five preliminary points. The first is obviously the importance of memory and a full and truthful rendering of history. The memory of what happened in Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989, and in numerous cities where millions of Chinese came out to protest, and the historical precedent these protests represent,
remains deeply threatening to the Chinese Communist Party, thirty years later. The Party is still as insecure as it is ruthless and controlling, and so it feels a total imperative to suppress the memory of these historic events. This is movingly attested to in the extremely important historical reflection contributed to the present volume by our colleague Jean-Philippe Béja that was presented at the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen meeting in Taipei, and in the articles we published in the April 2019 *Journal of Democracy*. Among these is the article by my Hoover Institution colleague, Glenn Tiffert, which documents the extraordinary lengths to which the Chinese Communist Party-state is going to systematically suppress not only historical memory but even any academic trace of analysis or prior historical academic record that does not accord with the hegemonic discourse of the Chinese Communist Party.

Second, I want to underscore how important it is to continue to honor those Chinese, living and deceased, including some of those who are here, who took great risks and make great sacrifices to rise up for and demand freedom and accountability in China. The fact that the Chinese Communist Party continues to regard them and the entire memory of Tiananmen as such a great threat indicates that the struggle is not over. This is the most important lesson that we can take away from the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen meeting: The CCP can try, but they cannot bury the truth about people’s remarkable mobilization in 1989 for a freer, more open society, and the Party’s brutal suppression of it. And to repeat, only a Party that feels deeply anxious and insecure about the legitimacy of its rule would go to such great lengths to try to wipe all this from historical memory.

My third preliminary point, therefore, is the importance of sustaining the struggle for democracy and freedom, while learning from past failures and adapting to current reality, for the Chinese Communist
Party-state has been relentlessly adapting in some ways that I will describe. The fact that the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen meeting is taking place in Taiwan and not Hong Kong underscores one element of adaptation: Recognizing the inseparability of the struggles for democracy in mainland China, in Hong Kong, in Taiwan and in the crucibles of the greatest current ongoing repression of identity in China, in Xinjiang Province and in Tibet. When we examine Chinese influence efforts around the world, as I will do momentarily, we see that the Chinese Communist Party-state is pursuing what it sees for itself as a global imperative to control the narrative about China, suppress historical memory about Tiananmen, and intimidate and censor any critical discussion of the past or present crimes and abuses of power of the Beijing leadership. We have to adapt in the face of that and I hope my presentation and this article will be useful in that regard.

Fourth, and following from these other points, I want to stress the importance of working at the level of values, ideas, and knowledge – including historical memory. We have to fight for the truth, and we have to fight to disseminate true understanding of the past and present around the world and among all Chinese people. Despite the heavy weight of repression and censorship, China’s rapid development has afforded new and interesting opportunities to do this. One of the great vulnerabilities of the People’s Republic of China is that it is sending well over half a million Chinese students abroad to study (indeed, the current estimate is approximately 600,000 overseas students). Most of these Chinese students abroad are studying in democracies. 350,000 of them are studying in the United States. We are not doing enough and we can do much more to ensure that these young Chinese who are outside China have the historical knowledge, the political understanding, and the analytical tools to question their regime, to think about what kind of society and political system they want for China in the future, and to
quietly begin conversations on how they might get there. The People’s Republic of China is laboring intensively now to insulate them from any understanding, and to censor academic inquiry and discussion, even on university campuses in the U.S. and other democracies. We should not stand for this.

Finally if I can borrow a term from Marxist discourse and apply it for democratic purposes, we need to have a full and correct understanding of the moment we are at. It is not enough to understand the malign behavior of the Chinese Communist leaders and the party-state toward their own people. This malign authoritarian behavior increasingly propels beyond China’s borders to attempt to control the behavior and information flows of Chinese diaspora populations, and the activities and statements of foreign think tanks, universities and political systems in liberal democracies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. The Chinese Communist Party-state represents a threat not only to the freedom and individual dignity of 1.3 billion Chinese in China but also to the freedom, rights of privacy, and access to information of billions of other people around the world. And as China emerges on the world stage as the second superpower, as it engages in the most rapid expansion of military capacity of any country in the world, as it increasingly projects belligerent claims to sovereignty over the entire South China Sea (in defiance of international law), and as it uses sharp power to corrupt and intimidate other countries in Asia and beyond to yield to its new strategic vision, the PRC also poses a growing threat to Asian regional and ultimately international peace and security.

Analytically, we cannot separate – and politically, we must not separate – the repressive, deeply and increasingly authoritarian behavior of the Chinese Communist state toward its own people, and the increasing concentration of political power of its leader Xi Jinping, from what China is doing on the international stage. The two are
symbiotically and inextricably linked. If we do not recognize that and confront that, we will not do a service to the people of China and their legitimate aspiration for greater freedom and dignity. And we will not do a service to our own interest in international peace, freedom and security.

2. The PRC’s Projection of Covert and Corrupting Influence

I want now to provide an overview of the report we released in November of last year on PRC influence activities around the world, particularly in the United States, and what we need to do to recognize, expose, and rebuff these efforts.¹ This was a report that brought together about 20 experts on China and American foreign policy in the United States with a number of China experts from other countries and resulted in it detailing the analysis of Chinese influence efforts in a number of individual sectors as well as their general approach.

We need to begin by recognizing that the People’s Republic of China is a deeply and increasingly authoritarian regime. Everybody in the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen meeting in Taipei understands that this is not adequately appreciated around the world in the face of expanding efforts by the People’s Republic of China global propaganda apparatus, recently consolidated into the Voice of China, to try to divert attention from its deepening authoritarianism. And while everybody in the Taipei meeting understands, it is not sufficiently globally understood that the PRC remains a Communist Party-state, which functions under Leninist principles of highly centralized control and seeks to extend influence through a vast united front architecture of influence and penetration activities as well as the broader influence apparatus that we have tried to map and describe in the report. As I have said, China is now the second superpower in the world, and it is increasingly seeking
to project its global power and influence through means that are, as neatly summarized by the recent former Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull, “covert, coercive or corrupting” (and quite often, all three).

It is crucial to understand here how different this projection of “sharp power” is from the effort of democracies to extend their influence through what we call soft power. The difference between soft power and this new or renewed form of authoritarian power projection that we call sharp power (following a report of the National Endowment for Democracy)\(^2\), is that soft power efforts proceed openly and cooperatively to try to persuade and influence people and build partnerships and solidarities through democratic means. Sharp power efforts work in the shadows to intimidate, coopt, and corrupt people, and to silence criticism and dissent, utilizing the massive financial power of the People’s Republic of China and its various satellite corporations and wealthy agents, as well as the long arm of its diplomatic missions and surreptitious intelligence activities.

When one examines all these activities, and what the PRC has been doing to try to limit Western and American efforts to reach the Chinese people, compared with the open access that Chinese media, scholars, and diplomats have in the U.S., when you look at the role of the Chinese Students and Scholars Associations on college campuses in the U.S., when you compare the open access of Chinese scholars and academics with the controlled access and intimidation in the granting of visas for Western academics to function in China, when you examine the way their corporations and business entrepreneurs can function in the United States and compare that with the way that Western business sectors can function in China, you see a profound asymmetry in the relationship. And our argument is we need to restore greater reciprocity in the relationship. I do not favor the generalized trade war the Trump
administration is pursuing against China but I do think we need to insist on reciprocity in key dimensions of economic access and behavior particularly regarding technology transfer.

We need more transparency in the relationship. This is the major theme of our report, that we need systematic and radical transparency in the way that Western think tanks, universities, NGOs, local governments and other actors relate to the People’s Republic of China and accept funds from both state and putatively private actors in China. And we need to do much more to strengthen the resilience and integrity of our own democratic institutions in Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and not least – as many people in the Taipei meeting recognize – in Taiwan, because these institutions are under systematic, sophisticated, penetrating assault from the Chinese Communist Party-state apparatus of global influence projection.

Our focus is on the behavior of the Chinese Communist Party-state. But we issue in our report an emphatic caution against overreaction. We have interacted repeatedly, and we hope we will be doing so on an ongoing basis, with Chinese-American community organizations and actors, including one of the most important U.S. national organizations. We want to be sensitive to the danger that we always face in the United States and (and in other Western democracies) of ethnocentric and even racist ethnic stereotyping of the threat. The threat we face in the United States is not from individual Chinese-Americans or from Chinese-American organizations. And we need to recognize that anybody, of any ethnicity, can be bought off and compromised. In fact, I am increasingly astonished by the number of prominent former elected officials and appointed officials of Western democracies who have made themselves available for great financial gain to promote the interest of the Chinese Communist Party-state in their own countries. So, we need to distinguish legitimate influence, which is soft power – transparent efforts to
persuade and attract, cultural and educational exchanges, legal and open lobbying – from the illegitimate sharp power activities that China and Russia are increasingly engaging in.

We noted in our report a sad and worrying phenomenon, which I do not think I need to dwell on here but I repeat is not adequately understood by the world in general. Many of civil society leaders from emerging and even established democracies are brought to China, wined and dined, shown the great infrastructural achievements under Chinese Communist Party rule, the gleaming cities and high-speed trains. And they do not see the political repression. They do not see how Xi Jinping has eroded institutional constraints on his rule and personalized power. They do not see the concentration camp in Xinjiang Province, where human rights organizations now estimate that somewhere between one and three million Chinese Uyghur Muslims are now being detained against their will in what the PRC calls re-education camps but people of free societies have a more accurate term for, concentration camps. Any state that is capable of doing this on such a large and brutal scale – today, not 50 years ago in a dark period of Cultural Revolution, but today in 2019, to its own people – represents a threat to freedom and human dignity elsewhere.

And as you know, it is not stopping here. The technology that the Beijing leadership is deploying to try to control the people of Xinjiang and other restless elements of its own society is rapidly being developed on a larger level to try to create over time a generalized system of digital control that will be unprecedented in its scale and its threat to human freedom. Already now China leads the world in the number of surveillance cameras that it has deployed, in the sophistication of its digital and photographic surveillance technology, and in this specific digital technology of facial recognition. And this technology does not remain in the People’s Republic of China. The PRC is sharing it
enthusiastically with other authoritarian regimes in the world in order to suppress popular movements for freedom in other countries as far away as Africa. Both the Chinese Communist Party leadership and the Kremlin leadership in Russia are so lacking in confidence about their legitimacy that they regard any new transition to democracy anywhere in the world, any successful popular movement for democratic change even as far away as Venezuela or Sudan, as a threat to their own authoritarian stability. Therefore they are happy to disperse this technology of repression as widely as possible. Ultimately, the Orwellian vision of China’s cynical leadership is to create a social credit system that will vet for political loyalty the entire digital history and life of every Chinese citizen. But they are not stopping with China, this is one reason why they are trying to buy up data companies around the world so they can collect the digital imprint of literally every digital netizen in the world if they can get it. Within China, they intend to mash up all this data into a computational profile of every individual that will determine, as you know, whether people can get a train ticket, whether they can step on an airplane, whether they can get a passport, whether they can travel outside of China, whether theirs kids can get into school. It is a pretty powerful and pervasive, in some ways subtle, but in the end not very subtle system of control.

And of course there is the new dimension now of China’s hard power and geo-political and geo-economic projection around the world through what can only be described as a new era of neocolonialism, the Belt and Road Initiative. Through this initiative, the Chinese Communist Party-state is cynically plunging many emerging market countries into oceans of debt by lending at commercial rates that they know can never be repaid. Then the PRC turns around and says, as it did to the Sri Lankan leadership, “Well, you know we can reduce that big debt you’ve cumulated to us. Why don’t you just give us your strategic port of
Hambantota on a 99-year lease and we’ll write off some of your debt.” And this is going on in financially strapped or tempted countries around the world, in Asia, Africa, Latin America, Europe, and the Middle East. And of course, I have mentioned what the PRC is doing to militarize and claim (illegally under international law) territorial control over most of the South China Sea.

Then there is the issue of technology transfer, which is a crucial element in the unfortunately deepening trade war between China and the United States right now. The People’s Republic of China has embarked on a 30-year if not more campaign to hack, steal, coerce the transfer of, or otherwise misappropriate the full range of the world’s most advanced technologies, everything from supercomputing and the next generation of computer chips to robotics, drone technology, hypersonics, and a variety of other means of digital driving of next generation of transportation, consumer and other technologies. These technologies all have a common feature, even the biotechnology of gene editing and so on. They have the potential to greatly enrich and simplify or empower human life and of course human enjoyment and human consumption. But they are dual-use technologies, and they have the potential to be deployed, and they are being deployed, to accelerate the modernization of the People’s Liberation Army, with the ultimate goal of making China the militarily, economically, and geo-politically dominant country in Asia, if not the world. The first phase of this is to push the United States out of the western Pacific, enabling China’s Communist leaders to achieve their hegemonic goals by force if necessary, by intimidation by preference. High among these goals is the imposition on this society here in Taiwan of the same bankrupt, morally discredited, politically unsustainable system of “one country two systems” that has been shown to be a brazen deception in Hong Kong itself.
We see and have documented in our report and other work a growing deployment of this kind of sharp power in Western democracies, U.S., Canada, Australia, New Zealand and much of Europe, but Australia has been a cutting edge of this. And this is why the election in Australia is so significant. The previous conservative government in Australia – whatever one may think of their other policies – has taken extremely important steps to strengthen Australia’s resilience in the face of Chinese penetration efforts, including banning foreign contributions to political campaigns and tightening foreign agent lobbying efforts in Australia. It is not a question of the U.S. and China competing for Australia’s heart or pocketbook. I do not think that is the way it should be framed. It is a question of whether Australia and similar societies will preserve the integrity and independence of their own democratic institutions in politics and civil society in the face of what is a documented extensive pervasive Chinese authoritarian assault on them.

China is seeking to control the narrative of China, not only in China, not only among the Chinese diaspora, but globally as well. And it is doing that by trying to use formal and informal institutions to eclipse and silence alternative points of view. And this is not just focused on trying to mitigate any separatist or formally anti-regime activity, or anything that would question what the People’s Republic of China is doing anywhere in Xinjiang, in Tibet, in Hong Kong, in the South China Sea, its posture toward Taiwan, its Belt and Road Initiative. Anything that contradicts the narrative of the Chinese Communist Party and its propaganda apparatus, they are trying to silence and pre-empt. They are doing this by targeting a number of institutions in Western democracies and I am sure here in Taiwan as well, universities, think tanks, mass media, corporations, and even in some cases politics and government. This is the influence bureaucracy that we have tried to unpack and describe in our report.
3. Policy Recommendations

I learned much in the process of co-chairing and co-organizing our Working Group with my distinguished colleague, the China expert Orville Schell. And one of the things I have learned that most shocked me is the extraordinary extent to which we have lost freedom and pluralism of the press, both print media and electronic media, in a significant segment of our media enterprises in Western democracies, particularly Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States. And that segment is the Chinese language media. The People’s Republic of China has embarked on a maybe 10- to 20-year campaign to buy up and pre-empt and shut down critical Chinese voices in the media of Chinese diaspora communities like the ones I described. This goes along with the PRC’s dramatically expanding global effort at international propaganda. Through these methods of both buying up existing Chinese language print publications and radio stations and television stations and establishing new ones, the People’s Republic of China has all but eliminated the plethora of independent Chinese language media outlets that once served Chinese-American communities. Only a few are left, most of them aligned with Falun Gong. So, we argue in our report that we need to strengthen oversight regarding foreign ownership and control of media. And we need to promote all over again and maybe to fund with public funding truly independent Chinese language media. I personally proposed that the United States Public Broadcasting Corporation, which is our independent public radio and TV, establish a Chinese language service, not for the world (as we have that in Radio Free Asia), but for the United States, because of what is happening in our own country that is diminishing freedom of the media. And I think we need to fight for free expression and the freedom to report of our journalists in China. And we could go further. I do not see why China
Global Television should be allowed to broadcast on cable television in the United States when CNN and other American cable television networks (which are private television networks, not even a state-controlled one) are denied access to Chinese citizens. If we do not start as democratic societies insisting on some degree of reciprocity, we are never going to succeed in opening up China’s highly authoritarian society, which of course should be one of our primary goals.

For those who live in the United States and other Western democracies, we repeat the injunction, “First, do no harm.” That is, we must remain vigilant as well against any efforts to stigmatize or discriminate against Chinese Americans (or Chinese visitors) on the basis of their nationality or ethnicity. But we also need to engage in educational efforts, solidarity efforts to make Chinese-American individuals and organizations much more aware of the danger of possibly being targeted and used by the PRC in its Leninist united front activities. I am a member of a university community, so I take very seriously the risk we face on university campuses of penetration, subversion, and censorship. We stress strongly the need for institutions to draw together, and not be played off against one another, to establish common codes of conduct, to share information about their relations with Chinese institutions. Although our report did not recommend a blanket termination of the Confucius Institutes in the United States, I have come to agree with the recommendation of Human Rights Watch in its recent report on Chinese penetration of the American universities, which I highly recommend to all of you, that we should just terminate the presence of Chinese government-funded Confucius Institutes in democratic societies. We should not have the Ministry of Education of the Chinese Communist Party-state writing the Chinese language instruction curriculum and training Chinese language teachers in American or other Western universities. We should not have the Chinese
government determining, even in language classes, what can and cannot be discussed in the classroom – or implicitly threatening universities with a cutoff of funding if taboo issues are discussed in other university forums. And I think here this is on us. If we in the United States do not want the Chinese government funding Chinese language instruction, we, the American people, through federal funding, should do it ourselves. We used to have a National Defense Education Act that subsidized American colleges and universities to teach critical languages. We need a new and resourceful version of that program.

4. Concluding Remarks

We are at a perilous moment in so many respects. We are facing a superpower that is outwardly super-confident and is increasingly super-belligerent and even super-aggressive in trying to defeat and pre-empt any historical memory of, or normative embrace of, democratic values or democratic mobilization. But I think we should draw hope from the fact that this is not a self-confident regime, and I have noted many respects in which this is the case. This is a regime that wakes up every morning in fear that what happened in April and May of 1989 in the People’s Republic of China could happen again. And someday it will.

Notes

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Democratization and authoritarianism in the Arab world, Will China democratize?, and Liberation technology: Social media and the struggle for democracy, all edited with Marc F. Plattner; and Politics and culture in contemporary Iran, with Abbas Milani. With Juan J. Linz and Seymour Martin Lipset, he edited the series, Democracy in Developing Countries, which helped to shape a new generation of comparative study of democratic development. <Email: ldiamond@stanford.edu>


Assessing China’s Situation and Challenges

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Abstract
This article intends to assess China’s situation and challenges in the context of its deteriorating external and domestic environments. It focuses on the regime-maintenance initiatives of the Party regime and the prospects for political stability in China. Various types of scenarios are briefly examined on the basis of the assessment, and suggestions are offered for consideration by overseas pro-democracy groups. The stability of the Party regime is not to be under-estimated; its gradual atrophy is probable in the near future.

Keywords: Party regime, external and domestic environment, political stability, hard authoritarianism, civil society, atrophy

1. Introduction
This paper intends to assess China's situation and challenges in the context of its deteriorating external and domestic environments, as well as the political crackdown and cultivation of a personality cult on the part of Xi Jinping. It focusses on the regime-maintenance initiatives of
the Party regime and the prospects for political stability in China, especially in the absence of political reforms and the return to hard authoritarianism. Various types of scenarios are briefly examined on the basis of the assessment, and suggestions are offered for consideration by the overseas pro-democracy groups and activists.

2. China’s Deteriorating External and Domestic Environments and Its Challenges

The Sino-American trade disputes in 2018-19 demonstrated China’s deteriorating external and internal environment. In the first place, they showed that the U.S. is very concerned with the rise of China; actually most Western countries share this concern, though many of them are reluctant to impose sanctions against China. This concern will much exacerbate the significant challenges against China’s peaceful rise, as well as Xi Jinping’s attempts to establish a “new type of major power relationship”, especially that with the U.S. At the same time, the trade disputes would also impose serious difficulties for China to exploit foreign trade, foreign investment and the import of advanced technology to secure its economic development at this stage.

The trade disputes indicate that the international community is worried that China may use its growing economic power to seek regional or even global hegemony. This worry has naturally been based on China’s aggressive foreign policy and eagerness to expand its influence instead of adopting a low profile, as advised by Deng Xiaoping in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident. But deeper reasons behind this worry are doubts whether China really embraces the principles of a market economy and the lack of political reforms and human rights setbacks in China.
Since China’s economic reforms and opening to the external world beginning in 1979, the international community had been sympathetic. Following Japan’s offer of economic aid starting in the same year, some Western countries adopted similar measures; and China soon emerged as the largest recipient of concessionary loans from the World Bank in the 1980s and 1990s. Though in the beginning of the twenty-first century China basically graduated from a developing country receiving foreign aid, most developed countries had been tolerant of their substantial trade deficits with China and enthusiastic in technological exchanges with the country. Behind this tolerance and generosity, there was an expectation that China would be absorbed into the global market economy, and that its economic growth would lead to political reforms eventually.

They are definitely disappointed in recent years. There have been no serious political reforms since the Tiananmen Incident, though there have been considerable administrative reforms designed to improve the efficiency and responsiveness of various levels of government. During the Xi Jinping administration, human rights conditions have been deteriorating, with the human rights lawyers, independent labour groups and underground churches suffering increasing political pressures and crackdowns. In the past two years or so, the Uyghurs in Xinjiang were also persecuted in an unprecedented manner for their religious beliefs.

In response to the global financial crisis in 2008-9, the Chinese government initiated a fiscal stimuli package of four trillion yuan, which was subsequently supported by contributions to infrastructure projects on the part of local governments amounting to over ten trillion yuan. Though the package achieved its goal of enhancing economic growth rates, it resulted in the advance of the state sector at the expense of the private sector. Today while the state sector produces slightly more than 30% of the country’s GDP, it consumes over 70% of the credits provided by the state banks. While the Chinese leadership often
promises to ease the private sector’s problems of raising loans, not much progress has been made, as evidenced by the presence of a substantial underground banking sector.

The Party regime considers it important to maintain a firm grasp of the economy through upholding the strategic role of about a hundred major state-owned enterprises (SOEs). Apparently the liberalization of the economy and market reforms have limits and the Chinese leadership may well have further ambitions. In September 2017, it was reported that Jack Ma Yun, founder and chairman of the e-commerce giant Alibaba Group Holding, recently claimed that a planned economy would be possible at this stage because of big data. Liu Qiangdong, the founder of J.D.com, further indicated that he had experienced that “communism can be realized in our generation” because robots would be doing all the work of humans (Pei, 2017).

Though Chinese leaders have avoided talking about the return of the planned economy, in July 2016, Xi Jinping nonetheless declared his endorsement of the approach of “righteously making SOEs strong, outstanding and big” (ibid.: 3). After the collapse of the stock market in July 2015, in response to the subsequent depreciation of the yuan, the Chinese authorities reversed its reform of making the Chinese currency more market-driven and international.

The stock market collapse was an interesting and significant example of how the Chinese leadership handled a market economy. Top Chinese leader Xi Jinping encouraged people to invest in the stock market in the year or more before the bubble burst. The Chinese authorities hoped that rise in share prices would create a wealth effect and thus encourage consumption, in line with economic growth’s increasing dependence on domestic consumption rather than exports and infrastructure investment. Chinese leaders chose the stock market instead of the real estate market because they were concerned with
dissatisfaction generated by rapidly rising housing prices.

The stock market collapse therefore was a loss of face on the part of Chinese leaders, and it was perceived as a social issue as it hurt middle class interests. In addition to normal measures of cutting interest rates and the reserve requirement ratio by the People’s Bank of China, the central bank and the China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC) on July 5, 2015 provided funding amounting to 260 billion yuan (US$42 billion) to a state agency, the China Securities Finance, to lend money to brokerage firms to buy shares to prop up the market. The government also exploited propaganda tools to appeal to patriotism to encourage stock purchases and threaten investigations into “malicious short selling”. Listed SOEs were ordered not to sell shares and to buy their own stocks, with 292 committing to do so. In early July 2016, during the anniversary of the emergency meeting of the CSRC to initiate the campaign “to save the market by violence”, a study estimated that from the high point of the A shares reached on June 12, 2015, the capitalization of China’s two stock markets in Shanghai and Shenzhen had evaporated by 35% in one year’s time, and every stock market investor had on the average lost 230,000 yuan each within the same period. Many financial experts in China’s universities lamented not so much the losses, but the lack of marketization and institutionalization in China’s stock markets, leading to loss of confidence domestically and internationally.

The Chinese authorities’ retreat from market reforms damaged the confidence of China’s tycoons. The fact that the bulk of China’s political and business elites have their children, families and wealth moved to the Western world is no secret. In the second half of the 2010s, it is speculated that the overseas investment projects of major private conglomerates like the HNA Group, Anbang Insurance, Dalian Wanda, Fosun International, etc. were actually exit strategies. From mid-2015 to
mid-2017, China’s foreign exchange reserves dropped from US$4 trillion to US$3 trillion (Pei, 2017). In the context of the Sino-American trade war, the Chinese authorities have tightened the outflow of investment.

In Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption campaign, it was demonstrated that even members of the Political Bureau Standing Committee and the Political Bureau could enjoy no immunity. The same applied to the rich business leaders too. In June 2017, the Chinese authorities detained Wu Xiaohui, chairman of Anbang Insurance, husband of a granddaughter of Deng Xiaoping. Guo Guangchang, chairman of Fosun International, was briefly arrested by the police at the end of 2015. Xiao Jianhua, a billionaire who had close business ties with many top leaders and their families, was reported to have been kidnapped by Chinese security agents in Hong Kong and brought back to China in January 2017.

Successful businessmen in China, almost without exception, have to depend on the support and protection of political leaders. When the latter fall from power, it is difficult for their business associates to avoid implications. Hence a sense of insecurity is common among China’s business elites; and this has led to the exodus of their families and wealth. It certainly hurts the Chinese economy which in recent years has been adversely affected by a decline in investment, especially that from the private sector.

Business leaders like Jack Ma have already closely identified themselves with the Party regime’s official line, but this may not be considered adequate. Jack Ma’s announcement in 2018 of his pending retirement was often interpreted as a step for his own political protection. While foreign passports may not be adequate protection from the long arm of China’s security agents, as shown in the case of Xiao Jianhua, it has been suggested that perhaps the possession of secret documents threatening the reputation of the leadership may be a more
reliable safety guarantee.

Influential businessmen with their political connections are able to secure the essential credit lines, but small and medium-sized firms are less fortunate. Their demand for liquidity has generated the growth of “underground banks”; and their lack of regulation and supervision can easily lead to local financial crises. As the wealthy people want to move their money overseas, illegal banking operations through “underground banks” are perceived as the means to overcome official restrictions. China’s police authority indicated that in 2016, it busted more than 380 “underground banks” involving over 900 billion yuan (US$131 billion).4

China’s peer-to-peer lending platforms (P2P lending industry) is the world’s largest and one of the riskiest and least-regulated segments of its shadow-banking system. In 2018, as China’s credit markets tightened due to the economic downturn and when the official banking regulator issued serious warnings to such depositors, defaults, sudden closures and frozen funds occurred among P2P operators. In some cases, savers protested at the offices of P2P operators and launched petitions to local and central government officials. Many of the P2P operators used their connections with local cadres to enhance their credibility, and the protestors’ anger was naturally directed against the corrupt cadres too. These protests may easily become local crises in times of economic difficulties and can easily lead to riots. These financial irregularities are potential sources of social and political instability.

A root cause of the Sino-American trade war is their competition for superpower hegemony in the economic as well as scientific and technological fields in the coming two to three decades. This rivalry is therefore long-term and structural, and will continue to cause a deterioration in China’s external environment. This competition poses two questions. The first is the research and development policy of the regime which adopts basically a command economy approach.
The experts in the official science and technology establishment identify the priority areas and projects which will then be approved by the leadership, which in turn allocates funding to the top universities, official research institutes and key SOEs. This approach allows very few opportunities for Bill Gates-type of innovations, and it is doubtful whether this approach will facilitate China securing global leadership in innovations in the long term.

In May 2018, it was reported that the Ministry of Science and Technology and the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council issued a joint statement outlining reform plans of centrally-administered SOEs’ technology innovation drive. These SOEs were asked to increase spending on research and development; and the research and development spending share of their sales revenues should be included in their business performance evaluations. In the following September, SOEs in China were accorded the leading role in technological and economic progress in the escalating trade war with the U.S. They were urged to “make breakthroughs in key aspects” of cutting-edge technologies and to “take a leading role at the front” of the nation’s drive to make technological progress, in the context of the government’s plan to assume a significant, if not dominant, global role in ten major hi-tech sectors by 2025.

Even before its economic reforms and opening to the external world beginning in 1979, China was notorious for its “reverse engineering”. In recent decades, advanced countries have been asking China to demonstrate its respect for intellectual property rights. During the recent Sino-American trade war, Beijing’s “Thousand Talents” programme attracted considerable attention in the U.S. as it was perceived by the U.S. National Intelligence Council as a scheme to tap into its nationals educated or employed in the U.S. to transfer, replicate and eventually overtake U.S. military and commercial technology.
Another channel to secure access to U.S. technology has been joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions. Chinese investment and acquisitions of American companies hit a record level in 2016 before dropping somewhat in 2017 and again in the first half of 2018. China’s aggregate investment in U.S. technology from 2007 to 2017 amounted to US$40 billion, and reached about US$5.3 billion in 2017. This access would probably be more handicapped in the foreseeable future as the Donald Trump administration would accord a higher priority to national security when granting approval for Chinese enterprises engaged in joint ventures, mergers and acquisitions in the U.S.

Meanwhile at least one participant of the “Thousand Talents” programme, Zheng Xiaojing, a Chinese-American General Electric Co. engineer, was arrested in New York state in August 2018. Earlier in May, the Trump administration announced plans to restrict the visas of Chinese students studying in America. This means normal exchanges at the people-to-people level between China and the Western world become more difficult in the foreseeable future; and this would also mean that China would continue to lag behind in soft power or smart power. The Confucius Institutes programme is a good example of the backlash created by a stubborn insistence on the correct ideological line and a refusal to accept international norms; as a result a scheme with vast potential and a good beginning has now been discredited. Similarly, China’s vast resources spent on building international media have largely failed to achieve results simply because the Chinese authorities do not allow them the freedom to behave as independent mass media.

The Sino-American trade war reveals the weaknesses of the Chinese economy and the danger of financial crises leading to social and political instability. In the longer term, maintenance of a healthy economic growth rate and improving the living standards of the people remain the principal sources of legitimacy for the Party regime and the foundation
for social and political stability. It appears that China should be able to maintain an economic growth rate of about 6% per annum for a few more years, even though the Chinese leadership may have to pump money into the economy including infrastructural projects. But the reduction of income inequality becomes increasingly difficult.

China’s Gini coefficient rose 0.002 to 0.467 in 2017, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. This was 0.005 higher than in 2015 when the indicator hit a recent low, having gradually declined since reaching a record high of 0.491 in 2008. Other data confirm this trend. Disposable income of China’s upper class grew 9.1% in 2017; that among the upper-middle, middle and lower-middle classes increased 7.7%, 7.2% and 7.1% respectively. Lower-class disposable income advanced 7.5%, reflecting the impact of anti-poverty programmes (Harada and Takahashi, 2018).

Rising housing prices were a major factor contributing to widening income disparity. Real estate prices began their upward climb in 2015 after the government had relaxed requirements for home loans so as to reduce the glut in housing stock. Most of China’s wealthy have benefitted from surging real estate prices, since they own multiple properties. In China’s 2017 income survey, income from assets increased 11% on an annual basis, showing double-digit growth for the first time in three years (ibid.).

When farmers move to cities and take up jobs in the industrial and tertiary sectors, inequality generally declines. Restrictions on rural migrant workers in urban centres have handicapped earnings growth at the bottom of the income pyramid. Cities like Beijing and Shanghai have worked to expel migrant workers in recent years, including tearing down illegal structures where many of them reside. As a result, populations in these cities had dropped across the board by the end of 2017, the first such decline for Beijing in two decades.
In terms of per capita disposable income, the uppermost one fifth of the families enjoyed a ratio of 10.90:1 compared with the lowest one fifth of the families. In 2013, the ratio was 10.78:1; it dropped to 10.45:1 in 2015, then rebounded to 10.72:1 in 2016. The average wage of workers in the non-private sector was 1.76 times that of those in the private sector in 2010; the ratio dropped for four consecutive years to 1.55 times in 2014; then it gradually rose to 1.56 times in 2015, 1.58 times in 2016 and 1.62 times in 2017 (Chen and Tian, 2019: 10-11).

Chinese leaders apparently understand the challenge posed by income disparity. Their response has been to increase social development spending, including that on education, social security and employment, medical and health, urban and rural community development and housing. In 2017, social development expenditure amounted to 47.4% of general budgetary expenditure in public finance, a very substantial increase compared with the early years in the era of economic reforms and opening to the external world (ibid.: 21). Experts in China’s official think tanks consider that there is still considerable room for improvement, as the corresponding ratios among developed countries within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development range from 55% to 60%.

The Chinese authorities are proud of their poverty-alleviation programmes. In 2012-2017, it was claimed that people below the poverty line in China were reduced by almost 70 million; poverty occurrence rate was reduced from 10.2% to 3.1% in the period. In 2018-2020, a campaign was further launched with the focus on regions of deep poverty, with central government subsidies to local programmes amounting to 106 billion yuan. It was expected that at the end of 2018, more than ten million people would be lifted above the poverty line (ibid.: 8).
Since the Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration, the Chinese authorities have been working hard to cover the entire population with a basic social security net. At the end of September 2018, the pension system covered over 930 million people, the basic medical insurance scheme covered more than 1.35 billion people, and the unemployment insurance scheme, the work injuries insurance scheme as well as the maternity insurance system claimed about 200 million participants each. But since the beginning of 2018, the minimum standard of the basic pension payment in the urban and rural residents’ basic pension scheme only offers 88 yuan a month, which is far from adequate (ibid.: 5-6).

Employment has also been a priority for the Chinese leadership which understands that unemployment is a potential source of political instability. In 2018, China produced 8.2 million graduates from tertiary institutions. In the combat of problems generated by the economic downturn and the Sino-American trade war, stability in employment was a crucial concern of Chinese leaders. The government claimed that in 2018, the urban registered unemployment rate remained below 4%, and declined to 3.82% at the end of the third quarter, a record low since 2002. The national urban surveyed unemployment rate stayed at the level of 5% in the year, and dropped to 4.9% in September. The Chinese authorities boasted that in the first three quarters of 2018, 11.07 million jobs were created in the urban sector, fulfilling the annual target three months ahead (Mo and Chen, 2019: 40-41).

While unemployment has been contained relatively satisfactorily, young people in China, like their counterparts in East Asia and other parts of the world, are frustrated with the insecurity in employment and career prospects, the high cost of housing and the lack of upward social mobility opportunities. A China Family Panel Studies was conducted by a team of economists at the National University of Singapore and the Chinese University of Hong Kong producing data on children born
during 1981-1988 and who had worked for at least three years. It was found that children born to parents in the top 20% of income were almost seven times more likely to remain in the top 20% as adults than those born into the bottom 20% were to rise to the top.\textsuperscript{10}

A recent study examining the economic mobility of children born in the U.S. in the mid-1980s revealed that those from the poorest 20% of households had about a 9% chance of reaching the top 20%, compared with around 7% in China. U.S. children from the top 20% were also far less likely to stay at the top in adulthood relative to their Chinese counterparts. The problem may not be unique in China, but the superiority of socialism with Chinese characteristics is not obvious. This helps to explain why fairness and justice have often been mentioned as social policy objectives by Chinese leaders in recent years.\textsuperscript{11}

3. The Absence of Political Reforms and the Return to Hard Authoritarianism\textsuperscript{12}

In the Nineteenth Party Congress in October 2017 and the subsequent revision of the state Constitution, Xi Jinping managed to consolidate power, generating speculation that he may seek a third term in 2022 against the established political convention. After the Tiananmen Incident in June 1989, there have been no serious political reforms as the Party refuses to give up its monopoly of political power. In fact, since the Beijing Olympics in 2008, the entire political ecology had been tightened. In this increasing political intolerance, dissidents and the human rights movement, autonomous labour groups, and the underground churches especially felt the pressure (Pils, 2015).

The strengthening of political suppression was to some extent related to the difficulties in the domestic and international environment. In 2008, there were riots and disturbances in Tibet, followed by those in
Xinjiang in the next year. Since then, mass incidents had been on the increase, people’s rights consciousness strengthened and their political struggle skills also improved in sophistication. In 2010, migrant workers in a number of coastal cities went on strikes and protests to fight for better wages and working environment. Chinese leaders adopted soft tactics in handling the incidents then.

The 2008-9 global financial crisis and the Arab Spring in 2010 further alerted the Chinese leadership to the maintenance of social and political stability. Political control further tightened, especially regarding the Internet and social media. The authorities paid more attention to the employment issue too. The mainstream Chinese mass media avoided talking about “shengshi (a glorious era)” soon after the global financial crisis in 2008-9, probably in recognition of the domestic and international challenges (Wu, 2010).

Xi Jinping’s impressive combat of corruption has been popular and, to some extent, contributed to the legitimacy of his administration. At the Nineteenth Party Congress, Xi promised to continue the campaign and considered “the fight against corruption remains grave and complex”, and that his administration would “institute a system of disciplinary inspection for city and county level Party committees”. At the same time, this campaign against corruption was used as a tool to strike at the political enemies of Xi in the intra-Party political struggles at high levels. The problem of corruption certainly has not been resolved, the people’s congress system and the mass media have not been given any role in the combat of corruption, and this combat has been relying on campaign activities which can hardly be sustainable.

In spring 2013, the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee Office released a document criticizing that the spread of universal values was to deny Party leadership, hence censorship was imposed against the discussions of universal values, freedom of the
media, civil society, civil rights, the historical mistakes of the CPC, the concept of the power elite capitalist class and the independence of the judiciary. The policy document also condemned “historical nihilism”, i.e., denying the verdicts of the Party on historical issues, with the ultimate objective of weakening and even overthrowing the legitimacy of Party leadership (He, 2013). These were very serious accusations under the Party regime.

Xi Jinping obviously considers that the spread of liberal Western ideas and criticisms against the Party positions on important historical issues is dangerous to the maintenance of the Party regime and political stability. This harsh position quickly led to strict control of the Internet and the social media, as well as deliberations in university campuses. The author’s academic friends in China told him that soon after this, university staff members of associate professorship and above would be required to deposit their passports with the university management; they had to ask for them before their overseas travels.

The Chinese authorities in recent years have the resources and skills to organize international events to spread China’s position on human rights too; and these activities are relatively new, demonstrating the high-profile and self-confidence of the Xi Jinping administration. On March 8, 2017, for example, the Chinese Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva and the China Society for Human Rights Studies (an NGO sponsored by the Chinese government) held a side event entitled “Building a Community of Shared Future for Mankind: A New Approach to Global Human Rights Governance”. In the following June session of the Human Rights Council, another similar side event was organized on “building a community of shared future”. It released a joint statement on behalf of more than 140 countries entitled “Joining Hands to Reduce Poverty, Promote and Protect Human Rights” (Worden, 2017).
In early December 2017, China organized a more ambitious “South-South Human Rights Forum” in Beijing for the first time. President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message, and it emphasized that: “The development of human rights worldwide cannot be achieved without the joint efforts of developing countries, which account for more than 80% of the world’s population ... Developing countries should uphold both the universality and particularity of human rights and steadily raise rights framework based on the principle of the universality, indivisibility and inter-dependence of all human rights.” (ibid.)

China’s diplomatic offensive involves introducing China’s position into various resolutions of international organizations and fora. For example, China’s concept of “building a community of shared future” was included in two resolutions adopted during the 34th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2017: a resolution on the “Question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights” (A/HRC/34/L.4/Rev.1) and a resolution on “The Right To Food” (a/HRC/34/L.21).

The deteriorations in the human rights conditions in China began to attract international attention in recent years though. In February 2016, the United Nation High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed concern regarding China’s continued arbitrary detention and interrogation of human rights lawyers, harassment and intimidation of government critics and NGO workers, and the negative impact on basic rights of the new Foreign NGO Management Law.

In the same month, the European Parliament adopted a strong resolution condemning human rights abuses in China; and in the following March, a dozen governments led by the U.S. issued a statement condemning China’s “deteriorating human rights record” at the United Nations Human Rights Council. The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, in his first China visit in July 2016,
also expressed concern about its crackdown on civil society, and urged the Chinese authorities to give “citizens a full say and role in the political life of their country”.¹⁵

On the whole, these criticisms were rare, and they were not accompanied by any pressures on China to change. Chinese leaders correctly interpreted them to be gestures in response to domestic public opinion pressures, and that the governments and international organizations concerned had no intention to impose sanctions on China, instead they were prepared to maintain good relations with China. Hence Chinese leaders ignored these criticisms. The Xi Jinping administration has been especially relieved to note that the Donald Trump administration is not interested in human rights issues.

To ensure the Party’s monopoly of power and in response to the deteriorating domestic and international environments, the Xi Jinping administration’s response has been to emphasize Party leadership and strengthen Party organization, especially that at the grassroots level. After a Political Bureau meeting on September 21, 2018, a statement was released on how to build and strengthen Party organizations, and expand into areas where previously the Party has had only a token presence. Some China experts argued that the shoring up of local Party cells was an attempt by the top leadership to implement policy programmes amid growing doubts within the Party and society about China’s direction. They would also help to enhance social control. The Party charter all the time requires any organization or unit with three or more Party members to set up a Party branch; but most of the time, these Party cells have existed in name only, seldom holding meetings or activities.¹⁶

New areas of expansion of Party organization include private and foreign joint ventures as well as the boards of listed companies. By the end of 2016, 70% of foreign-funded enterprises and 68% of all private
businesses in China had set up Party branches. Foreign investors naturally feel uneasy. It was reported that in November 2017, the Delegations of German Industry and Commerce in China warned that members of the German business community were concerned and some German companies might retreat from the China market or reconsider investment strategies.\textsuperscript{17}

In November 2018, further regulations were promulgated on how Party branches should be run. Commercial buildings, business districts, dedicated market-places as well as NGOs are now required to set up Party branches. One innovation is for Party branches to be established where one line of goods or produce like clothing might be traded or in cross-region farmers co-operatives. Shanghai had set up 3,200 Party organs inside its commercial buildings by 2016, covering more than 50,000 Party members. When Xi Jinping visited Lujiazui, the financial district in Shanghai in early November 2018, he called on its Party branch in Shanghai Tower, China’s tallest skyscraper, and “highly reaffirmed” its efforts to build the Party’s presence.\textsuperscript{18}

Any project or work programme that lasts more than six months is subject to the latest requirements. Even Party members who regularly change workplaces or residences are not overlooked. The new regulations demand the establishment of “Party branches for floating Party members”.\textsuperscript{19} The strengthening of Party organizations coincides with an appeal for total Party loyalty. Xi Jinping in a speech on discipline and corruption broadcast across the country in January 2018 made the following demand: “When the Party centre makes a policy decision, all Party groups must put it in practice to the letter, ... At any time and in any situation, the Party’s leading officials must stand firm and be trustworthy in their politics, be sincerely devoted to the Party, be in one mind with the Party centre.”\textsuperscript{20}
For ordinary people, the Party regime has been promoting the concept of social credit, because “making trustworthiness visible” can be leveraged to create a docile population and contribute to political stability. The Alibaba-affiliated Ant Financial Services Group is one of several companies that have entered this new field of social credit with its Sesame Credit system. These enterprises examine individuals’ educational background and employment history, assets such as cars, homes and other items, payment history, social relationships and consumption patterns, and transform this into a numerical representation of his or her “trustworthiness” scored between 350 and 950 points. Individuals are informed of their respective social credit scores.

Given the advantages conferred by a high social credit score, hundreds of millions of Chinese have supplied their personal information in order to increase their social credit rating. In many cases, there is even competition within neighbourhoods as high ratings on the part of parents facilitate their children going to elite schools, while low ratings may handicap one from buying domestic airline tickets. The social control mechanism is obvious. For example, 200 points are immediately deducted for making comments critical of the Chinese government on a blog related to the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 (Funabashi, 2018).

Human rights groups and international media have articulated serious concerns about China’s social credit system. *The Independent* in Britain called this a “cyberpunk dystopia”, i.e., China wants to use social credit to create by 2020 an inescapable political system in which citizens are completely loyal to the state.

The Chinese authorities have been strengthening national control over data flows to ensure that leaks of data out of the country and digital communication with the rest of the world will not threaten regime stability. Social networking services (SNS) provide continuous feedback
on people’s words and actions, allowing the Party regime to fine-tune its policies and communication. They can also be easily used to manipulate public perceptions to the regime’s benefit. Furthermore, the regime can exploit the social credit system to digitally exert control over its citizens from the inside (*ibid.*: 2).

Since Deng Xiaoping’s return to power in late 1978, the Party leadership had actively sought to avoid the emergence of a dictator, as it was acutely aware of the danger of the over-concentration of power in Mao Zedong. Since then, the Party regime had attempted to devolve power within the Party, encouraged division of labour between the Party and government, and allowed some decentralization of power to the provinces and localities. There was more emphasis on consultation and collective decision-making in the policy-making processes.

Xi Jinping’s accumulation of power in his person with his aggressive anti-corruption campaign have deeply undermined the collective responsibility system that Deng Xiaoping and his successors tried to establish. To a considerable extent, the political patronage system has now been replaced by demands of loyalty to Xi as “core” of the Party. Political systems based on loyalty to a single ruler are politically unstable, and usually lack broad-based legitimacy and staying power (Shambaugh, 2016: 2).

The abolition of term limits on the state presidency in early 2018 was a clear signal that Xi intended to stay in power indefinitely. Xi overturned rules of succession in Chinese politics that evolved as the Party sought stability and institutionalization. This was interpreted as a significant step in the breakdown of political norms gradually established in the early years of China’s reform era.21

At the same time, the amendments to the Constitution in early 2018 also added his ideological contributions, Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, to the preamble, a
status only enjoyed by Mao Zedong. It appears that like Mao, Xi has been building a personality cult. For example, in Yugen county in Jiangxi province, near Poyang Lake, thousands of Christians swapped their pictures of Jesus for portraits of Xi Jinping as part of a local government poverty-relief programme that sought to “transform believers in religion into believers in the Party”.

In the second half of his first term, the Chinese news media gradually began to cover Xi Jinping’s public appearances with adulation befitting a demigod. During his visits to the headquarters of the three main Party and state news organizations in February 2016, Xi announced that “the Chinese news media exist to serve as a propaganda tool for the Communist Party, and they must pledge their fealty to Xi”. A China Daily article explained Xi’s new policy as follows: “It is necessary for the media to restore people’s trust in the Party, especially as the economy has entered a new normal and suggestions that it is declining and dragging down the global economy have emerged.”

In was probably in the same context that the entire Political Bureau visited the People’s Daily in January 2019. Xi Jinping stressed that the media had to raise their Internet technological competence so as to protect China’s political security, cultural security and ideological security.

The growing confidence of the Chinese leadership and the emergence of Xi’s personality cult are perhaps related to the decline of Singapore as a top overseas training ground for Chinese officials. The number of Chinese cadres sent to Singapore and other countries for training had fallen in recent years, reflecting that domestic training programmes had caught up and China exhibited greater pride in its own development model.

Professor Zhu Lijia from the Chinese Academy of Governance indicated that overseas training of Chinese officials in countries like
Singapore and the U.S. had peaked between 2007 and 2012, and that numbers had declined in recent years. Zhu observed: “As China’s social and economic development advances, top institutions in China have also improved their training quality and international vision to be on a par with their overseas counterparts, including those in Singapore.” Zhu revealed that the number of officials receiving overseas training would continue to decline and that such programmes might even be “gradually cancelled”.

4. China’s Deteriorating External and Domestic Environments and the Overseas Pro-democracy Movement’s Responses

In 2018-19, the Sino-American trade disputes and the slowing down of the Chinese economy have given rise to some optimism regarding pressures on the Party regime. The international community has largely given up hope that China’s economic reforms will inevitably lead to political reforms, and that economic growth will give rise to an expanding middle class eager to demand and support political reforms as in the case of Taiwan and South Korea at the end of the 1980s.

Despite some suggestions of the downfall of the Xi Jinping administration and even the demise of the Communist regime in 2020 or so, to a considerable extent, the Party regime has been able to maintain legitimacy through economic growth, a basic social security net covering the entire population and effective governance. The Xi Jinping administration has been spending a higher proportion of the budget on public and social services, and his combat of corruption as well as his efforts to enhance China’s international status and influence have been popular among the people. It is not likely that an Arab Spring kind of situation would engage in China in the near future.
Meanwhile, civil society is still developing under increasingly difficult conditions. It is in no position to confront the Party regime yet, and probably will not be able to do so in Xi Jinping’s second term. But the intelligentsia has become more and more exposed to the developments in the Western world. The latter’s appeal has been well demonstrated by the middle class families’ enthusiasm to send their children to the elite universities in the U.S. and Europe. The weakness of the Party regime is also exposed when it can no longer hide that a substantial segment of the political elites has moved their families and wealth to the Western world.

The latter has become increasingly impatient in recent years with the lack of convergence in values in China despite its partial embrace of capitalism and impressive economic development. More criticisms have emerged, though there is still an absence of political will to impose sanctions against China besides the Donald Trump administration. The Western world is largely willing to bear with the escalating arrogance of Xi Jinping in ignoring its protests and continuing to propagate his discourse on human rights in the international community. In his political report to the Nineteenth Party Congress, Xi, for the first time, declared that “by the mid-21st century, our people’s armed forces will have been fully transformed into world-class forces”.

Despite the heightening worry about China’s rise, the Donald Trump administration’s demands are basically economic and strategic in nature. China has to reduce its trade surpluses; it has to respect intellectual property rights; and it has to defer to U.S. strategic interests especially those in the Asia-Pacific region such as freedom of navigation, superiority in strategic and conventional military capabilities, etc. But it is reluctant to consider regime change nor pressure on China to improve its human rights conditions and introduce political reforms. The European Union is more interested in the latter,
but it is not prepared to exert pressure on China. Traditionally, Japan adopts a "separation of politics and economics" approach in its China policy.

China, on the other hand, is still willing to make the necessary economic concessions, like reduction in bilateral trade surpluses in the recent Sino-American trade negotiations. It is not in a position to challenge U.S. strategic interests in the near future and finds it easier to avoid U.S. pressures at this stage while biding its time. There were unrealistic assessments like those from Hu Angang at Tsinghua University which considered that China had surpassed the U.S. in economic power, military power, as well as in science and technology. Yet on the whole Chinese leaders remain prudent in handling major power relationships.

The Xi Jinping administration’s rejection of universal values and genuine embrace of a market economy, however, would create serious challenges to China's future economic development and reforms. The Huawei Technologies Co. offers an interesting example. It has been designated by the Chinese authorities to take the lead in the development of 5G technology, which is considered an important area in the competition for a leadership position in global scientific and technological developments both by China’s leadership and its experts. But the enterprise needs a respectable market share to secure the necessary resources, and the influence to demand a say in the discourse defining the rules in the international technological community. At this stage, various governments from the U.S., the United Kingdom to Australia have refused to deal with Huawei; and this boycott will pose substantial difficulties in fulfilling its mission.

China’s decision to join the World Trade Organization in 1999 reflected its awareness that isolation and closing its door would not allow it to join the ranks of the most advanced countries, only opening
its doors and accepting global competition would enable it to do so. But the policy orientations of the Xi Jinping administration demonstrate that China’s integration with the international community has distinct limits, mainly due to the consideration of maintaining the Party regime’s monopoly of political power. These limits would well mean that China’s exchanges with the external world, especially those with the advanced countries, would become more restricted; and domestic innovations would be handicapped. In some ways, the Xi Jinping administration is aware of the impact of these limits, and its efforts to overcome it include the “One Belt, One Road Initiative”, more state funding for research and development, etc.

The discussions in this paper intend to argue that both the scenario of the fall of the Xi Jinping administration and the demise of the Party regime in the near future, and that of the Party regime being able to overcome its difficulties and set a successful model in the long term are not very probable.

The stability of the Party regime is not to be under-estimated. One may be reminded that many predictions were made in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident in 1989 that the Party regime would not last more than three months. It is obvious that no major power today wants to bring about regime change in China, nor would even welcome it. The Western world has largely given up hope that serious political reforms would be introduced in China in the near future, and their efforts of encouragement have not been effective. It is possible that criticisms of China’s poor human rights conditions and moral support for its civil society organizations and human rights activists may be stepped up in the Western world despite the Donald Trump administration’s disinterest in human rights issues, but they are insufficient to bring about a qualitative change in China’s civil society movement.
In January 2019, Xi Jinping in a meeting with ministerial and provincial rank officials warned of the threat of “black swans” and “grey rhinoceros”, and stressed the need to maintain political security.²⁸ Chinese leaders have been working hard to protect the Party regime, and they have been learning the lessons of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the demise of the Soviet Union, the “colour revolutions” and the Arab Spring. While they have rejected political reforms to deal with the fundamental problems of a Leninist regime, they have been largely successful in destroying political opposition.

Economic recessions and financial crises are entirely possible and even likely in the near future in China, but its civil society is not yet as strong as that in Poland and Czechoslovakia in the 1980s. The considerable improvement in living standards for the bulk of China’s population in the past decades provides the Party regime legitimacy, and most people still expect continuous improvement in the near future, albeit at a much slower rate. Slow to moderate economic growth, a basic social security net, and relative efficiency in governance in response to issues like undergraduate employment are adequate for maintaining political stability and deterring revolution. The pragmatic cost-benefit analysis of ordinary people still opts for tolerance of the status quo.

It is obvious that the absence of serious reforms has gradually sapped the political appeal of the Party regime. Beneath the tolerance of the status quo, there is no active support for Xi Jinping’s policy programmes among the intelligentsia, though there is an awareness that opposition is very costly. The exit strategy (Hirschman, 1970) is available not only to the power elites, but is actively pursued by a considerable segment of the middle class, very often for its younger generation only. The Leninist regime in China has offered an exceptional case with an unprecedentedly high proportion of its power elites moving their families and wealth abroad. This fact alone bankrupts
its claim to realize the China Dream; and the offer of dignity and fundamental human rights to the people is beyond the very nature of a Leninist regime, now even with the ambition of cultivating a personality cult.

The pro-democracy movement therefore has to face the third type of scenarios, that of a gradual atrophy of the Party regime (Shambaugh, 2008). This, together with the inevitability that the principal struggles have to be carried out inside China, has caused much frustration in the movement overseas. Unavoidably there are sometimes expressions of disappointment and accusations that the movement overseas has been a failure. But the challenge lies in what it can do and should do at this stage.29

Despite the international and domestic pressures on the Xi Jinping administration in recent years, Hong Kong’s pro-democracy movement is in a low tide, and inter-generational distrust is apparent. Hence it is with a sense of deep humility that I offer my suggestions at this conference which aims to provide a platform for honest exchanges of views on the future of the pro-democracy movement.

There is a common understanding of the severe challenges that pro-democracy groups outside Mainland China face, including those in Taiwan and Hong Kong. They have to fight a sophisticated united front machinery and a state security apparatus with ample resources at their disposal. An indicator of their extent of influence is their almost complete control of the small-scale media in Chinatowns in various big cities. It is safely assumed that almost all pro-democracy groups outside China have been infiltrated. But at the same time, there are no signs that they would soon disappear, despite this challenging environment for survival.

There is no denial of the internal problems among these pro-democracy groups, including corruption, internal quarrels, lack of
democratic mechanisms within them and divisions among the groups. What is called for at this stage is self-reflection and self-reform. All groups should aim to achieve the high standards of established international NGOs, with well-defined accounting, reporting and election systems. Activists should find their own means of living or become salaried executives of the groups, accountable to the respective boards of directors. The rejuvenation of the pro-democracy groups should begin with this reform process. The cultivation of a new generation of activists must be given priority.

Strengthening unity is a must to rebuild the overseas pro-democracy movement’s appeal and influence, and the best response to criticisms that it is not ready for the major changes to come. My suggestion is to have an all-groups annual conference arrangement with participants responsible for their own expenses and the organizational responsibilities assumed by individual groups in turn. Defined agendas and serious preparations for discussions cannot be neglected.

A starting point perhaps is the establishment of a common Internet platform for publicity and exchanges of views and information based on a joint management board and mutual financial contributions; fund-raising naturally is an option and has to be pursued. The maintenance of such a platform serves to demonstrate the initial joint efforts made to get prepared for the major changes to come through unity and co-operation on the part of the overseas pro-democracy groups.

5. Final Words

Irrespective of what will happen in China in the near future, it is high time for self-reflection and reform on our part. It is sincerely hoped that this conference offers a starting point.
While the Leninist regime in Beijing denies the dignity of citizenship for the Chinese people, the overseas pro-democracy movement continues to demonstrate that the struggle for human rights and democracy in China will never end. It remains our firm belief that a regime which denies the dignity and rights of its people will not last; and we are ready to work for what we believe in as this is what our conscience demands.

Notes

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From Protests to Crackdown
April 27th, 1989:  
The Day the Chinese People Stood up

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Abstract

On April 26th 1989, the People’s Daily published an editorial branding the Student movement that started in the wake of Hu Yaobang’s death a “turmoil”. Despite the supreme leadership’s qualification, tens of thousands students supported by urban residents took to the street to protest. It was the first time in the history of the People’s Republic that ordinary citizens challenged publicly a decision by the Central committee. On 27th April 1989, the Chinese people stood up: fear had receded, and free expression was taking place. The ensuing events showed that urban residents in the whole of China were willing to express their demands for change in peaceful demonstrations. It symbolizes the emergence of Beijing citizens’ new political maturity. Unhappily, it was crushed during the night of June 3rd to June 4th. However, if the ways to express their demands have changed during the following three decades, some changes induced by the movement have been ingrained in people’s minds. Rights awareness has resisted the government’s innumerable crackdowns.

Keywords: social movement, democracy, June Fourth, demonstration
1. Introduction

The 1989 pro-democracy movement was the largest social movement in the history of the People’s Republic of China. It involved millions of participants in more than 300 cities. No movement of such a scope ever took place in a country ruled by a communist party except in 1989, when the Central and Eastern European regimes were toppled.

The policy of State amnesia enforced by the Chinese Communist Party has all but erased the memory of the movement in China. If commemoration by exiled activists – especially by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China – of the June 4th massacre has been held every year since 1990, the contents, the demands, the modes of organization of this huge mass movement have been forgotten, and only a very small number of Chinese people who did not experience it know anything about it.

The contrast with say, the 1968 movement in France – a movement that was vastly commemorated last year on its 50th anniversary – is blatant. Last year, leaders, ordinary participants, activists, policemen, and workers published innumerable books, produced innumerable movies and organized multiple exhibitions to present their versions of the movement. The French State was also an important actor of the commemorations.

In China, the 1989 pro-democracy movement is taboo, and any citizen who dares commemorate it is immediately taken “for tea” by the Public Security, or, worse, sent to jail. How, in the Internet era, can such a huge event be erased? Why, thirty years after it happened, does the Chinese Communist Party continue to chase after any mention of its occurrence? Even the figures 6.4 are prohibited on the Internet. This is all the more ironical as the events have disappeared from public memory.
thanks to the Party’s efforts: if nobody knows that something happened in 1989, why is it subversive to mention two figures that are only an allusion to something that nobody knows about?

The other bothering aspect is that the 1989 pro-democracy movement is always referred to (when people dare talk about it) as 6.4. I am not trying to ignore the magnitude of the tragedy represented by the massacre, and by its symbolic violence. However, since the founding of the People’s Republic in 1949, there have been many massacres, from the elimination of the counter-revolutionaries in the early 1950s to the massacres that took place during the Cultural Revolution, but how many movements for democracy involving millions of people in hundreds of cities have occurred? Why commemorate the defeat of this unprecedented pro-democracy movement, and be silent on what it stood for and on the number of its participants?

The present-day Communist Party leaders and most international observers laud the stability of the Chinese regime, which has been able to “lift 400 million persons out of poverty” and bring huge changes to Chinese society, without any massive conflict. This success is supposed to show that the Chinese people long for stability, and are willing to live under an authoritarian, even a totalitarian regime provided that it is able to deliver economic progress.

However, these observers have forgotten that, at the end of the 1980s, millions of Chinese urban residents took to the street to ask for democracy and freedom, and that this “stability” is based on the violent repression of citizens’ aspirations.

This movement was not born out of nowhere. During the 1980s, Chinese citizens of all classes had pushed for democratization, and supported the party’s reformers who tried to take their voices into account. From the 1978-9 Democracy Wall to the 1986 student demonstrations through the 1980 local elections, Chinese subjects had
expressed their opinions and their will to become citizens after having been subjects for decades (Goldman, 2005).

When pundits claim that the 1989 protest was doomed from the beginning because there was no solid basis for the protest as Chinese society lacked autonomy, they tend to ignore the huge changes that had taken place in the mentalities of ordinary citizens, and of part of the Communist Party leaders. This change is acknowledged by the fact that, when the mass movement erupted in the wake of Hu Yaobang’s demise, part of the Communist Party leadership tried to deal with it using the methods of “legality and democracy”¹.

2. A Divided Communist Party

One should remember that in the late 1980s, the Party was deeply divided between those who thought that in order to deepen the reform of the economy, a reform of the political system was indispensable, and those who thought that any change to the people’s democratic dictatorship would spell death for the regime. The latter thought that the economic reform which provided for a larger role for the market were threatening its stability. This division was felt in most fields, notably in the attitude towards Chinese society and intellectuals.

The reformers rallied behind Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang were convinced that only by taking on board the critical opinions of the intelligentsia and of the ordinary people was it possible to renew the legitimacy of the regime. They actually solicited these opinions by creating think tanks such as the Centre for the Reform of the Economic System, and the Research Group for the Reform of the Political System. They listened to the opinions of the newly emerging group of social scientists, and were increasingly convinced that the press should be emancipated from strict party controls. Experiences such as the *Shijie*
Jingji Daobao (World Economic Herald), Keji Bao (Science and Technology), and Jingjixue Zhoubao (Economic Weekly), which carried lively debates on the nature of the political regime and did not hesitate to publish unorthodox opinions, were remarkable in a communist country. So was the emergence of the salons where all sorts of political and philosophical discussions were taking place (including talks by the American Ambassador!). A kind of non-institutionalized civil society was emerging, and the Party reformers did not take any step to do away with it, a lack of action that outraged the members of the conservative faction of the Party. Deng Xiaoping, sometimes supported the reformers, and, when he thought that they were going too far, switched to a more conservative attitude. Chinese society was modernizing and not only the intelligentsia, but also a large number of urban residents wanted to have a say in the evolution of the political regime.

The Party itself that had been trying to regain legitimacy after the terrible years of the Cultural Revolution displayed an unprecedented willingness to listen to the voices of society to adapt its rule to contemporary challenges. A sort of virtuous cycle appeared, in which reformers needed input from society in order to modernize party rule, and a large number of intellectuals and members of the economic elites were willing to provide them.

This was especially the case among students, who believed the Party’s discourse according to which they represented the main force for modernization. The official propaganda insisted on the role of grey matter in the new economic revolution, and tried to co-opt students into the party apparatus. This was the period when, in order to be promoted inside the Party hierarchy, one needed a university grade.

The students themselves, when they were not obsessed with the desire to go and study abroad (the famous tuopai, those who prepared for the TOEFL), were willing to renew with the traditional role of the
literati, convinced as they were that they bore the main responsibility for China’s future. Like the literati, many thought that they had a moral imperative to censor abuses by the authorities, and felt obliged to defend ordinary people, who themselves were convinced that they had a duty to protect the students who were ready to fight for their welfare. In the rather relaxed atmosphere that prevailed in the 1980s, students were convinced that the cost of political action would not be excessively high, as had been demonstrated by the relatively low level of repression of the 1985 and 1986 demonstrations. Fear, which had been an essential component of the Party rule during the previous forty years, was receding.

3. Spontaneous Action Rehabilitated

The rehabilitation of the April 5th, 1976 Tiananmen incident by Deng Xiaoping in November 1978 had signalled an important change in the Party’s attitude: in a way, it meant that spontaneous protest by citizens was legitimate. And, as a matter of fact, the day after Deng’s declaration, posters appeared on what was to become Xidan Democracy Wall.

Nevertheless, spontaneous demonstrations had not been legalized, as many leading activists of the 1978-79 pro-democracy movement were to find out: after the Party had tolerated their free expression for a few months, they were dealt long prison terms. However, other demonstrators, such as the Shanghai rusticated youths who had organized protests in the late 70s, were not repressed.

Despite numerous episodes such as the campaigns against bourgeois liberalisation (1981, 1987) and against spiritual pollution (1983-84), the political atmosphere was getting increasingly relaxed, and students were keener to take to the streets to express their discontent. Therefore, when Hu Yaobang died on 15th April 1989, they did not hesitate to take their
claims on the Party to Tiananmen Square. If the 1976 homage to Zhou Enlai was regarded as “revolutionary”, why couldn’t they pay their respect to a leader who, during his term as president and general secretary of the Party, had been instrumental in rehabilitating the victims of Maoism, and had fought for the implementation of a reform of the political system? They were convinced that by taking to the streets to demand the end of the campaign against bourgeois liberalization and the lifting of press censorship, they were actually supporting the line that had triumphed after Deng Xiaoping’s return to power, the famous 3rd plenum political line.

The great majority of the students who took to the streets in the wake of Hu Yaobang’s death were not opponents of the Communist Party rule. Hu’s death was seen as weakening the reformers, who had already been dealt a serious blow by his forced resignation in 1987, and by the ensuing promotion of Li Peng to the post of Prime Minister. By expressing their grief over Hu’s death and asking for his rehabilitation, they believed they were reinforcing the reformist faction, which was confronted with a conservative offensive. The attitude of the demonstrators, who were replicating their 1976 predecessors’ action, their request for dialogue that the Party Congress had legitimized in 1987, and the way they presented their petition (three students knelt on the steps of the Great Hall of the people to ask the Prime Minister to receive them) showed that they did not question the legitimacy of the regime, but were willing to support part of the leadership.

Therefore, when Party leaders refused to talk to their representatives and sent the People’s Armed Police to disperse them and send them back to their campuses, they were really shocked.

But this shock reached its climax with the publication of the April 26th People’s Daily editorial.
4. The April 27th Demonstration

The April 27th demonstration that followed the publication of the editorial represents the first large-scale spontaneous street protest against a decision by the Communist Party supreme leader after it has been made public in an editorial published by the organ of the Central committee, and read on the radio before that.

The first Tiananmen incident on April 5th, 1976 had also been a large-scale spontaneous demonstration, but it had taken place before the highest authorities in the Party had expressed their opinion (biaotai). It is only two days later (on April 7th, 1976) that the People’s Daily published an editorial labelling it “counter-revolutionary”. This is a huge difference. In 1989, people who took to the streets knew clearly they were opposing the highest authority and did it deliberately.

As a matter of fact, the students were quite aware of the danger involved in launching a protest after the editorial, as many dramatically wrote their wills before taking to the streets. As emphasized by Bao Zunxin in his memoirs:

“Take to the streets to demonstrate? It was no joke. The April 26th editorial had been written according to a directive from Deng Xiaoping. (That same afternoon, every danwei had passed on Deng’s speech to Party members).”

(Bao, 1997: 69)

To many, the editorial language was a Great Leap Backward. It reminded its readers of the April 7th, 1976 People’s Daily editorial that had followed the Great Tiananmen Demonstration in homage to Zhou Enlai.
“When the editorial was passed on in every danwei, it caused unceasing laughter. Inside the Party, the idea that using the discourse of the 50s and 60s to solve the questions of the 80s was absurd, was widespread. Many party members were saying: ‘it looks like the Cultural Revolution has come back.’ It is the language and mode of action of the past movements.”

(Zhang, 2009: 72)

But to the students who had been protesting for days, it was a terrible shock as Chen Xiaoya, then a teacher at a university in Beijing, noted in her memoir:

“52 universities posted 860 dazibao, protesting the April 26th editorial. Until very late in the evening, various groups discussed to decide what were the best ways to reply to this ‘aggression’. They decided to launch a protest. In the evening of the 25th, the Beijing Provisional Union of Schools of Higher Education summoned a meeting and decided to launch a demonstration on the 27th. In its advice, it said: ‘on the 27th, there will be a united demonstration of the whole city, gathering at Tiananmen, to protest against the April 26th editorial.’”

(Chen, 1996: 152)

Ten slogans were agreed upon:

(1) Support the Communist Party, support socialism. (2) Long live democracy! (3) Oppose bureaucratism, corruption, privileges! (4) Support the constitution! (5) Patriotism isn’t a crime! (6) The press must tell the truth, resist calumny! (7) Long live the people! (8) Stability of the prices! (9) Everyone has a responsibility when the State is threatened. (10) The people’s policemen protect the people.

(Chen, 1996: 153)
But the students were aware that such a demonstration was different from the previous ones as it was taking place after the leadership had clearly expressed its judgement. Aware of the danger, some elected representatives started wavering. Afraid that the demonstration would meet with harsh repression from the authorities, Ma Shaofang and Wuerkaixi changed their minds and said they were cancelling the protest (Zhou and Gu, 2009: 67).

Students were not alone in expressing doubts. When they heard about the students meeting, some intellectuals tried to convince them to remain in their campus to protest. In his memoir, Bao Zunxin, who was later to play an important role in the founding of the Beijing Intellectuals Autonomous Union, remembers:

“I called to ask what was the situation like, asked to convey my warning to the people who organized the demonstration, and tell them to call me an hour later … I was really nervous.”

Bao then went home and got a call from Gan Yang who described the situation in the universities and asked him if he could do something to prevent the students from demonstrating. He said he was getting ready to go to Beida, but Gan replied: “this is useless, now professors from many universities are blocking the gates; if we go, it will only mean that there are a few more people. The most important is to be able to let some person at the top (shangmian) come out and say something.”

It made sense.

“Having thought it over, I thought of Tao Siliang. She was the vice-bureau chief of the United Front’s newly founded bureau for intellectuals; she had many friends among young intellectuals. The most important was that she could reflect the situation to the echelons
above ... I said: ‘now in the name of more than 100 people from the intelligentsia I express this request to you: please convey our feelings (xingqing) to the echelons above; we must at all costs find a way to convince the students not to take to the streets. If they really do, we hope that the concerned parties will be moderate (kezhi). This is my appeal!’ I also said: ‘if, during the demonstration, a bloody event happens, I will immediately proclaim I resign from the Party.’

She said that by all means she would tell the echelons above our opinion. It was already after midnight.”

(Bao, 1997: 69)

But these efforts were fruitless and after a period of hesitation, which did not last long, the students decided to ignore the elders’ advices. In Peking University (Beida), as (or because?) the University radio was calling for restraint, 2000 to 3000 students went to the campus gates from where they could see the military police. Some students gave impassioned speeches:

“From May Fourth to today Beida’s history has engraved one truth in our hearts: without the Communist Party, there would be no new China. We may be young, but we are more faithful to the CCP than those who calumniate us as anti-Party. We oppose the corrupt officials, and these corrupt officials are the real anti-Party, anti-socialist elements.”

(Zhou and Gu, 2009: 69)

At this point, the students still did not oppose the Communist Party rule, and feigned to ignore that a People’s Daily editorial represented the opinion of the leadership. But the simple fact that they dared take to the streets after such a decision was regarded as an unbearable challenge by Deng Xiaoping.
The demonstration lasted from 8 am till 11 pm, and involved several hundred thousand people. From Haidian, the university quarter, it went to central Beijing and back, covering 30 km. All along the way, the demonstrators cleared their way with a mixture of physical pressure and negotiation. When the procession arrived near Tiananmen Square, the situation became tense.

“At 6 pm, in front of Tiananmen Square, a student shouted in a loudspeaker: ‘I give you some good news: when the People’s University procession arrived at Tiananmen, a company of the 38th Army left on a military truck. Therefore, we have temporarily decided to leave some leeway to the government, and not enter the square, but go back (to campus) through Jianguomen, and to continue the strike tomorrow until the final victory’.”

(Zhang, 2009: 76)

The concessions allied to firmness showed that the demonstrators were mature, and that they were able to use all sorts of tactics to reach their objectives.

I shall not delve into the details of the demonstration, but a few elements should be remembered:

– **The demonstration was peaceful**, and despite some tense moments, there were no clashes with the military police that had been mobilized *en masse*.

– **The show of force by the Party did not dissuade the students** from taking to the streets, and, in the absence of clear orders (due to divergences inside the apparatus?) the police did not use violence to prevent the demonstration.

– **The slogans were not anti-Party**: Support socialism, oppose corruption, dialogue, were actually a show of support for the pursuit
of reforms. The students were trying to enlist the support of the police, with the slogans: “The people’s police love the people”.

Despite the fact that the students did everything possible to prevent any stranger from entering their ranks, the role of the “masses”, the ordinary Beijing residents, was central: “One to two thousand members of the masses stood between the students and the officers, shouting ‘Let them go through!’ The students were also shouting ‘the people’s police love the people!’ People were as tightly as in a bus, some lost their shoes. All the people were pushed forward unwillingly. The policemen were resisting the flow … (until they) released their arms, and the flow of people went through.” (Zhou and Gu, 2009: 69)

Demands for the respect of basic freedoms were not so easily acceptable by the Party, whether by the reformers or the conservative. Denunciation of the official press indicated that the students wanted real democracy, which was incompatible with the continuing dictatorship of the Party. “Around 6, they arrived at the headquarters of the Beijing Ribao: ‘北京日报，胡说八道！’ (The Beijing Daily is bullshit) ‘人民日报，欺骗人民！’ (The People's Daily misleads the people) ‘中央电台，颠倒黑白！’ (Radio Beijing reverses black and white) ‘工人日报，为民开道！’ (The Workers’ Daily clears the way for the people) ‘向科技日报致敬！’ (Salute to the Science and Technology Daily).” (Zhou, Gu, 2009: 80). This announced the journalists’ protest that took place on 4th May.

The student movement became a mass movement: From the beginning to the end, people were massed on the streets, bringing food, soft drinks and lollipops to the demonstrators, and showing support in all sorts of ways. They were actually supporting spontaneous political participation, and freedom of demonstration.
Thirty years later, a few student leaders reflected on the importance of the demonstration.

_Wuerkaixi:_
It is one day that I think we will remember with such festive feelings. Everybody was giving us a V sign and then it became a symbolic gesture of 1989 student movement too.

_Shen Tong:_
It was such a triumph. We broke human walls formed by Police – the feared armed Police did not block us – and it was such a carnival!

_Wang Dan:_
We were also proud because it was the first time since 1949 under the Communist Party rule that the people had taken to the streets. So I think it had a profound impact on Deng Xiaoping. Of course, this is only my impression, but I think he must have felt a great inner turmoil. From that day, the government was the government, the people, the people and the government was not with the people.²

5. Lessons from the Demonstration
The April 27th demonstration has multiple meanings: the fact that it took place, and that it was supported by great numbers of Beijing residents shows that the April 26th editorial had shocked the people, who were not ready to obey an irrational decision by the party leadership.

It showed that if people were united and had common claims, they could exercise effective pressure on the Party. Despite the fact that many students had written their will before they left their campuses, showing they were aware of the danger, the mere holding of the demonstration
showed that discontented people, if they were in significant enough numbers, could express their opinions, and, perhaps, force the party to change attitude.

From that day on, students and activists started to wonder whether the main obstacle to democracy was not party dictatorship.

It also reinforced the request for dialogue – with success as there were many attempts by the government to organize it. Some, like April 29th Yuan Mu’s dialogue with student union representatives, were fake. Others, such as May 14th Yan Mingfu’s dialogue with representatives of the Beijing Students' Autonomous Federation (union of institutions of higher education) were real, but were sabotaged by the conservative. However, by accepting to hold a dialogue with freely elected representatives of a social group, the Party was acknowledging the existence of an autonomous society, thus putting into question the totalitarian character of the regime.

The demonstration was also a symbol of unity between the students and various social groups who could rally behind a common agenda and common tactics: the agenda was the demand for freedoms of demonstration, of the press, and perhaps a demand for dialogue by autonomous organisations representing various social groups.

Therefore, one could state that on 27th April 1989, the Chinese people stood up: fear had receded, and free expression was taking place.

The ensuing events showed that urban residents in the whole of China were willing to express their demands for change in peaceful demonstrations. This sense of initiative was further displayed when the people of Beijing took to the streets to block the advance of the martial law troops on May 20th.

The April 27th demonstration symbolizes the emergence of Beijing citizens’ new political maturity. Unhappily, it was crushed during the night of June 3rd to June 4th.
6. The End of Ordinary Citizens’ Direct Political Participation?

No such demonstration has taken place since 1989. So, was it only a feu de paille? Have the Chinese people been convinced that it is useless to try express their dissatisfaction with the Party leadership by taking to the streets?

If the ways to express their demands have changed during the following three decades, some changes induced by the movement have been ingrained in people’s minds. Rights awareness has resisted the government’s innumerable crackdowns.

A blow has been dealt to the legitimacy of the regime: the credibility of the press has decreased immensely, and most people now turn towards the Internet to get information. The rights defence movement has emerged, signalling the possibility of contacts and common action among various social groups. Lawyers and citizen journalists have replaced the students as leaders of this movement.

The lessons drawn by the Party are that infighting prevented the leadership from acting decisively to put an end to the movement.

The conjunction of a social movement with divisions inside the party has since been regarded as the main threat against the regime that should be avoided at all costs. After 1989, emerging autonomous organizations have been harassed by the authorities. However, as society was getting more affluent, and the country increasingly open to outside contacts, grey zones appeared which allowed grassroots civil society organizations to develop. Most of them refrained from expressing political demands on the regime in order to be able to grow bigger. The party contented itself with preventing politicisation, and the establishment of NGOs at the national level.
At the same time, development of the Internet allowed the training of a new generation of activists fighting for the protection of citizens’ rights. But these forces outside the system still suffer from the chronic disease of the Chinese opposition movement: the absence of memory. Enforced State amnesia has prevented activists from drawing all the lessons of the 1989 pro-democracy movement. If most of them know that the State committed a massacre against unarmed non-violent citizens, few know that, thirty years ago, the Chinese people had stood up to fight a *People’s Daily* editorial. Fear has returned to society, and most activists believe that it is impossible to challenge the party in the centre of Beijing.

If, together with the commemoration of the massacre, which has to be continued, all the democrats had celebrated the memory of the April 27th demonstration, the image of the 1989 movement would be different. I hope one day it will be referred to as 4.27, and that people who try to know what really happened thirty years ago will investigate this essential event in the history of the People’s Republic of China. Paradoxically, I hope that one day, the Party will censor these three figures more than 6.4.

**Notes**

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June 4th, 1989: A Founding Non-Event,  
a Breaking Point in Time and Space

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to reflect broadly on the meaning of June 4 in the history of contemporary China. The main idea is that the violent military and political repression of the 1989 Chinese Pro-Democracy Movement in Beijing and in other cities is not only a tragic event which shocked the whole world, but also, looking at it in retrospect, a breaking point in the history of contemporary China. The fracture which it generated is not only affecting time, by drawing a fault line between the period of the 1980s and the following period, but is also affecting space, because the turn which China took at this time was in total contradiction with the events which started in the communist countries in eastern Europe and Russia in the same year and led to loss of power for the Communist parties of these countries. This means that the June 4 massacre cut China not only from its rather optimistic period of the 1980s, but also from the rest of the (hitherto) communist world. But the paradox is that this fundamental event has been, through the extraordinary efforts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), transformed into a non-event, which has been almost totally erased not
only from all official record including books, textbooks and all kinds of media, but also from the collective memory of the population.

**Keywords:** Chinese contemporary history, democratic movement, June 4 massacre, historical and geopolitical breakpoint, erasure of collective memory

1. Introduction

My purpose here is not to present a detailed history of the Pro-Democracy Movement of the Spring of 1989 and of its violent military suppression during the night of June 3 to June 4, nor to examine the subsequent evolution of the movement in and out of China. It is rather to reflect broadly on the meaning of June 4 in the history of contemporary China, to propose my own conception, which I hope others will comment, complete and criticize. Such a topic is certainly too ambitious for my limited capabilities, but my aim is only to stimulate reflection and debate.

My main idea is that the violent military and political repression of the 1989 Chinese Pro-Democracy Movement in Beijing and in other cities is not only a tragic event which shocked the whole world, but also, looking at it in retrospect, a breaking point in the history of contemporary China. I argue that the fracture which it generated is not only affecting time, by drawing a fault line between the period of the 1980s and the following period, but is also affecting space, because the turn which China took at this time was in total contradiction with the events which started in the communist countries in eastern Europe and Russia in the same year and led to loss of power for the Communist parties of these countries. This means that the June 4 massacre cut China not only from its rather optimistic period of the 1980s (beginning in fact
in 1978), but also from the rest of the (hitherto) communist world. This event, then, had at the same time dramatic historical and geopolitical effects. But the paradox is that this fundamental event has been, through the extraordinary efforts of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), transformed into a non-event, which has been almost totally erased not only from all official record including books, textbooks and all kinds of media, but also from the collective memory of the population.

I shall now present with more details the fractures in time and space engendered by the fatal decision of using military violence against a population protesting peacefully, as well as the subsequent transformation of this event into a non-event. Finally, I shall raise the question whether June 4 is not as tragic as a “non-event” than it was in 1989 as an “event”. Is it really possible that a new era built on such a collective amnesia, like a castle haunted by a ghost whose presence can be felt but never clearly seen, becomes a sound environment for the “rejuvenation of a great nation”, which is the official objective of the CCP under Xi Jinping’s leadership?

2. A Breakpoint in Time

After the dark period of the Cultural Revolution and the atmosphere of “end of reign” of the Red Emperor Mao in the 1970s, the period beginning in 1978 appeared as a liberation from the Maoist dogmas, a relief from meaningless bouts of so-called “class-struggle” and as a “new enlightenment” period. Although the most optimistic hopes of a new period of “democracy and rule of law” in which socialism could respect human rights and freedom of thought were disappointed by Deng Xiaoping’s insistence in March 1979 on the respect of the Four Basic Principles including the dictatorship of the Party, the 1980s still were a period during which people were hopeful of a political reform and
discussed passionately new ideas and new prospects for China. The 1980s were also a period of extraordinary thirst for new ideas coming from the West, including from the East-European countries, which were also experiencing a period of reform. Young people felt that they had a mission to fight the conservative forces inside the Party and eventually help the emergence of a new China opened to the outside world. For this, they not only supported the reformist forces inside the Party (mainly those around Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang), but some of them insisted on the necessity to build forces outside of the Party and put their hopes on a collaboration of intellectual and political forces “inside and outside of the system” (体制内和体制外).

These strong aspirations of the Chinese youth were confronted with the hesitations concerning a political reform in the mind of the real Number One, Deng Xiaoping, and to what seemed to be a decision against it at the end of 1986. Then, the death of Hu Yaobang was felt as a possible end to a real reform and this triggered the students’ Democratic Movement on April 15, 1989. The boldness of this movement in its relationship with the authorities and the huge echo it stimulated in many cities and in many strata of urban society are testimony for the strength and depth of the aspirations to a political change, specifically to a new and more equal relationship between state and society, in the entire population. This would not have been possible without the preceding decade, during which people discussed passionately about the best way to help the emergence of a new, open, China and kept a vivid memory of the cruel and hopeless realities of the Maoist period, especially that of the Cultural Revolution. This contrast had been brought to the front in the famous TV film The River Elegy (河殇), which proposed to create a “blue culture” in China and to put an end to the “yellow culture”, representing the traditional, feudal, China with which the closed and despotic society of the Maoist period was
clearly associated.

It is not my purpose, here, to judge if the Beijing students were or were not overly optimistic and should have listened to more mature intellectuals who counseled more restraint and compromise in the relationship with the authorities. I know by my own experience as an ordinary participant in the May 68 Movement in Paris fifty years ago that large social movements have their own logic which is path-dependent, each action opening new possibilities but also making it impossible to go back in time. In any case, the declaration of martial law and, later, the massacre were enough to quell all the optimism accumulated in a decade.

I cannot here analyze all the effects of this event, but I would like to insist on the idea that it was one of those events which change radically the relationship that every society entertains with Time. From a society facing the future and open to the Western world, Chinese society since the very beginning of the 1990s became a nostalgic society looking at its past and rediscovering its own specific tradition. I noticed this fundamental change while studying the memory of the zhiqing (the urban youth sent to the countryside during the Maoist period and mainly during the Cultural Revolution). I was surprised that those zhiqing who had almost all returned to cities in 1980 or before began to have a host of collective memorial activities only in 1990. And those memorial activities took pace and developed very fast, which showed that the explanation by the social and economic changes brought by Deng’s Southern Tour was not sufficient, since those changes were effective only a few years later. Moreover, the nostalgic mood was not only affecting the former zhiqing, but the whole urban society (Bonnin, 2016).

If we look closely at the period which followed the Tiananmen events, we can observe that the massacre killed not only people but also
the optimism and the openness of the 1980s, especially as the authorities did all they could to reject everything new and Western in the ideological realm and to encourage Chinese people to go back to their own cultural and historical roots. This is the period when traditional practices like martial arts, qigong and even belief in all kinds of fantastic “special powers” (teyi gongneng) flourished suddenly, especially in very official institutions like the police and the army. In these circumstances, the zhiquing nostalgia which had always been latent became more pressing and at the same time, the authorities were more willing to let zhiquing organize memorial activities (and in fact they encouraged these activities as long as they could control their content). Even if the 1960s and 1970s remained a sensitive past, this sensitivity was much less dangerous than the recent past of the Spring of 1989. In a way, the tolerance shown by the authorities could be explained as the use of one memory to obfuscate another one. It could also be described as letting some steam out, in a tense situation. The first exhibition, which opened in November 1990 in the Beijing History Museum (bordering Tiananmen Square where the 1989 events had taken place), had a strong official “flavour”. The other exhibitions that followed in Hainan, Chengdu and Nanjing in 1991 and 1993 were also held under the patronage of the municipal authorities and blessed by calligraphies of the main local leaders (ibid.).

The sudden emergence of unofficial historical books on the Rustication movement after 1990 is also intriguing. Before 1989, apart from some “internal” studies not available to the public, a historical account of the movement had only been published in 1987 as a small chapter in a book written by Party researchers to give an official presentation of the “ten years of the Cultural Revolution”. But, two historical books on the movement written by former zhiquing with no official background were published in 1992 and 1993 (one of them
having been ready since the end of 1990). Others followed during the 1990s. These books of course could not have been published without official approval. Although a complete study on this topic has yet to be made, it seems then that the trauma of June 4 has brought China to a new “regime of historicity” (to use a concept cast by a French historian, François Hartog (2016)), which means a new relationship of a society to Time: in this case, a tendency to reflect on the more distant past so as to forget the painful present or immediate past, in a situation when previous hopes for the future have been disappointed. The nostalgic mood of Chinese society (which was in total contrast to the idealistic and often impatient expectations concerning the future prevalent in the 1980s) appeared very soon at the beginning of the 1990s, so that a new publishing company, Huaxia publishing house (with links to the Political Department of the Army), decided in 1994 to publish a series of books dedicated to nostalgia under the title “Collection of Nostalgia Literature”. One excerpt of the general preface to the collection and one of the post-scriptum of the fifth volume can illustrate this change in the “regime of historicity” (Bonnin, 2016: 162):

- The sad present has not been able to give us new ideas or new forms which we can acclaim and recall with dignity. So we have no other choice but to look behind us and return to the past.

- One of my friends said to me: “Tomorrow is born of yesterday, not of today. I can only concoct my dreams of the future from the traces of the past.” These words are an accurate reflection of the mentality of certain urban intellectuals today. Unable to imagine what tomorrow will hold, they try to avoid falling in a state of open anxiety by intoxicating themselves with heady draughts from the past.
So, we can see that the shock of the military repression of the democratic movement, followed by a period of terror (hunt for its real or supposed “leaders” and pressures on persons and organizations to show their rejection of the movement and obedience to the Party) led to a sudden change in the social mood. Another aspect of this change is a general spreading of cynicism inside society, linked to the loss of moral legitimacy of the regime and to the new “social contract” which the leadership soon proposed to (or rather imposed on) the population. (I shall go back to this point later).

The breakpoint effect of these events was indeed not limited to the population but also very obvious in the official political sphere. The most obvious result was the total marginalization and even political destruction of the more open and reformist wing of the Party once represented by Hu Yaobang, and then by Zhao Ziyang. With the house arrest of Zhao, the arrest of his right-hand man, Bao Tong, and the sidelining of other leaders like Hu Qili (and many others at every level), the Party was purged of all the forces favoring a political evolution of the country and of the Party. This was an important action blocking a future evolution of China.

But this was not the only political effect of June 4. The problem was that this unprecedented event of the People’s Liberation Army openly using bullets and tanks to kill unarmed Chinese civilians on a large scale meant a sudden loss of legitimacy for the Party in large chunks of the population. Many people who had kept a rather good image of the Party (or had regained it after the Cultural Revolution) suddenly saw the brutality of the regime and opened their eyes to its absence of popular legitimacy. This was a widespread phenomenon. Suddenly, they saw that the king was naked, to refer to the famous Andersen story. And people knew that internationally the Chinese regime was strongly criticized and was the target of political and economic sanctions. This brought a very
clever and informed journalist like Liu Binyan to predict that the regime would not last more than two more years. This was of course a wrong prediction made by someone who still thought that a communist regime needed a moral legitimacy. The following months and years showed that this was not the case. As long as the regime was able to purge dissenting leaders and to stick to power in a united fashion, nobody could throw it down. This is a specificity of totalitarian or neo-totalitarian regimes: in a paper I wrote at the time, I noticed that the Chinese Communist Party still kept a kind of “Ground Zero legitimacy”, which could also be called a “Dasein legitimacy” (to refer to the German philosopher Martin Heidegger), which means the legitimacy of a power which simply is “there”, occupying the political sphere with the capacity of preventing anyone to topple it out of its throne.

But of course, this legitimacy needs to be reinforced by something more positive. And very soon, the regime resorted to the magic wand of all political regimes in a difficult situation: nationalism. Nationalism married together love of the fatherland (patriotism), insistence on the heroic role of the Party against aggression and humiliation from foreign enemies, pride about the rich and ancient Chinese civilization, and above all the idea that Chinese people are radically different from the rest of humanity, are a special breed which cannot follow the Western ways. All this can be considered as the main pillar on which the Party tried and in a large measure succeeded to find a new legitimacy. But these efforts would certainly not have been as successful, if they had not been sustained by an important wave of prolonged economic growth, which brought satisfaction and pride to a large part of the population.

This economic transformation would not have been possible without the determination of the leader who must bear ultimate responsibility for the fatal June 4 decision, Deng Xiaoping, to reject all ideological restraints on the use of the capitalist market system. By opening the
gates during his famous Southern Tour at the beginning of 1992, he proposed a new “social contract” to the Chinese people: continued political obedience against a wealth of personal opportunities to become “rich” or at least richer than before.

We cannot know, of course, if this new radical turn of the economic reform would have been launched (and launched in such a vigorous manner) without the events of June 4. But, in any case, it is clear that the policies concerning the new ideological basis and the new socio-economic orientation of the regime have been deeply modified after June 4. It is then possible to say that this date constitutes a breakpoint in the contemporary history of China.

3. A Breakpoint in Space: a Sad Geopolitical Contrast

Albert Einstein taught us that time and space are not separated in the physical world. I would argue that the time fracture of June 4 had also an important spatial aspect. Only five months after the distant events of Tiananmen shocked the Western world in a tragic way, the same world witnessed with excitement and delight another historical event happening right at its door: the Fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, which had been preceded by the victory of the Polish independent trade-union Solidarity in June and was followed by other uprisings in the then communist regimes of Eastern Europe. Before the end of the year, mainly by peaceful means, communism had disappeared from that region and two years later the USSR itself, the formidable stronghold of “Real Socialism”, began to crumble after 70 years of uninterrupted iron-fisted rule. As a result, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union eventually lost power. This was of course a turning point in world history, and most importantly the end of the Cold War that had structured the whole world since the end of WWII. But, as a result of the
exhilarating effect of the fall of the Berlin Wall, many people in the West, including intellectuals, had the wrong impression that Marxist-Leninist regimes were finished and that Western liberal democracies had won the war. The memory of Tiananmen was eclipsed or at least not considered as meaningful.

The most obvious proof of the total obfuscation of the historical meaning of the Tiananmen massacre was the publication of Francis Fukuyama’s *The End of History*\(^8\). The success of this book and of many other books and articles acknowledging the end of the communist ideology and of the communist system which had evolved from Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin until 1989 meant a total disregard for the fate of the Chinese people. The violent reassertion of the totalitarian model of government was not considered as significant and was deleted from universal (or global) political science.

For the Chinese intellectuals and ordinary people who had been participants or sympathizers of the Pro-Democracy Movement, the East European events were at the same time a source of joy and of disarray. The contrast between the victory of democratic ideals in the West and their bloody crushing in their own country was heartbreaking, even though it could be a source of hope for the future. To make sense of that cruel contrast, they often expressed the idea that the Tiananmen massacre had so disgusted and shocked Europeans, including Mikhail Gorbachev, that he had decided not to use the Soviet Army to crush the Eastern European revolts, contrary to what had been usual practice before that in those countries. Then, in a way, the tragic failure of the Chinese democratic movement took the heroic dimension of a sacrifice which permitted (or facilitated) the end of communist dictatorship in the West\(^9\). This idea is still in the minds of some former participants of the movement\(^10\). Unfortunately, this idea does not conform to the historical fact that as early as October 1985, Gorbachev had already notified the
Eastern European leaders that they had to solve their problems by
themselves and that the Soviet Army would not come to their rescue in
case of a rebellion in their country. It is because he reiterated this
decision in front of a Polish Communist envoy in September 1988 that
Solidarity could negotiate with the Polish government and eventually
win the elections in June 1989\textsuperscript{11}.

Then, the sad reality is that history had taken a direction in China
completely different from that in the West (or to be more precise, in “the
East of the West”). The June 4 violence had not only cut the Chinese
people from their optimistic period of the 1980s, but also from the rest of
the world. And although there was great sympathy in the West for the
Chinese democrats who had been massacred under the eyes of the world,
the meaning of that massacre was largely eclipsed by the events in
Europe and in Russia. It had become an event which people remembered
or had heard about, but deprived of signification because its meaning
could not be integrated into the new worldview of Western intellectuals
and ordinary people. In China itself, its fate was about to become even
more tragic, because of the CCP’s efforts to transform it into a non-
event.

4. From Tragic Event to Tragic Non-Event

In the few months following the massacre, the authorities tried to
minimize it and to justify it in putting the blame on the students who
were supposedly duped by some “black hands” supported by hostile
foreign forces. They published not only newspaper articles but also
books giving the official version. In September, they even held an
exhibition in the Military Museum presenting “proofs” of the counter-
revolutionary rebellion and the admirable actions of the soldiers. Even a
film showing the famous scene of the “tankman” was shown in the
exhibition as proof of the restraint shown by the soldiers. Texts written by astrophysicist Fang Lizhi, one of the so-called “black hands”, were also displayed to show how he had poisoned the minds of young people. But of course, these actions, like the use of “Reverse Teaching Materials” during the Cultural Revolution, could have the opposite effect of the intended one, by diffusing ideas which were not necessarily understood with the correct ideology by the public. Using Marxist or Hegelian dialectics, they could be tempted to use the “negation of the negation” and get a positive image of erroneous ideas. This is why Deng Xiaoping was very soon convinced that silence and amnesia were a better way of dealing with the events in the long run.

In my speech at a similar conference we had in Hong Kong ten years ago for the twentieth anniversary of the Tiananmen events, I already said, concerning the “treatment” of the events by the regime: “The main method employed is quite simply total concealment (...) Ideally, these events would be made to disappear from social memory altogether, and be transformed into non-events for all the generations who did not actually witness them directly.” (Bonnin, 2009: 55) This method has been pursued very thoroughly since then and even the huge development of social media, which could have helped maintain memory, has been countered by a very strict and quick censorship, with all kinds of terms related to 6.4 being prohibited and blocked. Even “May 35” became taboo and the candle emoticon disappears each year from the social media a few days before and after June 4. Of course, this erasing of social memory is facilitated by the fact that those who have not witnessed this period have become more numerous ten years later and will become more and more numerous with time passing.

There are many proofs of the success of the policy of amnesia, among the younger generations at least. Rowena He and Louisa Lim have written books and articles dealing with this question, and my own
experience of teaching in Hong Kong with a large majority of students coming from the Mainland confirms this. But, amnesia cannot be absolute, of course. Some parents have told their children about what happened, students who have gone to universities abroad have also generally heard about June 4. But, they might be convinced by the official justification reserved to those who have heard about it: it was necessary to quell this rebellion to save China from a foreign plot, to protect stability and, thanks to that stability, China has been able to obtain a great success in its economic development. On the contrary, with the disappearance of the USSR, the Russian people have not been able to make real progress and have lost part of their territory. Then, for the good of the country, it was necessary to sacrifice some people. This idea is not limited to June 4. Many unjust actions or policies of the regime are justified by the superior interest of the country. I have met this conception also concerning the educated youth sent to the countryside. But, my experience is that this justification is only efficient when people have a limited and abstract knowledge of historical realities. When they are confronted with the concrete details of the event or policy through words or images, they get a better understanding of the whole situation and feel a natural empathy with the victims. This is why it is so important for the regime that the people remain ignorant or only get an abstract and caricatured knowledge of history. Young people who suddenly learn about this dark page of recent history that had been totally concealed to them will often feel shocked and even insulted, because it is not normal that they should be ignorant of such a public and important event of the recent past of their country. Indeed, this rather successful fabrication of nationwide amnesia has a tragic aspect. It has long-term effects, which cast a shadow over the future of China.
5. The Long-term Effects of the Fabrication of Amnesia

1984 as a response to 1989

The CCP regime, as other communist regimes, has always dedicated a lot of energy to control all information circulating in the country. But, to make an event like the 1989 pro-democracy movement and its tragic conclusion disappear totally from collective memory, the effort had to be especially strong and systematic, and with the rapid development of Internet and of the new communication technologies, it had to be based on the most advanced technology. This is why the answer to the specter of 1989 had to be “1984”. The overarching surveillance system installed by Big Brother in George Orwell’s novel\textsuperscript{15} seems less and less dystopian and more and more realistic in today’s China. And even if this tendency has clearly been strengthened since Xi Jinping’s accession to top power, it was already very clear in the 1990s and the 2000s. One of Deng’s main mottos, “Stability prevails over everything” (稳定压倒一切) implies such a system. But even if this system is sufficient to guarantee stability for some time, it is not enough to fully control the minds of the people. This is why the other great dystopian opus of the 20th century, Aldous Huxley’s \textit{Brave New World}\textsuperscript{16}, has also been put to contribution. It is not enough to prevent people from knowing the truth about history and to fill their brains with slogans, it is also necessary to “amuse” and distract them, to give them opportunities for pleasure and satisfaction and to fill their spare time with “harmless” activities. The extraordinary development of consumerism in China, which began after Deng’s Southern Tour in 1992 and was prolonged until now has been very effective in this respect.

The mix of the two methods of control of the population (the negative and the positive, or let’s say “the stick and the carrot”) has been hitherto successful. But it is dependent upon a continued economic
growth. The protection of stability (维稳), including the political police, the army of censors in all kinds of media as well as the numerous surveillance devices and the people who collect and study their data – all this is costly. It seems that it is now more costly for the government than the army, in spite of the constant growth of the Defense budget\textsuperscript{17}. As for the satisfactions brought by consumerism, they are also clearly dependent on a growing economy. And, if the exhilarating effect of economic growth and consumerism is no longer there, it is not certain that the authorities will be able to put a slight dose of ecstasy in the drinking water tanks as imagined by Chan Koonchung, the writer of a recent utopian/dystopian novel, \textit{The Fat Years}, dealing at the same time with the feelings of satisfaction in the Chinese population and its capacity for amnesia (he imagines that a whole month has been lost in China, that there is no trace of it in records as in the people’s memory)\textsuperscript{18}.

In case of an economic slump, the regime would have to find new methods to guarantee its “stability”. It is hard to predict the future, but in difficult internal situations, an efficient “distractive method” for governments can be the heightening of tensions with foreign “enemies”, especially when the main ideological pillar of the regime is nationalism.

Confronted with the successful refusal of the regime to acknowledge what happened in the Spring of 1989, as well as to its more and more ambiguous attitude towards hitherto acknowledged historical black spots like the Cultural Revolution, we are led to raise a fundamental question:

\textit{Can the regime refuse indefinitely to face its own history and prevent its people from knowing it?}

There is in China a long tradition of insisting on the necessity to draw lessons from history. Wang Fuzhi, for example, said in the 17th century in his “Reading of the \textit{Zizhi Tongjian}”: “What is precious in history is
that by exposing the past, it is a master of the future”19. Even the CCP, when it is in its interest, will remind the Japanese government that “Only a country which respects history, which assumes its past responsibilities, thus winning the confidence of the Asian people and of the people in the rest of the world, can take higher responsibilities in the international community”20. More recently, Xi Jinping even said: “A nation that does not remember which road it took in the past has no future”21. And still, the capacity of the CCP to deny history and to make events “evaporate” has rarely been matched in world history.

Before Mao took power in China, he had already learned a lot from Stalin in the art of rewriting history for his personal political interest (see my brief presentation of the 1945 “Resolution concerning several historical questions” in China Perspectives, 2007, № 4)22. When Deng Xiaoping took the helm at the end of 1978, his objective was to unite the Party and launch it on the road of the Four Modernizations. For this, he needed to solve a huge pile of unjust decisions which had affected people during the Cultural Revolution and other movements of the Maoist period; but since inside the Party and inside the population, former victims and former perpetrators were mixed, he promulgated, during the preparation of the “Resolution on several questions concerning the history of our Party since the founding of the People’s Republic of China”, a purely utilitarian attitude towards history: “Better remain in the generalities and not enter into the details” (宜粗不宜细), so as to obtain a situation in which “all people are united to face the future” (团结一致向前看). He insisted that this was valid not only for one event, but for history in general23. And indeed, although the 1981 Resolution admitted that Mao had made an “error” in launching the Cultural Revolution (reserving the “crimes” to the Gang of Four), it has been very difficult afterwards to do detailed research on “sensitive” topics like the Anti-Rightist Movement, the Great Famine or the Cultural
Revolution. It was clearly “inconvenient” (不宜) to risk damaging the Party’s legitimacy through that of Mao. But, clearly the 1989 Pro-Democracy Movement and its repression have posed an even greater problem to the authorities and the only “convenient” treatment was evaporation through amnesia.

It is certainly not sound for a people to be deeply ignorant of its own past and it is certainly a recipe for the repetition of previous errors. Even in open societies with a large degree of freedom of expression, a special effort must be done by the State, by teachers, intellectuals and all people concerned to make sure that the young generations understand the facts of the past and the causes of many historical dramas, so that they are not tempted by dangerous ideologies and ready to act irresponsibly. But, having said that, we have also to acknowledge the fact that some leaders might not be against the repetition of former errors, if they are a necessity for the preservation of their own power and if those who must pay for the damage are the people and not themselves.

To get back to the question of what could be done to get out of the vicious cycle of a constant need for repression because of the desire to conceal the memory of a prior repression, I would like to evoke a debate which I presented ten years ago: the debate about the question of the possible reconciliation between the Party and the Chinese people concerning the June 4 massacre. In 2007, a Chinese reconciliation think-tank had been created on the model of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Famous dissidents like Liu Xiaobo, Chen Ziming and Zhou Duo were part of the project. Dai Qing had published on this topic in an article in the magazine *Yazhou Zhoukan* which caused some sensation in March 2009. But even then, Wang Dan had observed that the Party showed no sign of intending to go into that direction (Bonnin, 2009: 60).
Ten years later, such a reconciliation project seems indeed unthinkable. With the evolution of the Party during those last years, with the death in detention of Liu Xiaobo, with the ever stricter official control on history, the gap between power and society is so large that it seems impossible to imagine any kind of reconciliation. Reconciliation needs discussion and you cannot discuss with Big Brother. You can only obey or resist. Resistance, of course, is extremely difficult. But one must believe in history. It has already shown that Fukuyama was wrong when he wrote that 1989 was the end of it…

The struggle goes on.

Notes

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1. On the political situation in the 1980s, see, for example, Baum (1996). On the vibrant cultural and intellectual scene of this period, see Barmé and Minford (1988) and Link (1992).


3. See, for example, Zhang, Nathan and Link (2001).


5. See Baum (1996).


9. I heard many former leaders of the movement express this idea in the years following 1989.

10. See, for example, Bei Ming, “Tiananmen moshi” [the Tianamen Model]: <https://www.bannedbook.org/bnews/baitai/20190602/1137064.html>.

11. See, for example, Braithwaite (2009).
13. Personal experience of using Chinese social media Weibo and Weixin since 2011. There are many references on the topic of Internet censorship in China.
17. See, for example, Lam (2019).
20. Speech by Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, AFP, 12 April 2005.
21. See Li (2016).
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The Tiananmen Military Coup d’État of 1989: 
A Neglected Aspect of History from a Comparative-Politics Perspective

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Abstract
Through research on official and semi-official Chinese documents, this article has found evidence to support the argument that there was a military coup d’état taking place during the 1989 Tiananmen crisis. This invalidates a long-held assumption that a coup has been absent in the history of the People’s Republic of China. As the military leader, Deng Xiaoping played a central role in the coup, and the coup served as a political prelude to the later military crackdown on Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrators. The coup was prepared during the days following April 26 when Deng announced his hardline stance against Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations through the mouthpiece of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), took place at the meeting illegitimately summoned by Deng at his residence on May 17, which enacted martial law and dismissed Zhao Ziyang, the top civilian leader, and was completed at the another meeting also held at Deng’s residence on May 19 by Deng’s anointment of the new party chief Jiang Zemin. In
a comparative context of the Global South, the article further analyzes the case of a coup for highlighting its three “Chinese characteristics”, which are: the structural inherency of the military power in PRC politics; the operational furtivity for political considerations; and the interweaving between the military mobilization for the purpose of illegitimate leadership and that for the purpose of suppressing social movements. These features may obscure relevant observations, but are not in conflict with a common definition of the coup. Instead, they can enrich the understanding of the coup. In essence, the Tiananmen Chinese coup is a response with the employment of state violence against the Chinese momentum of democratic transition.

**Keywords:** Tiananmen Crackdown, military coup d’état, leadership politics, Chinese politics

1. **Introduction**

As open, large-scale state violence against citizens, the military crackdown of the 1989 Tiananmen pro-democracy movements in Beijing, China, shocked the world and profoundly changed China (Béja, 2010; Brook, 1998; Hutchings, 2000: 422-27). The role the military played in the tragedy is obviously significant, but at least one aspect of it has been little explored in both historical research and political-science analyses of the event, and this concerns the role of the military in elite politics and leadership change. Attention has been fairly paid to how the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) was mobilized against students and citizens who were engaged in peaceful demonstrations calling for democracy and rule of law, which is surely among the most vital aspects for recording and understanding the history and politics of Tiananmen 1989. The Chinese leadership during the Tiananmen crisis, however,
split concerning how to respond to mass protests, when Zhao Ziyang, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a reform-minded leader, was paying great sympathy for the demonstrators. With martial law imposed in Beijing in late May of that year, the Chinese leadership was reorganized with the dismissal of Zhao from power (who then spent the remainder of his life under house arrest until his passing in 2005), and the new party chief was anointed by a small group of aged people, a group virtually consisting of three men with Deng Xiaoping taking the lead, whose only leadership position of the time was Chairman of the Central Military Commission (CMC). It is an unconstitutional, illegitimate action even according to the CCP’s own rules, since no constitutional documents of the CCP provide grounds for such a leadership change that ousted the party chief without due procedure; it is this leadership change that cleared the way for the June Fourth crackdown of demonstrators.

Military involvement in such an unconstitutional action to topple the incumbent leadership is usually referred to as a military coup d’état. Studies of coups were once flourishing and have recently been revitalized to some extent in comparative political research, yet they are virtually absent in the fields of contemporary Chinese history and politics. In fact, it is usually agreed in the relevant literature that there has not been, or, at least, rarely, a coup taking place in the history of the People’s Republic of China (Luttwak, 1979: 192). By reconsidering this assumption and reexamining the politics of the Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 from a historically informed comparative-political perspective, this article raises and explores the following questions: What role did the Chinese military play in the leadership reorganization in Tiananmen 1989? Can the pertinent event be viewed a military coup d’état? What are the connections in the historical circumstances between the employment of military forces in leadership politics and in dealing with
social movements? How was a seemingly coup necessary for the later exercise of state violence? What does a military involvement in leadership politics in its specific way reveal for our understanding of both Chinese politics and studies of authoritarian military coups?

Below the article will first present an empirical investigation from three angles. The first angle focuses on Deng Xiaoping’s dominant role in the 1989 leadership change and, emphatically, how his position as the military leader was vital for him to accomplish this change. The second concerns the mobilization of the PLA during the Tiananmen crisis from mid-April to early June, 1989, for political purposes, especially regarding their involvement in the party-state leadership change. Thirdly, the process of the leadership change per se will be considered from the angle of military dominance versus constitutional and conventional norms. A comparative discussion of the findings will follow, bringing the role of the military in Tiananmen 1989 into the Global South context of military-civilian relations, and arguing that the institutional features of the Chinese party-state in this regard show military involvement in the state leadership change to be distinct in form from those conventionally observed military coup d’états under a nondemocracy; and, the nature of contemporary Chinese politics regarding the weight of the military in particular and state coercion in general can be revealed from the empirical findings about Tiananmen 1989. The article, therefore, challenges the assumption that coups have been absent in PRC politics by suggesting that a Tiananmen military coup d’état took place in 1989, and, based on an analysis of a coup with CCP characteristics, attempts to enrich the understandings of military coups with a case under a reformed communist regime and its close connections to state violence in a transitional authoritarian politics.
2. Deng Xiaoping in Tiananmen 1989: The Paramount Leader and the Military Leader

Deng Xiaoping’s decisive role in Tiananmen 1989 is undeniable, especially in decision-making on martial law and the crackdown of demonstrators. As Ezra Vogel (2011: 595; the emphases are added) states in his highly-acclaimed biography of Deng, “behind the scenes, he remained focused on the unfolding drama [of Tiananmen] and was the ultimate decision-maker.” In which capacity he did so, however, has for decades remained unexplored. This avoidance might have reason, as Deng’s position in China at the time was clear in both political and institutional terms. In the case of the former, he was termed the “paramount leader”. But this is a journalistic term without a constitutional base, nor a notion with any scholastic definition.¹ It is informal in any sense. Yet Deng had a formal position during the Tiananmen crisis of 1989, for highlighting of which let me again quote Vogel (2011: 588):

At the 13th Party Congress, held October 25 to November 1, 1987, Deng gave up all his party and government positions, resigning from the Central Committee, the Politburo, and its Standing Committee. He retained his positions as chairman of the CMC and as chairman of the State Military Commission.

In the constitutional sense, Deng was the military leader of China. This formal, military position, as we will see below, was vital for Deng to exercise power and carry out his determination during the Tiananmen crisis.

Deng’s identity as a military soldier in politics was nothing new, as an expert sees him “a product of Mao’s fiscal-military state” (Lai, 2014: 141), needless to mention his long experience as a military leader during
the war eras. As Deng repeatedly and proudly declared, “I am a soldier; my true profession is war” (Liu and Xu, 2009: 4-5). This became a vital source of his power in post-Mao China. He resumed the position of PLA Chief of Staff when returning to power in 1977, in charge of the daily operation of the PLA. His strong powerbase within the PLA helped him to topple Hua Guofeng, Mao’s heir as Party chairman, in 1982. After Hua, however, Deng did not take the seat of the party chief; he chose to become chairman of the CMC and had since then established his status of so-called paramount leader. His political seniority and performance in governance were of course vital for this achievement, while his military profile was equally decisive in empowering him to predominate post-Hua CCP politics. Deng’s role in post-Mao China, therefore, fits the concept of praetorianism more than such journalist or political terms as “the paramount leader” or “the core of the leadership”. Eric Nordlinger (1977: 2) decades ago defined that “praetorianism refers to a situation in which military officers are major or predominant political actors by virtue of their actual or threatened use of force.” According to Nordlinger (1977: 3):

The Praetorian Guards of the Roman Empire were established as a special military unit for the protection of the emperor. They ended up using their military power to overthrow emperors and to control the Roman senate’s ‘election’ of successive emperors.

In post-Mao China, Deng used his military as well as political power to overthrow three nominally Number-One leaders, namely, Hua Guofeng, Hu Yaobang, and, as this article will show, Zhao Ziyang.

The Chinese party-state leadership had since Hua’s step-down until September 1989 developed an unusual structure featuring a special pattern of civilian-military relations, in which the CCP party chief was...
not able to concurrently take the position of CMC chairman. As Hu, Zhao, and, following Tiananmen, Jiang Zemin took the title of the party chief in a row and, for the first two cases, were forced to step down, Deng firmly occupied the position of CMC chairman before he formally resigned by handing on the position to Jiang in September 1989. Analytically speaking, Deng combined the formal office as the top military leader and the informal position of the paramount leader for exercising his supreme power and authority in China through the 1980s. In other words, it is impossible to separate Deng’s military identity from his paramount leadership in analyzing Chinese politics of the period.

It was his control of the Chinese military that enabled Deng to dismiss the party chief Zhao Ziyang in 1989 when he found Zhao’s attitude toward student protests to be fundamentally different from his own, and that empowered him to anoint the new party chief Jiang Zemin in a total disregard of the Party Charter’s relevant stipulations. It was Deng himself who unilaterally initiated martial law without a deliberation of the CCP Politburo and its Standing Committee, and it is the exercise of martial law that politically (though, not constitutionally and legally) justified and tactically actualized Deng’s removal of Zhao from office with his replacement by Jiang. This process of the involvement of the military in leadership politics is of course complicated, lengthy, and often secretive; it can be analyzed, however, as three stages of development toward the success of a military coup, namely, the mobilization of the military forces; the overthrow of the incumbent, legitimate, top leader; and the choosing of the new civilian leader. Through all of these crucial steps, Deng always stood at the center as the military leader and, in Vogel’s words (2011: 595), “the ultimate decision-maker”.

The first stage is Deng’s bringing of the military into Tiananmen politics, leading to martial law. Due to the absolute secrecy that such a
plot requires, the relevant information is not available to the public, but there are some hints disclosed in official or semi-official documents. One of the hints regarding Deng’s personal moves and involvement in this secret military mobilization is the mysterious disappearance of Deng from significant state diplomatic and political activities during the period of about two weeks from April 26 to May 10. According to the personal diary of the time by Li Peng (Li, 2010), PRC Premier who was a hardliner during the Tiananmen crisis, Li encountered a diplomatic scandal that had never happened in PRC history, and it was Deng’s secret disappearance that caused it. On May 9, starting from four o’clock on, Li spent anxious hours of the afternoon at the People’s Great Hall, outside of where there were hundreds of thousands of students protesting against his government. Li’s anxiousness during these hours, however, was not caused by the protests; he was waiting for Ali Khamenei, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, who was paying China a state visit. A formal meeting between the two leaders had been scheduled to begin at four o’clock, but Khamenei did not show. The mass demonstrations might have been the cause for his delayed arrival at the meeting venue, but a phone call by the Chinese protocol staffers came in to tell the Chinese Premier that President Khamenei was boycotting the meeting. Li and Foreign Minister Qian Qichen had to come to the Diaoyutai Guest House, where the Iranian visitor was staying, for an informal meeting. Why the boycott? “Because comrade Xiaoping does not meet him,” Li wrote in his diary (Li, 2010: 111-112). In the paragraphs that Li later added to his original diary, it is stated that “Iranian President was very upset at learning that comrade Xiaoping has no plan to meet him” (Li, 2010: 111).

Li’s explanation to Khamenei first emphasized that Deng’s health conditions did not allow the meeting; the Iranian guest compromised by requesting a brief visit to Deng for a handshaking without any
conversation. Li indicated in the added paragraphs to his original diary that “health conditions” were simply a lie, as, “at the time, comrade Xiaoping was preparing for the Sino-Soviet talks, and closely watching the development of the riot, thus reluctant to meet foreign guests” (Li, 2010: 112). The Sino-Soviet talks are a reference to Deng’s plan to meet the Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev who would visit Beijing in mid-May.

During the same period, there was another political leader who was denied a meeting with Deng. This was not a foreign guest, but China’s party chief Zhao Ziyang. Upon his return on the morning of April 30 from a visit to North Korea, Zhao was eager to meet Deng in person in order to discuss how to respond to the mass protests, but he was repeatedly denied such an opportunity. According to Zhao’s memoir (Zhao Ziyang, 2009: 37; Bao, Chiang and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 18):

I was eager to have a talk with Deng and to gain his support. I phoned [Deng’s secretary] Wang Ruilin asking for a meeting with Deng, but Wang said Deng had not been feeling well lately and he worried that his health problems might make him unable to receive Gorbachev, which would be a serious matter indeed. So he asked that I not report anything to him at that time.

Deng reemerged to public view on May 11, when in the morning he officially met the Iranian president, while Zhao had to wait for his turn on May 13 (Zhonggong zhongyang wenxian yanjiushi [ZZWY] (ed.), 2004: 1274, 1275). What happened to Deng during these crucial two weeks from April 26 to May 10? From Li and Zhao, we have learnt three different, perhaps overlapping, explanations: Deng’s bad health; he was preparing for his meeting with Gorbachev; he was “closely watching” the situations in Tiananmen. No report from Deng’s later meetings
indicates his health being too bad to allow him a brief, courtesy meeting such as that with Khamenei; and, Li already hints at it being an excuse. Is this simply the excuse given to allow for Deng’s entire concentration to be focused on his forthcoming meeting with Gorbachev, excluding any other state activities? The Deng-Gorbachev meeting was later held on May 16; it is difficult to understand why Deng needed 20 days to do nothing else but prepare for this meeting in total isolation. It is convincing to suggest that Deng was occupied during the time by watching Tiananmen, but two questions still stand out: first, how could a courtesy meeting with Khamenei interrupt him much in doing so? Second, and more importantly: the purpose of Zhao’s request for a meeting with Deng was exactly regarding Tiananmen, therefore if he was thus preoccupied, why did Deng refuse to meet Zhao?

It is impossible to know the truth before the Chinese authorities honestly disclose it, but there is still room for an exploration with very limited information. A great possibility is that Deng was physically away from Beijing starting from sometime between April 26 to 30 (when Zhao visited North Korea) until May 10, and that he came back earlier than had been planned only under pressure from Khamenei. The purpose of the trip would have been extremely important to Deng, much more important than China’s diplomatic dignity, and even much more important than the immediate problem of the Tiananmen protests. Could Gorbachev’s visit really be that much more important than both? One may assume so, but Deng’s own activities then do away with this assumption: he eventually met Khamenei and Zhao, respectively, before his meeting with Gorbachev, indicating that such meetings could take place without interrupting him much. So, what was Deng doing during the two weeks?4

There were rumors during mid-May 1989 that Deng was away from Beijing to mobilize the military for dealing with the Tiananmen crisis.
Zhang Sizhi, a well-respected Chinese lawyer, records this in his memoir saying that probably on May 14, in Wuhan where Zhang was attending a conference, a local high-ranking leader warned him not be involved in the Tiananmen movements, as “the problem is complicated”, and told him that Deng Xiaoping was at the time summoning a supreme military meeting in Wuhan to solve the problem (Zhang, 2014: 286). This statement can easily be proved false, as, according to the above-cited sources, Deng was already in Beijing on May 14. It is unreasonable, however, to expect an outsider, including those high-ranking leaders who were not involved in the process, to know exactly the details of the meeting even if there was indeed such a meeting being held. The point, therefore, is not about the misinformation concerning the concrete date of the said “supreme military meeting”, but, rather, about why there was such a rumor.

Li Peng at that time might have known where Deng was and what he was doing, but Zhao Ziyang did not know anything in that regard. This is a crucial question: when Deng, according to Li, was very much concerned about Tiananmen protests during this period, why did he hide such a legitimate concern of his from Zhao and instead, through his secretary and Yang Shangkun, only told Zhao that he was troubled by bad health while preparing for Gorbachev’s visit?

What increases the curiosity of this situation is the role of Yang Shangkun in particular during this highly sensitive period – at the time Yang was Executive Vice-Chairman of the CMC, ranked third only after Deng and Zhao, the First Vice-Chairman, in this military leadership body and was in charge of the daily operation of the PLA. On May 11, after his morning meeting with Khamenei, Deng received Yang at home in the afternoon, then, on May 13, Yang also joined the Deng-Zhao meeting (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 140; ZZWY, 2004 (ed.): 1275). The time gap between the Deng-Yang meeting and the Deng-Zhao
meeting could be meaningful in such a crisis period. Considering Yang’s prominent position in the military, it can be speculated that Deng instructed Yang to do something concerning the military, and Yang needed the day of May 12 to implement Deng’s instructions; perhaps, before these steps were taken, Deng was not ready to meet Zhao. The disclosed contents of Deng’s conversation with Yang on May 11 help to support this speculation: Deng, for the first time in 1989, addressed a point, by citing Li Xiannian, a senior, conservative leader, that “the Central Committee is speaking with two voices” (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 142). This signaled Deng’s implicit declaration of his political confrontation with Zhao, as the “two voices” referred to Deng’s hardline tone in the April 26 editorial of the People’s Daily and Zhao’s Asian Development Bank speech discarding with Deng’s, respectively. Deng also mentioned a number of senior leaders, including Li Xiannian, Chen Yun, and Wang Zhen, who had implied their support for himself (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 142). After indicating a showdown between the “two voices”, Deng turned the conversation to his concern over the morale of the military (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 144), which strongly suggests that Deng had already pondered the role of the military in the leadership politics of the “two voices”.

Two days later when they met, Deng displayed nonchalance towards what Zhao told him about how to cool down the protests. It is strange as, according to above-cited sources of information as well as common sense, Deng during the time had great concern over the Tiananmen crisis. Having had no state activity for more than two weeks, Deng’s health seemed to have grown worse; at least, he told Zhao so by saying “I am greatly exhausted” (Li, 2010: 120). But, when Deng met Yang two days ago, he showed no sign of such exhaustion. These further indicated Deng’s unwillingness to discuss with Zhao how to respond to the protests, which helps to confirm that, by then, Deng had already had
his own determination in the regard but he wanted to hide it from Zhao.

It is Deng himself who initiated martial law. At the meeting of the CCP Politburo Standing Committee (PSC) he illegitimately summoned at his residence on the afternoon of May 17, the day after the Deng-Gorbachev meeting (Li, 2010: 136), Deng said: “After thinking long and hard about this [worsening situation], I’ve concluded that we should bring in the People’s Liberation Army and declare martial law in Beijing” (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 189). Zhao Ziyang voiced his unwillingness to agree to the proposal, but Deng ignored it (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 27-28; Li, 2010: 140). Despite his own nonmember status, and without a deliberation and a vote by PSC members, Deng announced that his proposal had been adopted by the PSC with a majority in agreement (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 189-190). Zhao’s memoir states, “in the end, Deng Xiaoping made the final decision”; “the decision is to move troops into Beijing to impose martial law” (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 28).

Li Peng (2010: 135, 136, 137) called this meeting “a meeting that determined the fate of China”. He does not explain why he says so, but the next section of this article will help to disclose his reasons. An anecdote might be of interest for revealing, so to speak, Deng’s bosom secret of the time: during his meeting with Gorbachev on May 16, Deng “seemed uncharacteristically tense” (Vogel, 2011: 614), and “hands shaking, let a piece of dumpling drop from his chopsticks” (Tsou, 1991: 306). Vogel’s explanation is that “Deng could not easily forget the worsening situation” in Tiananmen Square, as some two hundred hunger strikers had been rushed to hospitals for emergency care (Vogel, 2011: 614). But we know, also from Vogel’s same book, that from the very beginning of these protests Deng “had little sympathy with the demonstrators” (Vogel, 2011: 595). Why, therefore, was Deng so nervous? Did it have any connection to what he was determined to do
the next day? Why was Deng’s action on May 17 so vital for this much-experienced politician-soldier?

3. The Mobilization of the Military and the Reorganization of the Civilian Leadership: The Party or the Gun-Barrel in Command?

At the moment Deng told the PSC to enact martial law, the mass of troops had already come to Beijing from various military districts. In other words, the military was not mobilized following the PSC’s nominal decision on martial law, but prior to it. The military leaders, primarily Deng, and with Yang Shangkun, maneuvered the large-scale dispatch of the PLA without authorization from the party-state civilian leadership. This is a typical sign of a military coup d’état.

The publicly available information shows that the CCP regime for the first time during Tiananmen 1989 mobilized the PLA on April 20, when 9,000 soldiers were dispatched to reinforce the police in maintaining order during Hu Yaobang’s funeral. This was due to Deng Xiaoping’s instruction, and the relevant document was signed by Yang Shangkun and approved by Zhao Ziyang (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 47). According to the CCP procedure of that time for troop dispatch, it would have been subject to the approval by Zhao as the First Vice-Chairman of the CMC (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 47). Regarding the later military moves, however, there is no such record indicating that Zhao was informed in any possible way. In fact, substantial measures for PLA mobilization took place starting from April 26 when Deng’s hardline attitude toward the student movements was publicized through a People’s Daily editorial, and when Zhao was visiting Pyongyang. According to The Tiananmen Papers, after the April 26 editorial was published, the General Political Department of the PLA distributed an urgent notice requiring all officers and soldiers to study the editorial
carefully, and instructing that “all units in the military must be prepared in their thinking, organization, and readiness for action”; the notice also stipulated that “any unit’s deployment of military personnel, however minor, must be reported to and approved by the CMC” (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 77-78; emphases added). Meanwhile, with Deng’s permission, Yang Shangkun ordered to move about 500 troops into Beijing to protect the People’s Great Hall and to serve as a reserve force in case of need (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 81). This is the second dispatch of troops that we now know of during Tiananmen 1989; a difference from the first is that it did not seek Zhao’s approval.

The urgent notice from the PLA General Political Department, seemingly also without Zhao’s approval, was truly unusual, especially its call for the readiness for action and its strict requirement concerning any minor military personnel deployment. Responding to the urgent notice, it is reported that the Shenyang Military District, among other military districts, on April 28 declared its determination in support of Deng’s stance on how to deal with the chaos facing the nation, including “through the concrete actions of a steady military” “to halt the current turmoil”, and made it clear that the Military District leadership and units stationed in cities “must be prepared in thought and organization and must be ready for action so that we will not be mobilized by lack of preparation should the problem grow larger and should use of the military become necessary” (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 80). The wording of both the urgent notice and the corresponding responses from military districts obviously signaled Deng’s and his loyal generals’ strong intention to take military action for political purposes.

It is during this period that, as the last section has analyzed, Deng Xiaoping mysteriously disappeared from Beijing and the rumors on military mobilization spread. Other sources of information help to confirm that Deng took decisive actions for military mobilization in late
April. Vogel (2011: 616) states that “on April 25, the same day he decided to publish the editorial warning the demonstrators, Deng put the People’s Liberation Army on alert.” Brook (1998: 34) discloses that by the beginning of May, all military leaves had been cancelled. These facts, together with what has been presented earlier in this section, indirectly support the speculation this article earlier made on why Deng disappeared during the period from April 27 to May 10. It helps to explain how, immediately after the diplomatic events with Gorbachev’s visit to Beijing, Deng “was ready to bring in the troops” (Vogel, 2011: 615).

In Zhao’s advisor Bao Tong’s analysis, Hu Yaobang’s funeral was a critical point from which Deng was determined to take action for kicking Zhao out of office (Bao, interviewed 2014). Vogel’s (2011: 595-596; emphases added) observation resonates with Bao’s in the sense of highlighting this turning point, as he finds that “from the beginning he [Deng] believed that firmness was required, and after Hu Yaobang’s funeral he became more directly involved in supervising the party’s response to the demonstrators.” Vogel emphasizes that, “as soon as the period of mourning ended, Deng was ready to issue a warning to the students” (Vogel, 2011: 603); after Zhao left Beijing for Pyongyang on April 23, “from then on, Deng became deeply involved in decision-making about how to respond to the demonstrators” (Vogel, 2011: 595-596). The subtle difference between Bao and Vogel lies in what they perceive Deng’s major target to have been: for Vogel, it was student demonstrators; for Bao, it was Zhao Ziyang. But these are not necessarily exclusive to each other; to this article, Deng’s martial law targeted both the protesters (explicitly) and Zhao Ziyang (secretly). For dealing with protesters, Deng, as Vogel (2011: 596) says, “was prepared to ensure that officials carried out whatever steps he considered necessary to restore order.” Zhao, however, was obviously the first
among the officials who disagreed with Deng doing so, thus must be removed from power before restoring the Dengist order. It is a matter of historical fact that by resorting to the exercise of martial law, Deng first toppled Zhao, then cracked down on the demonstrators. Apparently, this sequence could not be altered or reversed.

At the same time he declared the decision on martial law adopted, Deng assigned Li Peng, Qiao Shi, and Yang Shangkun to be in charge of the implementation of martial law (Li, 2010: 140; Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 29). Li and Qiao were among the five members of the PSC, but Yang was not. This move illegitimately deprived the existing PSC in general (which will be further discussed later) and incumbent party chief Zhao Ziyang in particular of power. Though no decision over a personnel change was made regarding the PSC, Li Peng started to call and chair the PSC without even consulting with Zhao as General Secretary (Li, 2010: 141), a position that chairs the Politburo and PSC according to the party charter. Immediately after this meeting on May 17, Zhao sent out a letter of resignation, but Yang Shangkun persuaded Zhao to “halt the distribution of the letter” (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 29). What is curious enough is that Yang told Zhao at the time that “No changes in leadership should be made”, which Zhao understood as “my position as General Secretary should not be changed” (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 29). According to Zhao’s memoir, Deng at the meeting, after having assigned Li and others the task of imposing martial law, noted “Zhao is still the General Secretary” (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 32). In fact, Zhao was entirely pushed aside in the days following the May 17 meeting, and was “excluded from decision making” (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 32), far prior to his official positions, including that of General Secretary, formally being dismissed at the Fourth Plenary of the 13th Central Committee held on June 23-24, 1989 (Jiang, Zhang, and
Xiao (eds.), 2006: 527-528). Zhao even lost his personal freedom since visiting student demonstrators at Tiananmen Square on the early morning of May 19, until his death on January 17, 2005.

Deng’s and Yang’s remarks on not changing the leadership, when compared with the reality that Zhao had lost power since May 17, might mean a political tactic to fool Zhao and, more importantly, to strategically camouflage the May 17 meeting’s essence as a military coup d’état they successfully carried out, at which the incumbent civilian leader was in fact removed from office with the military leader’s decision to exercise martial law. In retrospect, the May 17 meeting at Deng’s residence was a most critical point of the events during Tiananmen 1989, at which the second stage of the coup d’état was accomplished, that is, the overthrow of the incumbent leadership.

The coup d’état cannot be completed without a new civilian leadership being appointed by the military; this did take place during Tiananmen 1989, also during the time that martial law was imposed. “Deng was busy considering the new leadership structure”, according to Vogel (2011: 622), even before martial law was declared. Li Peng discloses that at 10 o’clock morning time on May 19, Deng called for another decision-making meeting at his residence, but two of the total five PSC members were not allowed to attend – beside Zhao, Hu Qili was also excluded (Li, 2010: 152-153). This confirms that the May 17 meeting already illegitimately disbanded the highest CCP leadership body without any due procedure. At the May 19 meeting, Deng nominated Jiang Zemin as General Secretary, and appointed some other new members to the PSC (Li, 2010: 155; Vogel, 2011: 623). Meanwhile, Deng urged to “immediately” dispatch troops to control radio and TV stations (Li, 2010: 155) – a typical measure of a military coup d’état. In addition, “Deng personally decided on a seven-year sentence for Bao Tong”, Zhao’s top aid, and “other subordinates” of Zhao were jailed.
(Vogel, 2011: 632), which is also a typical move for a coup’s leader to deal with the overthrown leader.

The leadership change, however, had to be “legitimized” in some way through a meeting beyond the small circle of aged leaders plus selected PSC members.¹⁰ Deng on May 19 proposed to call for an enlarged Politburo meeting with no more than 40 participants (Li, 2010: 154). However, when Li Peng on May 21 phoned Deng’s office to suggest having the meeting three days later, Deng refused as he preferred to wait for the arrival of major troops in Beijing,¹¹ because “it would be more controllable” at that time to have such a meeting for “solving the Zhao problem” (Li, 2010: 163). Furthermore, Deng worried about the military’s loyalty (Li, 2010: 165), which helps to explain why massive troops from diverse districts were mobilized for martial law, as this would increase cross-division deterrence within the military. Deng’s camouflage on May 17 of noting Zhao’s continuation of his position, moreover, also reveals his extreme caution in illegitimately manipulating the leadership change.

Challenges also came from the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. Initiated by some members, the CCP Party Group of this parliament-like organization on May 19 unanimously adopted a decision to, according to the PRC constitution, call for an urgent meeting to discuss the current situation. All NPC leaders also agreed on the request that NPC Chairman Wan Li, a reform-minded leader who was expected to support Zhao Ziyang, cut short his visit to the United States and immediately return to Beijing to take constitutional action (Li, 2010: 173). The proposed urgent meeting was at the time expected to invalidate martial law, which would be a reversion of the entire episode. The Party Group of the NPC Standing Committee, however, had to report its decision to the CCP’s PSC, now illegitimately consisting of only three members and chaired by Li Peng, and they gave their
disapproval (Li, 2010: 173). Wan Li still shortened his US tour, but, at 3 o’clock morning time of May 26, his airplane landed in Shanghai instead of Beijing, where he was met by Jiang Zemin (still party secretary of Shanghai) and Ding Guangen (Li, 2010: 196), who “knows comrade Xiaoping’s ideas pretty well” (Li, 2010: 212) and, like Wan Li, was Deng Xiaoping’s playmate in Deng’s favorite card game bridge. Ding forwarded Deng’s message to Wan, then Wan, without appearing in public, publicized a written speech to support martial law. This speech, Li Peng discloses, was drafted by the Central Propaganda Group organized following the May 19 meeting (Li, 2010: 155, 161, 180, 196). Although failed, the NPC’s attempt to block martial law, as well as the counter-block by Deng Xiaoping of Wan Li’s autonomous expression of his political preference, further reveals the unconstitutional nature of martial law as a coup d’état to not only topple the CCP incumbent leadership but also infringe the parliamentary authority of the PRC.

Even the designated new party chief Jiang Zemin was fully aware at the time of the illegitimacy of the leadership change. It was Deng who in person notified Jiang of his new appointment (Vogel, 2011: 625); Li Peng, despite now being in charge of PSC operations, felt himself to be unqualified to convey the message to Jiang (Li, 2010: 220). Jiang raised the issue of procedures, and suggested that, to follow the party charter’s stipulation, he be “elected” by the Central Committee (Li, 2010: 221). The leadership change was officially announced at the Fourth Plenary of the 13th Central Committee on June 24 with Jiang’s replacement of Zhao and the reshuffle of the PSC (Jiang, Zhang, and Xiao (eds.), 2006: 528). Jiang Zemin, however, had already joined the CCP leadership on May 31 after he came to Beijing, and, at the latest, started to chair the new PSC from June 15 on (Li, 2010: 278), ten days before Jiang himself and the new PSC were “elected”. Beijing was still under martial law during this period, and, according to American
journalist Harrison Salisbury’s (1989: 7) record of a message from a Beijing citizen at the time, “an army takeover was imminent”.


The historical episodes have become clear by this point to support the argument that there was a military coup d’état during Tiananmen 1989, which unfolded through three stages: first, approximately around April 25-27, the CMC chairman Deng Xiaoping secretly started the mobilization of the PLA for political purposes, which led to Deng’s imposition of the martial-law decision on the PSC on May 17; second, by means of this imposition, Deng mutely overthrew the legitimate party chief Zhao Ziyang and took action to reshuffle the PSC, though an official declaration was postponed until mid-June; third, Deng, in consultation with Chen Yun and Li Xiannian, both, like Deng, being nonmembers of the PSC, decided on the new general secretary and new members of the PSC. Throughout the process, Deng relied on his power in the military and on the mobilized troops in action to achieve the political goals of, first, reorganizing the CCP leadership at his will and, then, suppressing social demonstrations. As Chen Yun commented in January 1990: “The military is very, very, very important. Without the military that would not have worked the last year to solve the problem of Tiananmen in Beijing” (ZZWY, 1995 (ed.): 373; ZZWY, 2005: 1815).

It is usually agreed in the relevant literature that there has not been, or, at least, rarely, a coup taking place in the history of the People’s Republic of China (Luttwak, 1979: 192). The empirical finding of this article challenges this assumption. Although there are various definitions of a coup, most experts agree on three key points: illegality, referring to
its unconstitutional procedures; military involvement, emphasizing the means; and leadership change as the goal and/or outcome. For example, Wikipedia (2019) defines a coup as “the overthrow of an existing government; typically, this refers to an illegal, unconstitutional seizure of power by a dictator, the military, or a political faction.” Encyclopaedia Britannica’s (2019) definition is more elaborative, stating:

Coup d’état, also called Coup, the sudden, violent overthrow of an existing government by a small group. The chief prerequisite for a coup is control of all or part of the armed forces, the police, and other military elements. Unlike a revolution, which is usually achieved by large numbers of people working for basic social, economic, and political change, a coup is a change in power from the top that merely results in the abrupt replacement of leading government personnel.

After systematically comparing the definitions employed by previous studies, two experts in their relatively recent research define coups as “illegal and overt attempts by the military or other elites within the state apparatus to unseat the sitting executive” (Powell and Thyne, 2011: 252). The leadership change in China during Tiananmen 1989 apparently fits all those defining features above clarified.

In the conceptual sense, however, this article likes to emphasize the possible fresh understanding that such an empirical finding may bring to the weighty role of the military within CCP/PRC politics and its unique institutional operations. In the context of comparative politics, here this article suggests analyzing the role of the military in the leadership change during Tiananmen 1989 from three angles: structural, operational, and state-society relational, all of which concern either institutional characteristics of CCP/PRC politics or democratic transition.
of an authoritarian regime. State violence stands at the center of these angles and concerns of analyses.

The power structure of the CCP/PRC is designed to integrate the military into political power, thus features a unique institutional, mutual embeddedness between the Number-One political leader’s firm and almost exclusive control of the military and, with the military’s loyalty and support, this leader’s control of political apparatuses, primarily the party. This institutional context can handicap an unconditional application of the terms, concepts, and understandings of civilian-military relations developed in either democracies or the Global South in the China case. The historical period from June 1981 to November 1989, however, is an exception to some extent, as the Sixth Plenary of the 11th Central Committee held in June 1981 replaced Hua Guofeng with Hu Yaobang as party chief but with Deng Xiaoping as CMC chairman, for the first time separating the two positions from each other since the de facto military leader Mao Zedong became party chief in the 1940s. Deng firmly occupied the position despite three different party chiefs coming into power during this period, namely, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin, before he resigned months later after the Tiananmen crackdown. Especially unusual, for the relatively short time following the CCP’s 13th National Congress of October 1987, Deng took the CMC chairmanship position without any seat in the Central Committee, creating a dual power structure in which the military leader was above the party chief. Even in this case, the power to control the military is so deeply inherent to the power to dominate the party that it makes it difficult to distinguish between the military leader and the so-called paramount leader. This structural characteristic of CCP/PRC leadership intentionally blurs the normal distinction between civilian and military leaders. For general Global South authoritarianism, however, the political party and the modern state are often weak, especially in a
comparison with the military; a coup signifies how military power can shamelessly take over state power in such a context (Decalo, 1976; Janowitz, 1977; Migdal, 1988; Stepan, 1971; Svolik, 2012). The China case is different, in which the soldier-politician overwhelms the professional soldier, but also, not less important though often being neglected, overwhelms civilian politicians – in the unusual circumstances like Tiananmen 1989, such overwhelming unfolds as a military coup.

The leadership change that takes place within this structure inevitably has its own operational features that differ from the military coups that can be observed in the Global South in the 20th and 21st centuries. In those cases, a scene often occurs in which soldiers burst into the state leader’s office or residence, and a leadership change is imposed with literally physical violence. In our case, however, due to the unique power structure, the leader who combines the paramount authority with the military commandership, Deng Xiaoping, has the convenience, though illegitimately, to summon the nominal top leadership to his own residence; the targeted leader Zhao Ziyang was then pushed into a corner by Deng’s unilateral decision on martial law and, accordingly, lost power as Deng personally assigned the responsibility of carrying out his decision to those leaders who stood with Deng together. One may say that CCP/PRC politics, especially during the post-Mao era, are conducted in such a subtle way that no physical violence is needed to directly apply against an enemy within the leadership; this author would, however, highlight the internalization of violence into CCP/PRC politics as demonstrated in Tiananmen 1989 in both leadership operations and state-society relations. In a comparative perspective with the Global South, it seems that in CCP politics an informal, small meeting is a most feasible, and dangerous, venue via which a coup operates to actualize its goal of leadership change.
Despite how significant the military involvement in the leadership change might have been, it is definitely not the entire repertoire of Tiananmen 1989. Viewing Tiananmen as the military coup d’état is not in conflict with the views of Tiananmen as a failed democratic revolution, nor in conflict with the records of state violence of the Tiananmen crackdown on citizens. This article would argue that the military coup above analyzed in fact took place for the purposes of both overthrowing Zhao Ziyang and cracking down on Tiananmen social movements, especially for dealing with the potential coalition between street protesters and Zhao-led pro-democracy intra-party elites. In other words, the Tiananmen coup of 1989 was conducted to block China’s democratic transition, and it did so successfully as securing a political precondition for and providing a prelude of violence to the military crackdown of Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations.

Martial law in Beijing 1989 mobilized a huge number of soldiers; one researcher estimated it as 350,000 (Chen, 1996: 329). It is the state-society interactions as a momentum for democratic transition that helps to explain why in a non-war background there was such an unusual huge scale and high intensity of the mobilization of the military forces in a domestic political event that resulted in a leadership change. Apparently, such a huge dispatch of troops is rarely seen in the developing countries even in the 1960s and the 1970s when military seizures of state power took place quite frequently, where the number of the soldiers in action was often small and the scale of their action was limited. Military coups, however, are often a response to a democratic transition in the Global South; in particular, the military is usually supportive of liberalization but comes to take strong resistance to the call for democratization (Stepan, 1988: xiii). Deng Xiaoping is obviously a leader who promotes liberalization while opposing democratization; when the massive
demand for democratization arose in China, he and the forces behind him turned to state coercion for the last resort in defending their power.

These three “Chinese characteristics” of the military coup, namely, the structural inherence of military power in political power, the military deterrence impact on political operations, and the entanglement of leadership politics with state-society interactions, can help shed light on some significant issues of CCP/PRC politics, especially regarding state-military relations, state-society relations, and transitional politics. They do not, however, invalidate the very essence of the relevant action as a military coup. Furthermore, the comparative discussion can also be extended to post-coup politics in the Global South. Decades ago, Edward Luttwak stated in the assumed tone of coup leaders: “Once we have carried out our coup and established control over the bureaucracy and the armed forces, our long-term political survival will largely depend on our management of the problem of economic development.” Moreover, such management of economic development must obey “our main goal: political stability” (Luttwak, 1979: 175). “Propaganda and repression, or, more efficiently, a mixture of both,” will be critical for the regime coming into power through a coup (Luttwak, 1979: 176) – “efficient repression, extensive propaganda and enough economic development to create new elites committed to the regime” (Luttwak, 1979: 181). For those who are familiar with the post-Tiananmen development of China, it should not be difficult to recognize the similarities between China and what Luttwak has highlighted in terms of the post-coup regime’s reliance on economic performance, its emphasis on political stability, and its combination of propaganda and repression for maintaining itself.

Some consequences of coup politics, also according to Luttwak (1979: 15-16), can be commonly observed, prominent among which is “overt corruption”, with “bribery [being] now a quite normal part in any transaction between citizen and state”, and through which “the logic
whereby public power may easily generate private wealth is universal.” Such a consequence of the Tiananmen coup in China is now fully evident, as many researchers have already documented (e.g., Pei, 2016). In this sense, the logic of Chinese politics is, obviously, not so unique that it is fundamentally incomparable to some general features of politics in the Global South. Some significant characteristics do exist, but, this article maintains, the understanding of such characteristics can only enrich and deepen relevant comparative politics studies.

5. Concluding Remarks

The Tiananmen military coup d’état toppling the reform-minded leadership cleared the way for the Tiananmen military crackdown on mass demonstrators. “Immediately after May 20,” Deng Xiaoping’s biographer Vogel (2011: 621) states, “Deng directed Yang Shangkun to prepare tanks, armored vehicles, trucks, and armed men in sufficient numbers to overcome all resistance.” When the troops’ moves into the city center had for days been blocked by citizens, Deng, Yang, and Li Peng during the week following May 23 were busy to amend schisms among the elites that had since April emerged regarding how to respond to pro-democracy movements. Intensive meetings and conversations were held with PLA generals, provincial party secretaries, NPC leaders, ministers of the national government, communist veterans, and satellite party leaders for convincing them to stand behind Deng (Li, 2010: 175-215). After NPC Chairman Wan Li’s surrender on May 27 and new party chief Jiang Zemin’s arrival in Beijing on May 31, the aftershock of the coup d’état had largely settled down. Now Deng was able to make the next move: “At 2:50 p.m. on June 3, he gave the order to Chi Haotian to do whatever was necessary (yong yiqie de shouduan) to restore order” (Vogel, 2011: 625). The Tiananmen massacre took place
during the night of June 3 extending to the early hours of June 4; the
sun rose in Beijing on June 4 to see blood, corpses, countless destroyed
bikes, and thousands of soldiers with their tanks and guns on the streets
as if on battlefields.

The humanitarian tragedy of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown
shocked China and the world; it has been since then, however, a top
political taboo in China. Meanwhile, Zhao Ziyang had since May 19
been banned from appearing at any public occasion, and his earlier state
activities have also been omitted from the PRC’s official historical
records. The obstacles for exploring Tiananmen 1989 are tremendous,
but various efforts have been made in historical, sociological, and
political-science scholarships to increase our knowledge and
understandings of the significant event. This article has joined these
efforts by bringing a neglected aspect of the event out of the shadows,
namely, how a military coup d’état took place during spring 1989 as a
political prelude to the Tiananmen crackdown. It has found that Deng
Xiaoping, who took the major responsibility for the Tiananmen
crackdown, also was the major figure plotting the Tiananmen coup. His
mobilization of the military in 1989, in fact, targeted simultaneously
both the Tiananmen protesters and the legitimate leadership.

Tiananmen 1989 is a set of complicated events and a process of
various interactions between multiple factors; state-society relations and
elite politics, to this author, both are extremely vital dimensions for
historical and political studies of Tiananmen. This article has focused on
elite politics, but never attempted to do so with ignorance of state-
society relations in concept and social protests during the time in
practice. It, however, especially attempts to position elite politics in
general and the Tiananmen coup in particular in the given institutional
and social contexts, and, furthermore, to connect the analysis to
understandings of the essence of Chinese politics in a comparative-

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politics perspective, especially how state violence and transitional politics in China can actually be understood in the sense informed by political studies of the Global South. It has, therefore, empirically found that military coup is not absent in PRC politics, and argued that it is the inherence of military power in PRC politics that has often obscured relevant observations.

Notes

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1. Here the term “constitutional” refers mostly to the CCP/PRC constitutional arrangements, not exactly in the sense that is understood in a constitutionalist context in general terms.

2. The authenticity of the diary (Li, 2010) has so far not been questioned since it was disclosed for the first time in 2010, including no challenge from the claimed author Li Peng, his family and staff, or the Chinese authorities. The style is the same as that of a series of diaries Li has published, which range from the first (Li, 2003) to Li (2008), the latest before Li (2010).

3. Li Peng in another collection of diaries (Li, 2008: 364) emphasized that the meeting was a courtesy.


5. Zhang Sizhi (2014: 286) emphasizes that the provincial cadre who disclosed the information “absolutely does not do lying or fabricating.”

6. How could Li get to know the content of the Deng-Zhao conversation on the same day? It was Yang Shangkun who told him, according to Li’s record. According to the norms of CCP leadership politics, Yang should not disclose the conversation to anybody else without Deng’s approval.

7. *The Tiananmen Papers* states that “The Standing Committee brought its disagreements to Deng’s home on May 17” (Nathan and Link (eds.), 2001: 175), but both Li Peng (2010: 136) and Zhao Ziyang (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 27), as well as Vogel (2011: 617), recorded that it was Deng who summoned the meeting. Gorbachev was still in Beijing as this meeting was held; he finished his visit to China on May 18.

8. Zhao in memoir clarified that “the Standing Committee held no formal vote” on the matter (Bao, Chiang, and Ignatius (tr., eds.), 2009: 30).

9. Li Peng (2010: 57-58) confirms this, though Li records this dispatch of the army with two divisions on April 21. A possible explanation is that the
document was signed on April 20 and the dispatch of the military took place the next day. Also, Vogel (2011: 602) states that on April 21 “a regiment of troops was sent into Zhongnanhai” (Zhongnanhai is the location of the CCP headquarters and the PRC national government).

10. Though such legitimization takes place with “institutional manipulation” within the CCP “constitutional” framework for making a political hypocrisy, it is still necessary for turning naked power to representative-endorsed legitimacy. See Wu (2015), esp. ch. 2.

11. Due to Beijing residents’ massive actions to block, the troops were not able to arrive at Beijing’s city center for at least a week (Lu, 2006: 106; Gargan, 1990: 299). In 1989, Lu was a leading editor of the People’s Daily, the CCP central organ, and Gargan was the Time’s Beijing correspondent.

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China Post-Tiananmen
Liu Xiaobo and the Citizens’ Rights Movement: A New Face for China’s Democracy Movement in 2003

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Abstract
The June Fourth massacre illustrated the fatal risks involved in complaining directly to the Communist Party of China’s top leadership. In ensuing years, liberal-minded intellectuals did not abandon the goal of democratic reform but switched to a very different approach. It was: to seek justice in concrete cases and to garner popular support for them by spreading word on the Internet or in the semi-open press. When authorities were exposed as violating law or fundamental morality, they were obliged to do reforms, some of which could become permanent. One had to be careful, though, not to anger the authorities, because crackdowns could destroy fragile progress before it had a chance to solidify. Liu Xiaobo was an active practitioner and supporter of this approach.
Keywords: Liu Xiaobo, Communist Party of China, June Fourth massacre, democracy movement, citizens’ rights movement

1. Introduction

Picturing the fire, the tanks, and the blood of 1989, people often ask why the democracy movement that year failed – and what China would look like today if it had not.

It is certainly true that certain things failed that year. The student protestors failed in their immediate goals. Deng Xiaoping failed in his moral judgment. His regime failed in its attempt to mislead the world about what had happened. But did the democracy movement itself “fail”? This is a complex question. Its full answer will emerge only when 1989 can be seen as part of a longer-term process, and that process is still underway.

Future historians will note, at a minimum, that a resurgence of the democracy impulse in Chinese society appeared in the late 1990s and continued into the 2000s at least until 2010. By 2003, when it was at its peak, it acquired the name “citizens’ rights movement”. The regime dealt this movement a severe blow in late 2008 when it crushed “Charter 08” and imprisoned Liu Xiaobo. For a few years the movement had carried the torch of spring 1989, but pursued democratic ideals using very different – and arguably smarter – methods. It no longer staged huge rallies or butted heads with the regime at the highest levels; it worked from the ground up, quieter and more gradually than the 1989 movement. It made use of the diffuse new tool called the Internet and focused on concrete projects and modest goals that brought measurable progress step-by-step. Although less confrontational, its tactics aimed at concrete change and its ultimate goal was a more profound transition than what the 1989 protesters had declared. No one person designed the
approach, but Liu Xiaobo’s thinking and his inveterate action did much to shape it.

2. “Liberals” Appear

From 1949 until the mid-1990s, the word liberalism (ziyouzhuyì) appeared in public language in China only with a negative connotation. In the 1980s a few prominent intellectuals (Bai Hua in 1981 and Liu Binyan, Fang Lizhi, and Wang Ruowang in 1987, plus others) were denounced as “bourgeois liberals”. The word liberal suggested “out of control” or “self-interested”. In the late 1990s, though, more and more people, mostly intellectuals, began to identify as “liberals” (ziyoupai) in a new sense. Now the term meant “pro-freedom”. In 1998 Zhu Xueqin, a well-regarded historian of modern Chinese thought and a self-identified liberal, published an analysis of the term. The implied contrast with communist ideology was hard to miss:

[Liberalism] reaches conclusions empirically, not a priori. It sees history as moving in fits and starts and does not subscribe to historical determinism of any kind. It is opposed to planned social systems. In politics it calls for representative democracy, constitutionalism and rule of law, and it opposes dictatorship whether by one person or by a small group. In ethics it calls for protection of the individual person and holds that while many values can be disaggregated, the value of the individual cannot be; an individual cannot be made into a tool and sacrificed to an abstract idea.¹

The version of liberalism that Zhu described went further than what the 1989 protesters had demanded. Democracy, constitutionalism, and rule of law were on the agenda in both periods, but those were things that the
communist government still claimed, in theory, to be supplying. The question of who should be in charge was not raised in 1989. Student leaders then had not called for removal of the Communist Party. But the liberals’ goals in the late 1990s (“oppose dictatorship whether by one person or by a small group”) did imply regime change.

3. A Semi-official Liberal Press Emerges

A new kind of journalism emerged around that time. Economics, not politics, provided its original spark. This happened because, in 1989, the prestige of the Communist Party had sunk so low that Party newspapers were not selling well. In an era of “make your own money or perish”, newspapers had to balance their books, and managers of newspapers found that the best way to do that was to publish stories that attracted people and to profit by selling paid advertising. Newspapers came out with secondary publications – “evening papers”, “weekend papers”, or “city papers” – carrying stories about movie stars, crime, police, sports, travel, and the like. A catchphrase for the new business model was “big newspapers hatch little ones, and the little ones pay for the big ones”. It gradually emerged, however, that readers of the little newspapers were interested not only in entertainment but in serious stories about economic inequality, political corruption, health care, the cost and quality of schooling, environmental safety, and other such topics. This situation opened a door for liberal editors. They could now let the little newspapers play the classic roles of the press: monitoring political behavior and voicing public opinion. The little papers were never fully free, though. Always registered through their parent newspapers, they were still inside the state system and could be closed down if they went too far.
*Southern Weekend*, a “little newspaper” that eventually was not so little, was the pioneering example. It was founded in 1984 as the offspring of *Southern Daily*, the Communist Party’s flagship newspaper in Guangdong Province, and it originally carried stories about such things as planting flowers and raising goldfish. Its circulation was about 7000. In 1995, though, it brought in a group of idealistic young reporters who went to work finding and reporting “deep background” stories. Under Jiang Yiping, who was chief editor beginning in 1996, they wrote about fake liquor, bridge safety, the underworld, unjust convictions, abuse of power, and other muckraking topics. They consistently took the side of underdogs when they wrote about human trafficking, bias against AIDS victims, and workers who did not get their pay. They observed a principle of “no local reporting”. As long as their unpleasant stories were about other places, not Guangdong, the senior officials at the parent newspaper would look the other way. But precisely this point made *Southern Weekend* much sought after in all those other places – i.e., nationwide. By 1998 the paper was being printed in nineteen cities in China and its circulation had soared to 1.3 million.

The success of *Southern Weekend* caused neurons to flash in the minds of editors elsewhere. In Guangzhou, *Southern Metropolitan News* was born; in Beijing there were *Beijing Youth News* and *China Industry and Commerce*; in Xi’an, *China Business News*; in Chengdu, *West China City News* and *Chengdu Commerce*; and elsewhere, others. Words like “commerce” and “business” were used in titles partly as covers; the true missions of these papers were not business but to report on problems in society, to seek fairness, and to reflect popular opinion. For analysis and comment these new papers turned to intellectuals, who often were only too happy to oblige. Their opinions, formerly confined to salons or dinner tables, now could reach tens of thousands of readers. It was a happy symbiosis. Liberal thought was spreading.
4. Reaching into Society

From October 1996 to October 1999, Liu Xiaobo was in a labor-reform camp in Dalian on charges of “disturbing the social order”. But after his release he quickly melded into the liberal tide. He devoted much time to helping people who had been to prison, whose loved ones still were in prison, or who in other ways were victims of the regime. He comforted them, advised them on their legal rights, and wrote articles in their defense. He defended The Tiananmen Mothers, Falun Gong practitioners, the veteran democrat He Depu, Yang Zili and Xu Wei (two of the “four stalwarts” of the New Youth case in 2000), and a number of young Internet activists. He acquired a reputation as a go-to person for help with political persecution.

At the same time, though, a worry grew inside him. Many of the people he was helping, admirable though they were, were living on society’s margins, banished there by the consequences of their own idealism. They had been to prison, had lost their jobs, and sometimes were ostracized even by friends and family who feared absorption of their taint. To pin one’s hopes for China’s transformation on these people alone seemed far-fetched.²

However, viewed another way, these people were not marginal at all. The problems that they protested – corruption, pollution, profiteering, bullying, mendacity – were at the very center of society. It was precisely their candor about the central truths that had pushed them to society’s margins. On the same principle, people who lived within the mainstream could get along there only because they were willing to keep quiet about its realities. In a devastating piece called “Porcine Philosophy”, Xiaobo lampoons his countrymen, especially its intellectuals, as examples of Socrates’ “pigs satisfied” – willing to bury conscience for the sake of safety and lucre.³ Still, that condition was not
the same as having no conscience at all. It followed, Xiaobo reasoned, that there must be considerable potential in society for support of an opposition movement – if only those sources could be tapped.

He identified what he called “gray areas” in society. The market economy and the Internet had brought a new diversity to people’s activities, interests, and values. Freedoms were creeping into their daily lives, and they were more willing than before to defend those freedoms. They did not want to do battle with the Communist Party and certainly did not seek glory or martyrdom; but, so long as their basic survival was not threatened, they were willing, as Xiaobo put it, to “nibble at the system’s edges”. Edge-nibbling proceeded without any obvious leaders or organization. People knew that if leaders or an organization were to appear, they would be crushed.

A good example of non-confrontational resistance was this one: when liberal editors at Southern Weekend were fired in 2001, forty-eight of the journalists who worked for them protested not by writing a joint open letter but by each composing a letter of his or her own, forming a kind of leaderless tide. The unity of their action lay only in their timing and tactics. One favorite tactic was to invoke classical texts. A protester wrote that The Book of Rites (ca. 200 BCE) advises that “In facing difficulties, don’t just hide.” Another quoted the Huainanzi (ca. 139 BCE): “The cock crows before the dawn, and the crane whoops at darkest night, but neither escapes the slaughter of sacrifice.” Another drew on a poetic essay by Fan Zhongyan (CE 989-1052): “Better to speak and live than to be silent and die.” Yet another invoked the modern Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941): “I thank thee that I am none of the wheels of power but I am one with the living creatures that are crushed by it.” This kind of literary guerilla activity allowed its
participants, Xiaobo observed, to be “resisters and survivors at the same time.” They were having their say without staking everything on one dramatic (and perhaps suicidal) gesture. Xiaobo liked the approach.

Liberal pioneers got good support from society. Managers at publishing houses, television stations, universities, and elsewhere began to protect critical voices. If a television station interviewed a “sensitive” guest or a magazine published a politically edgy article, the work units themselves sometimes wrote self-criticisms so that the offending speaker or writer could live for another day. People fired from one work unit for speaking too freely might be picked up by another. And work units often allowed their employees to step “outside the system” to make comments.

As the trend gained momentum, tactics became more sophisticated. Managers of work units learned that, when criticized from above, it was sometimes best not to offer a defense. Arguing back might just lead to exposure of more details that could, in turn, be evidence for more criticism. It was usually better just to nod heads, lie low, and bide time. The saying that “the top has its policies and the bottom its counter-policies” was well known at the time. This meant, among other things, that subordinates can dissemble. Editors at Southern Weekend several times were summoned to Beijing to listen to criticism and receive “guidance”. They carried notebooks, wore serious expressions, took copious notes, and then went back to Guangzhou to continue what they had been doing before. The harvest of such a trip was that people could feel they had bought a bit more time. Xiaobo admired this tactic, but worried, too, that “over time it could lead to pride in petty cleverness of a kind that erodes the spirit.” He preferred the leaderless-guerilla technique of the thirty-eight Southern Weekend letter writers. “Their words were mild,” he wrote, “but amounted to a unique kind of collective resistance.”
5. Building a Gradualist Approach

Xiaobo reflected on how different these low-key tactics were from the prevailing mood of the 1980s, which he called a “reformist era filled with moral passion”. Those passions had been expressed in high-sounding and sometimes self-promoting language that carried the same flavor of reverence for sacrifice and martyrdom that the communist ideology of the Mao era had promoted. Today’s tactics were superior, in his view. Now people who chose to resist could balance their risk against the limits of what they could reasonably endure. Their idealism would not land them in a place where, like the marginalized dissidents, they owned little and could do even less.

In March 2003 Xiaobo published an essay on his own understanding of “liberalism”. He wrote:

Liberal politics is humane. It is low-key. The reason why a liberal political system can get the most out of people, can call forth their creativity, is that it does not ask for cruel sacrifice or aim to produce saints. Preservation of life is its highest priority, and it fully respects the ordinary human desires that arise in daily life. It evaluates a person’s behavior only by whether it accords with common rules of civility. …Even in the rough and tumble of nasty politics, a true liberal does not surrender to bursts of blind passion that impose pointless costs on oneself or on society.

Here Xiaobo was seeking to purge the martyr ideology of the Mao era. He sought to purge it not only from Chinese society but from himself as well. No one had ever taught him in grade school that life is long and that he should learn general life skills. The point of Mao-education was that children were packages to be readied for one-time use in the revolutionary cause – either to die for the Party or to live for it alone.
There was no education in how to manage problems or how to act in good conscience in daily life.

Xiaobo’s turn in the 2000s toward a focus on daily life, common human values, and gradual progress was part of a more general shift in the liberal camp of Chinese intellectuals. May Fourth thinkers like Hu Shi (1891-1962), who were viewed in their time as less radical than the revolutionaries because they advocated “drop by drop” progress for China, were gaining new respect. Denounced by Mao in the 1950s and publicly unmentionable until after Mao died, Hu Shi made a considerable comeback in Chinese intellectual circles in the 1990s.

Eastern European thinkers who had experience with making slow, gradual progress under communist regimes – Václav Havel from Czechoslovakia and Adam Michnik from Poland in particular – were also extremely important to the new Chinese liberals. Cui Weiping, a professor at the Beijing Film Academy, translated a collection of Havel’s works, put it on the Internet, and followed it soon thereafter with a translation of Michnik’s *Towards Civil Society*. Havel’s and Michnik’s political thinking began (could only begin) by accepting the brute fact that communist political systems in their countries were entrenched and backed by a strong foreign power. It made little sense to confront those systems directly. One needed to look for starting points in the crevices of society, away from the centers of power, in places where the personal dignity and the consciences of people could thrive, and where like-minded people could associate. “Charter 77” in Czechoslovakia and the Solidarity labor union in Poland were fruits of this approach.

Havel advised his fellow citizens not to focus on the power at the top but to “live in truth” in daily life, on the ground, where there was space “to approach life differently”. When people maintain their personal dignity in daily life, they undermine the power of the controlling state and gradually hollow it out, which eventually makes

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systemic change more possible. Chinese readers of Havel were heartened to learn that in Czechoslovakia, it was, in the end, something as simple as the assertion of a rock ’n’ roll group’s right to sing that catalyzed the collapse of the regime. Michnik asked his fellow resisters to speak directly to the Polish public, not to the rulers of the state; to jettison the rhetoric of the state and to speak in daily-life language; to seek rights, not power; and to aim at building a society, not at toppling a regime. Any person, in any location, could begin such work.

Of course no state-run press in China would touch books by Havel or Michnik, but they spread widely on the Internet. Drawing on Havel and Michnik, Liu Xiaobo urged Chinese citizens “to live an honest life in dignity” (from Havel) and “to start at the margins and permeate toward the center” (from Michnik).9

6. Identifying with Civil Society

A further reason for citizens to turn their attention away from the summit of power in China was that recently it seemed no one at the summit was hearing them. In the decade before June Fourth there had always been dialogue, however awkward, with the top. When Wei Jingsheng called democracy a “fifth modernization” in 1978, he was adding to the “four modernizations” of Deng Xiaoping. Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, formally the top Party leaders from 1981 to 1989, were both known for a willingness, at least sometimes, to listen to suggestions from below. Democracy advocates in the 1980s often talked with liberal-minded officials and followed with interest the signs of struggles inside the government between liberal and conservative officials. At Tiananmen in 1989, students sought “dialogue” with the men who lived behind the tall red walls nearby. After the June Fourth massacre, though, it was as if a switch had been thrown to halt all interaction between top leaders and
society. There was no dialogue, direct or indirect, and barely a trickle of news about struggles between liberals and conservatives in the government. The rulers now seemed to be nothing but a cabal focused on maintaining power and plundering the country’s wealth for their families. They no longer had common language with society.

In 2003, Xiaobo noted what he called a “decline of officialdom and rise of civil society in the market of public opinion”.10 “Official talk” – including news, statistics, and forecasts – was losing credibility to the “unofficial talk” of society on the Internet. That transition, moreover, was accompanied by the appearance of what Xiaobo called “popular moral conscience”. This conscience was not necessarily connected with political dissidence. Broader and vaguer than that, it arose from a new consciousness of “rights” that was spreading. For example:

– Officials in Renshou County in Sichuan for ten years had been levying arbitrary fees on local farmers until one of them, Zhang De’an, led a group to the county government offices to insist, once and for all, that the extra-legal levies stop.
– A foundry that made iron alloys in Liaoyang city in the northeast was shorting the wages and severance packages of workers until Yao Fuxin, a worker there, organized a protest at local government offices. Authorities quietly arrested Yao, but when the arrest became known 40,000 workers from more than twenty factories in the area took to the streets demanding his release.

Xiaobo refers to people like Zhang De’an and Yao Fuxin as “new heroes” of the rights movement. Government controls kept such activities boxed in, but eventually, Xiaobo felt, they might “permeate” to neighboring areas.
In the same essay, Xiaobo arrives at a general analysis. Increasingly, he writes, “power resides with the officials and moral conscience with society.” Moreover there are “huge rifts”:

between power and legitimacy, between an enforced façade of stability and social crises below, between official consciousness and popular consciousness, between authority wielded in the name of the public and actual public good.

This analysis underlay most of what he wrote for the next few years. The various “huge rifts” were fields of opportunity for the rights movement.

The term minjian, meaning “among the people” or “not in officialdom” entered Xiaobo’s writing and thinking. He wrote of minjian autonomy, minjian forces, the minjian viewpoint, and minjian reason, all of which he saw as heartening developments. The minjian trend, he wrote, was:

the deep structure of the progress of society since the beginning of reform [in 1978] and the best course for the transition of all of China. Rather than handing the future of the nation and the fortunes of more than a billion people to a few “rulers” in Zhongnanhai, it is far better that every person be involved, starting individually from the minjian point of view.11

Xiaobo insisted that China’s progress could be measured only in these minjian terms. Foreign analysts and China’s elite both paid far too much attention to the ins and outs of politics in Zhongnanhai, as if those were the driving forces in Chinese society, but they are not.12

Xiaobo’s conception of minjian was broad. It included anyone, whether “inside” or “outside” the system, who had grounds for taking an
independent stand. This included groups like AIDS victims, petitioners, environmental activists, people whose houses were condemned to make way for developers, and many others. Their causes and methods were various but their resentment of imperious officialdom made them natural allies. Xiaobo wrote:

People have their own positions in society and their own agendas, so of course they can and should choose their own methods. So long as what they are doing pushes toward the same general transition in society, the combined effect of all their various efforts will inevitably be greater than that of anyone acting alone.\textsuperscript{13}

Xiaobo’s project had expanded from “dissident” circles to be potentially as broad as all of society. He stayed in touch with friends who worked in journalism, literature, film, business, and other fields. He read Internet websites run not only by his liberal friends but by the government, by commercial enterprises, and even by latter-day Maoists as a way to stay in touch with what various sectors of society were thinking.

The year 2003 was filled with events that helped the citizens’ rights movement to grow. The concept of “accumulation” grew in Xiaobo’s thinking. “The gradual accumulation of new ways of thinking and of doing things,” he wrote, “not only can lead eventually to a new political system but can assure a smooth transition in getting there.”\textsuperscript{14} We review below seven of the more important of those “accumulating events,” beginning in late 2002.

6.1. The Audacity of a Stainless Steel Mouse

One of the better-known causes that Xiaobo took up in his rights advocacy was the defense of Liu Di, a senior in the Psychology Department at Beijing Normal University who was known on the
Internet as the “stainless steel mouse”. Liu Di’s troubles began after a young man in Sichuan named Huang Qi inaugurated a “June Fourth Skyweb” to help look for people who were still missing from the June 4, 1989 massacre. Huang’s arrest on June 3, 2000, ignited a firestorm on the Internet. Liu Di, owner of a mischievous intellect, wrote several pieces in support of Huang, one of which she called “Netizens in the Persimmon Oil Party Should Surrender to the Party and the State”. “Persimmon oil” (shiyou) is a near homonym for “freedom” (ziyou), so many people knew that “Persimmon Oil Party” meant the liberals. Liu Di’s suggestion was that the liberals do one of two things: either go in hordes to police stations to turn themselves in as “Huang Qi elements” – or, if that did not work, then hit the streets with mass parades in support of communism. This would get the attention of the authorities, she reasoned, because everyone knows that nothing frightens them more than large unauthorized gatherings – no matter the cause. Liu Di was arrested on November 8, 2002, on “suspicion of the crime of overthrowing state power”. Were the authorities so obtuse as not to recognize whimsical sarcasm when they saw it? Or were they so smart that they could perceive the ways in which independent whimsy does undermine the austere face of the state? No one really knew.

Liu Di’s arrest triggered spirited protest on the Internet. The voices of all kinds of other stainless steel things popped up: a “stainless steel seashell”, “stainless steel moon”, “stainless steel requiem”, and “stainless steel green cow”, among many others. There was also “An Open Letter of Concern to the Chinese Government about the Stainless Steel Mouse” that, within weeks, thousands of people signed. That number was a record for open letters at the time – and a sign of the new power of the Internet.

The arrest was profoundly upsetting to Liu Di’s grandmother. (Liu Di’s mother had died when Liu Di was very young, and the little mouse
had been raised by her grandmother, who now was 80.) The grandmother was frantic with worry. When Xiaobo heard about the grandmother’s condition, he telephoned her and listened patiently as she related the twists and turns of the whole story. For more than a year afterward the grandmother called him often, as if he were family, insisting time and again that Liu Di was innocent. Xiaobo did what he could to comfort her and wrote a number of articles about her. He had been fired from Beijing Normal in 1989 so no longer had any formal connection with the school, but whenever he referred to Liu Di, Xu Wei, or other graduates from Beijing Normal, he still used the affectionate term “schoolmate”.

In February 2003, a young civil servant in the Hubei provincial government named Du Daobin drafted an “Open Letter to Members of the National People’s Congress and the Chinese Political Consultative Conference on the Case of Liu Di”. The letter asked that Liu Di be released. Xiaobo, Liao Yiwu, Yu Jie and fifteen others wrote a statement of support. Du Daobin followed up with a statement that he called “We Are Willing to Join Liu Di in Jail” that more than three hundred people signed.

6.2. Limits on the Regime’s Room for Lying: The SARS Episode

In February, 2003, around the time of the Spring Festival, news of a “weird disease” spread from cities in south China. It caused panic. “Severe acute respiratory syndrome”, or SARS, could be fatal. Doctors and nurses themselves were contracting it. By the time the disease was controlled a few months later, there had been about 7000 cases in China and Hong Kong and about 650 deaths.

The government’s first response to the news was to repress it. This was its normal first response to crises, but in spring 2003 the repression was especially urgent because the National People’s Congress and the
Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference, China’s two ceremonial legislatures, were set to meet in March to approve the coronation of the new president Hu Jintao and his associates. No one expected any surprises at the “two meetings”, but the rich panoply of the events was still something that had to go just right.

In Guangzhou, *Southern Metropolitan News* reported that a local scientist named Zhong Nanshan had contradicted the account that the New China News Agency had published. Zhong said the disease was new, dangerous, and poorly understood. On March 14, the day the “two meetings” opened, the same newspaper quoted the deputy director of the Ministry of Health saying that as yet there was no effective way to contain the disease. That comment drew quick riposte from Zhang Dejiang, the Party secretary of Guangdong Province, who let slip the infamous line “the disease is not fearsome; what’s fearsome is the media“. Privately, however, people were applauding *Southern Metropolitan News* for its pluck. The issue concerned the public’s right to know – a basic right. Xiaobo, following the events closely, wrote in an essay that “freedom of speech is the crux of human rights”. He raised the question: exactly how independent can a newspaper be before the regime closes it down? What risks are good risks? And when is prudence advisable, so that one can return to fight another day? He wrote:

> In order to bring about a gradual transition to democracy, we will need heroic figures with charisma – moral models to give focus to the project. But even more, we will need large numbers of dedicated people to push for change drop by drop.\(^{16}\)

At a news conference on April 3, Zhang Wenkang, Minister of Health, gave false statistics on the number of SARS deaths in China.
He claimed that the disease had “already been brought under control” and that “it is safe to work, live, and travel in China.” Sitting at home, watching Zhang on television, the former head of general surgery at the People’s Liberation Army Hospital in Beijing, 72-year-old Jiang Yanyong, was indignant. Just a few days earlier, at a conference of doctors from other PLA hospitals in China, he had heard reports on the numbers of people who had contracted SARS and who had died of it, and those numbers were far larger than what the Minister of Health was stating. Dr. Jiang wrote immediately to the Ministry of Health and Central Chinese Television, but he got no response. One of his letters leaked to The Wall Street Journal and Time magazine, and when those media approached him, he decided to answer their questions honestly. On April 11 the World Health Organization announced that China remained “an epidemic area” for SARS, but it was only after April 20, when Zhang Wenkang and the mayor of Beijing, Meng Xuenong, were dismissed, as scapegoats for the regime, that a vigorous effort to combat SARS got underway. For the regime, the lesson was that maintaining a public lie was not as easy as it once had been.

For Dr. Jiang, the lesson was that the regime had turned him into a dissident. He had told the truth about SARS as a matter of conscience and professional responsibility. But then the authorities accused him of violating military discipline by talking to the foreign media. They put him under house arrest and banned mention of his name in public. For him, that was it. He responded by writing an open letter to China’s leaders about the night of June 3-4, 1989, when he was on duty as a surgeon at a Beijing hospital and had tried to treat a shooting victim whose liver had been torn by shrapnel from an illegal hollow-point bullet. Xiaobo visited him often after that and they became good friends. They could not meet at “sensitive” times, because at those times Xiaobo was held under house arrest and Dr. Jiang was “invited” (indeclinably)
to go traveling outside Beijing. Xiaobo published essays with titles like “Jiang Yanyong: Putting the Interests of the People First”, “Jiang Yanyong Resists Dictatorship Single-Handedly”, and “Protest the Persecution of the Nation’s Conscience Jiang Yanyong”.

6.3. Exposing the Hidden Practice of Rape: The Huang Jing Episode

Huang Jing was a music teacher in a primary school in the city of Xiangtan in Hunan Province. On February 24, 2003, she was found dead on her bed, naked. Her body was bruised and scarred. Police at first ruled it a natural death due to heart failure, but the semen of her boyfriend was found at the scene, and an examination by the Nanjing Medical School contradicted the police report. Then some important forensic evidence went missing. Word reached a website called Citizens’ Rights Web, whose manager, Li Jian, got in touch with Huang Jing’s mother. Li Jian then organized a statement of support for the mother and several hundred people signed it. Professor Ai Xiaoming at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou wrote an article called “Date Rape and the Death of Huang Jing” and followed that up with a documentary film about the case that she called Heaven’s Flower Garden. Soon thereafter the Beijing Communications Administration ordered Citizens’ Rights Web to close. It gave no explanation, but the Huang Jing case must have been the reason. Was it because Li Jian and the Huang family were challenging an official conclusion? Was it because they were seeking an independent judgment from a court?

The normal tactic of website managers when ordered to close their websites was to close and then re-open under a new registration. But Li Jian decided not to do that; he wanted to fight the battle on principle. Xiaobo heard about the case and approached his rights-lawyer friend Li Jianqiang, who, with another lawyer, helped Li Jian to sue the central government’s Communications Administration. When the Xuanwu
District court in Beijing declined to accept the case, they appealed to the Intermediate People’s Court in Beijing, but still lost. The final judgment was that “while Huang Jing was in a state of latent pathological change, [boyfriend] Jiang Junwu pursued unusual means of sexual activity that precipitated death.” In short, the man and the woman each bore 50% of the responsibility for the death. Although hardly a victory, the result was an advance over the initial ruling. Moreover the methods, in Xiaobo’s view, had been correct. Li had been right to sue, to appeal, and to publicize. All of that was good minjian advocacy. Xiaobo praised Li Jian in a commentary for Radio Free Asia.

6.4. Getting Rid of “Custody and Repatriation”: The Sun Zhigang Episode

In March, 2003, a twenty-seven-year-old college student named Sun Zhigang, from Wuhan in Hubei Province, traveled to Guangzhou to take a job as an arts designer for a clothing company. On March 17, before he had done his local registration in Guangzhou, police on the streets asked him for an ID. Finding he had none, they brought him to a detention center under a program known as “custody and repatriation” that had been designed to pick up “vagrants” who had come from the countryside and to send them back home.

After three days in detention, Sun was found dead. Early reports in state media said he died of illness, but Chen Feng, a reporter at Southern Metropolitan News, noticed an item on an Internet website for young liberals called West Shrine Alley, did a bit of investigating, and discovered that Sun had been beaten to death. Police and guards denied beating him, but the forensic evidence was unambiguous. How the beating started is not clear, but Sun might well have angered his captors by objecting to his arbitrary detention. On April 25, Southern Metropolitan News published Chen’s report, entitled “On the Death of
Detainee Sun Zhigang”, and it quickly drew national attention. Ai Xiaoming convened a colloquium on the topic of Sun’s death and posted the resulting papers on the Internet, where they sparked fevered debate.

The indignation snowballed. On May 14 three young legal scholars – Yu Jiang, Teng Biao, and Xu Zhiyong – wrote an open letter to the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress arguing that “custody and repatriation” of the kind that had netted Sun Zhigang was an illegal violation of the personal freedom of citizens and should be either amended or eliminated. Nine days later, on May 23, five eminent lawyers – He Weifang, Sheng Hong, Shen Kui, Xiao Han, and He Haibo – wrote their own letter to the authorities requesting that there be a special investigation into whether the custody-and-repatriation system violates the constitution. The media joined in pressing the question, and before long a major revision was announced. On June 20, Wen Jiabao, premier of the State Council, announced that the “Procedures for Custody and Repatriation of Vagrants and Beggars in Cities” was abolished and a more kindly worded “Procedures for Assisting and Managing Vagrants and the Destitute in Cities” was replacing it. Punishments were announced for twenty-three people who had been involved in the abuse of Sun Zhigang.

Victory in the Sun Zhigang case infused the citizens’ rights movement with new hope. Xiaobo wrote:

An individual exercises a right … the media exposes the matter … popular opinion applies pressure … high officials notice … the media pursue and popular opinion gets stronger … the government makes a decision. This chain can be a master template for how an indigenous rights-support movement can bring systemic reform.18
6.5. Arbitrary Application of Law: The Sun Dawu Case

Sun Dawu owned a farm in Hebei province where he raised chickens and later moved on to do pork, beef, and grapes until he owned a 100-million-yuan agribusiness that he called the Dawu Farm and Husbandry Group. About 1,500 people lived in the all-new village that he built, which included a school, hospital, library, and nursing home. A free spirit, Sun liked to read articles by liberal intellectuals and often invited Liu Xiaobo and others from nearby Beijing to visit his farm. But then he began to have problems getting bank loans. Was it because he refused on principle to pay bribes? Or because the regime viewed him as too independent, too much of an uncontrolled player? Or was it because of his liberal intellectual friends, who included the economist Mao Yushi and the eminent legal scholar Jiang Ping? Whatever the case, Sun decided to solve the funding problem by opening his own credit union. He offered higher interest rates than the banks did, so had no trouble attracting deposits. But in May, 2003, something snapped inside the regime. Someone, for some reason, decided to stop Sun Dawu. He was arrested, charged with “illegal fund-raising” (his credit union had been entirely legal) and fined thirteen million yuan. People in the citizens’ rights movement took Sun’s side. They publicized the case and provided legal help.

Xiaobo wrote an article called “Bad Law and Its Victims: on the Sun Dawu Case”, in which he showed how the regime uses arbitrary application of law to serve purposes that are extrinsic to the case at hand.\(^{19}\) Taking bribes is pervasive, for example – so when person X is charged with bribery and person Y is not, the difference is not guilt versus innocence but the fact that authorities have other reasons for targeting X and not Y. One of the common extrinsic reasons is to purge political rivals; another is to make a show of opposing corruption in order to attract popular support. In any case, the existence of the
ambiguity means that a threat looms constantly over the head of everyone. Knowing that application of the law is arbitrary, people are induced to be maximally cautious.

One of Sun Dawu’s defense lawyers was Xu Zhiyong, a lecturer at the law school of Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications. Xu was one of the three young scholars who initiated the effort to abolish “custody and repatriation” following Sun Zhigang’s death. Xu had, in addition, run for election to the National People’s Congress in the district where Peking University was located – and he had won!20 His rise to prominence had been fueled by his contributions to a column called “Citizen Life” on a student Internet bulletin board at Peking University. He had posted his thoughts on the Sun Zhigang case there and had learned from the reactions that it drew; it was there, too, that he had offered his first analysis of the Sun Dawu matter.

6.6. Discrimination against the Handicapped: A Hepatitis B Carrier

A man in Anhui (who, not wanting his name to be publicized, uses the pseudonym Zhang Jie) applied for a government job in September 2003 and was rejected because he carried the virus for hepatitis B. About 10% of the Chinese population carry this virus, and such rejections had always been standard, but Zhang Jie decided to bring a discrimination case to court. A famous professor at the law school of Sichuan University, Zhou Wei, who had successfully argued cases of “height discrimination,” announced in the press that he was taking Zhang Jie’s case on a pro bono basis. He did, they won, and press reports of the result brought a tremendous nationwide response.21 Two months later a website called Liver and Gall at One [an idiom for unreserved trust] published “A Suggestion to Call Upon the Thirty-one Province-level Governments in the Nation to Launch Investigations into whether Restrictions on the Hiring of Carriers of Hepatitis B Violate the
Constitution and to Strengthen the Legal Rights of Carriers of Hepatitis B”. Many people signed. The next year the government was obliged to revisit its hiring standards, and progress on the issue arrived across the country, albeit in stages. Xiaobo viewed the Zhang Jie case as an emblematic example of people awakening to, and pursuing, individual rights.

6.7. Defender of the Arrested Mouse Himself Is Arrested: The Du Daobin Case

On October 28, 2003, police detained Du Daobin, the young man from Hubei who had initiated the joint statement of people “willing to join Liu Di in jail”. They spirited him straight from the street to detention, while seven of their number went to his home and rummaged through it. Startled, Du’s wife Huang Chunrong immediately picked up the telephone and called Liu Xiaobo. Neither she nor her husband had ever met Xiaobo; she was just going on reputation. She did not know how to use a computer, had not contacted any media, and understood little of what her husband had gotten into. Like others Xiaobo had helped, all she could was to shout into the telephone, “What am I going to do?!” The couple’s twelve-year-old son was at home with her. Xiaobo, at the other end, took notes on what she was telling him. He was about to speak when the line went dead. He tried the telephone function on his computer, but that, too, had been cut. Two days later, when he finally reached Huang Chunrong by using a friend’s telephone, he learned more of the story. The police were threatening Huang, and she, with Xiaobo’s advice and support, decided to publicize what she knew of her husband’s disappearance. In the early hours of October 31 Xiaobo wrote a piece called “We Must Strongly Denounce the Arrest of Du Daobin by the Public Security Bureau in the Xiaogan District in Hubei”. He published it on the Internet outside China, but it leaked back into China and
stimulated a burst of support for Du Daobin. Xiaobo’s reputation for defending the persecuted grew even stronger.

Within a few days two open letters appeared. One, from Xiaobo, Wang Lixiong, and other dissidents “outside the system”, was released on November 2 as “An Open Letter to Premier Wen Jiabao on the Case of the Internet Writer Du Daobin’s Receipt of Criminal Punishment for His Words”. More than six hundred others signed. The second, from intellectuals “inside the system” including He Weifang, Liu Junning, and Xu Youyu, was published on November 3 as a “A Declaration on the Detention of the Writer Du Daobin by Police in Hubei”. It, too, soon had hundreds of signatures. The total for the two letters exceeded 2,000.

Wang Yi, a young teacher at the Management School of Chengdu University in Sichuan – who was also the manager of a popular web page called Teahouse for Any Talk (and, a decade later, pastor of the Early Rain Covenant Church, one of the largest non-state-approved churches in China), soon initiated a name list of people who were “Willing to Join Liu Di and Du Daobin in Jail”. Wang further inspired his Internet followers by preparing a little booklet on how to retain a lawyer and to make other legal moves in the event one is detained by police.

Xiaobo visited Ding Zilin, the highly-respected head of Tiananmen Mothers organization, to make a special report on the Du Daobin case. He returned with the news that “Ding Zilin also wants to accompany Du Daobin, Liu Di, and Yang Zili in jail” – and made this the title of a short article. Morale in the movement soared. Three weeks later Huang Chunrong telephoned Xiaobo to thank him, because by then she had received more than 10,000 yuan in donations from good-hearted strangers who wanted to support Du Daobin. Xiaobo was elated at the donations, but even more elated to see the difference that had taken place in Huang Chunrong. A frightened, distraught spouse, struggling to
be semi-articulate, had turned into a person who spoke with confidence, clarity and composure. Xiaobo introduced Li Jianqiang to Huang Chunrong, and Li took the Du Daobin case. When then sentence finally arrived, on June 15, 2004, it was three years in prison suspended for four years (meaning that, after four years of acceptable behavior on parole, the sentence could be waived). The sentence was lighter than Xiaobo and others had feared; Xiaobo felt the lobbying had made a difference.

7. Advancing Internet Culture

In the late 1990s, with the arrival of the Internet in China, a number of idealistic young intellectuals set up web pages. They were called “thought pages”, where “thought” often meant – essentially if not explicitly – political thought. The first example was a page called On Constitutional Governance founded by the political scientist Liu Junning and run by Chen Yongmiao. Later The Du Fu Thatched Cottage run by Ran Yunfei appeared; so did Wang Yi and his Teahouse for Any Talk; Ren Bumei and his A Night of Unsound Sleep; Wen Kejian and his Spring Thunder Action; Ye Du and Democracy and Freedom; and others. Xiaobo became close friends, both online and offline, with the young people who ran them. They admired and emulated Xiaobo for his knowledge, experience, and independence of mind. Xiaobo’s name was banned from the Internet but he wrote for these websites under pseudonyms. At Ye Du’s site, where he wrote most often, his name was “Little Shrimp on the Water Surface”, where “water surface” meant bo “wave” (part of his name) and “little shrimp” was code for xiaoxia, or Liu Xia.

Xiaobo was impressed with the ways in which the Internet was offering a separate world in which people could incubate ideas before taking them into action in the real world. The website Citizen Life had
been a Petri dish for the Sun Zhigang case, for example. In time the
“thought pages” gave rise to real-world salons, workshops, and book
clubs. These included Guo Yushan’s “lawn salon” at Peking University
and the “economics salon” run by Wen Kejian’s Spring Bud Action
group in Hangzhou.

The number of visitors to the liberal websites grew steadily during
2003, and this made it much easier than before to gather names in
support of statements and open letters. The new names that appeared
eventually outnumbered the familiar names, which now seemed only
like salt and pepper scattered among long lists. Xiaobo concluded that
“the human rights movement is expanding from elite culture into popular
and general culture.”23 More and more complaints, rights cases, and
rights-support activities – some political, some not – kept popping up,
and the regime had its hands full trying to repress all of them at once. It
could not behead the movement, because it had no head. Rights lawyers
had no organization, but there always seemed to be one at hand ready to
help. People began to take interest in cases that had nothing to do with
themselves personally. When news of a court session involving citizens’
rights spread on the Internet, crowds would show up to support the
underdogs.

Not all was sunlight and roses, however. As the regime became
aware of the effects of the Internet thought pages, it began to harass their
managers and sometimes closed their websites. Whenever that
happened, Xiaobo made as loud a fuss as he could. Ye Du’s Democracy
and Freedom was closed forty-seven times, but that did not stop Ye from
going right back to do a forty-eighth inauguration. Xiaobo admired his
backbone.
8. A Path to Transition

What the rights movement lacked most obviously was an organization. It had no charter, no structure, no official leaders. Everyone knew that the regime would pounce if such things appeared. Still, Xiaobo saw possibilities of a kind of organization in the associations that the rights movement already had. He described them as:

various informal communities that were organizations in embryonic form. There were communities of the dissidents, the journalists, the scholars, the lawyers, the legal rights activists, the grassroots rights activists, the entrepreneurs, and even the private bookstore owners.

Moreover these communities “intersected with one another” through websites, open letters, lectures, and seminars. The result was “an unofficial organization that had no organizational form”.24

Xiaobo observed that minjian resisters, whatever their spheres of activity, tended to have one characteristic in common: they were open. For many openness was not only an ethical principle but a tactic. Openness was an effective way to highlight the sharp contrast with the secretive culture of the regime, which employed fear to make people self-censor and hide. Openness was non-violent “living in truth”. What’s there to hide? Here is my real name. Here are my values. There is nothing wrong with them. You might imprison me, but you cannot imprison the values.

Xiaobo’s concept of a decentered, bottom-up rights movement harmonized with his belief in non-violence as a method. His thoughts on nonviolence had first appeared during the 1989 Tiananmen movement and had matured during his years in the laogai camp, where he read about Christian nonviolence. He especially approved of Augustine on
the use of conscience to resist unjust law. In his famous essay “To Change a Regime by Changing a Society” (2006) he wrote that:

Although people must still deal with tyranny and the suffering that it causes, they can respond to hate with love, to prejudice with tolerance, to arrogance with humility, to degradation with dignity, and to violence with reason. Through the power of sincerity and goodwill, victims can take a bold initiative: they can invite victimizers to come home to the rules of reason, peace, and compassion. Recognizing that there is no way, in the near term, to replace China’s dictatorial political system with something better, I can see the following ways for Chinese society to continue its healthy bottom-up transformation:

1. Short of attempting to take over political power, we can work to expand civil society and thereby provide people with space where they can live in dignity.

2. Without pursuing a grand program of total societal transformation, we can concentrate on putting freedom into practice in daily life.

3. No matter how strong the freedom-denying power of the regime becomes, each individual person can still attempt to view him or herself as a free person – which means to live an honest life in dignity.

4. While insisting on the basic principles of liberalism, we must also practice tolerance and support plurality of opinion. When people who engage in high-profile confrontation with the regime hear about people who are pursuing matters in more low-key ways, the high-profile people should view the efforts of the low-key people not as errors but as contributions that are complementary to their own.

5. Regardless of whether a person is working inside or outside the system, or working to change things from the top down or from the
bottom up, we should promote everyone’s freedom of speech.
6. We must not hope that the dictatorial system will soon disappear …
[but must] encourage and support the rights-defense movement and
protect the independence of civil society.25

Xiaobo wrote essays about his special admiration, as expressed in
item 5 above, for people who push for a democratic transition from
inside the system. Because of their closer access to the dirt inside the
system, they had more credibility in describing its details. Moreover, the
regime could not so easily gainsay them, because it could not easily say
they were outsiders. Some of the senior figures had weighty
revolutionary credentials, which meant that it would be both difficult
and embarrassing for the regime to try to shut them up. The very sharp-
tongued Li Rui, for example, was a member of the Central Committee of
the Communist Party, a former secretary to Mao Zedong, and member of
the Communist Party earlier than the top leader Hu Jintao was. Could
the Hu regime tell him to shut up?

In a 2005 essay Xiaobo allowed himself to muse on whether a
senior inside-the-system person (not thinking of Li Rui, or anyone else,
in particular) might someday be sent to prison and then win a Nobel
Peace Prize. Xiaobo rarely mentioned that prize and had no idea that it
would eventually affect him personally when he wrote:

To send a famous inside-the-system dissenter to prison would be to
consummate that person’s moral character. The heavier the sentence,
the higher the standing would be. From the government’s point of
view, a Nobel Peace Prize would do more harm than good. As the
highest moral accolade the world has to offer, it would deliver a two-
pronged message: affirmation of the dissenter and censure of the
dictatorial government. If the government held a Nobel Peace Prize
winner in prison it would be squandering its political capital in the
eyes of the world and pronouncing its own moral death sentence. It
would, moreover, be cementing the credentials of an opposition
leader.26

As if teasing himself for his wild speculation, Xiaobo went on to
comment that “of course it would not be easy – even for a dictatorship –
to create such a scene.” He did not imagine that the daydream would
come true in part, or that the prize winner would die in prison.

Notes

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1.  Zhu Xueqin (朱學勤), “Talk on the principles of liberalism” (自由主义
学理的言说), Southern Weekend (南方周末), December 25, 1998.
2.  Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), “The predicament of civil-society opposition in
China” (民间反对派的贫困), Democratic China (民主中国), June,
2002. (《民主中国》, 2002 年 6 月号。)

4. In addition to the liberal editors fired at *Southern Weekend*, others were sacked, all in the spring and summer of 2001, at the liberal magazines *The Famous of Today* (今日名流) and *Study Room* (书屋). In August, friends of the victims including historians Ding Dong and Qin Hui, senior editor Wu Si, and writers Wang Lixiong and Hu Fayun published a statement called “There are some things we need to say” at the website called *Problems and Isms* (问题与主义). That website was soon closed down. The story of these events is available in an article by the exiled writer Mo Li called “A newspaper is purged, but Chinese intellectuals have things to say” <https://www.secretchina.com/news/b5/2001/09/11/102900.html>.


3070000/newsid_3071100/3071189.stm>. Sebastian Veg, in his book *Minjian: The rise of China’s grassroots intellectuals* (Columbia University Press, 2019) shows that the bottom-up efforts at social change by Chinese intellectuals was fairly widespread in filmmaking, legal work, the writing of history, and other areas.

20. That had happened only once before, in 1980, when Hu Ping did it.
21. “Opposing prejudice against Hepatitis B is more than just a victory for 120,000,000 people” ( 反乙肝歧视：不仅仅是1.2亿人的胜利),


26. Liu Xiaobo, The future of a free China’s is in civil society (see note 12), p. 381.
From 1989 to “1984”: Tiananmen Massacre and China’s High-tech Totalitarianism

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Abstract

Without the 1989 Tiananmen massacre and the “low human rights advantage” of China’s political-social situation, there would be no China miracle. What are behind the rapid economic growth include corruption, deprivation of freedom, environmental destruction, social decay, and violation of international commitment. With the help of Western engagement policy which is based on a series of erroneous assumptions, an unprecedented high-tech totalitarianism is being established in China. The fact that China has become the biggest threat to international freedom and democracy, calls for a profound change of the China policy adopted by the West for decades.

*Keywords: Tiananmen massacre, China miracle, human rights, democratization, engagement policy, high-tech totalitarianism*
1. The “China Miracle” and the “China Model”

China has shocked the world at least twice since 1989. The first time was the 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement and the ensuing repression, which made the world aware of the Chinese people’s eager and powerful pursuit of democracy, and the ruthlessness and inhuman atrocities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). The second time was China’s “economic miracle”. In 2010, with the phenomenal growth of its economy, China became the second largest economy by Gross Domestic Product. In 2014, it surpassed the United States, achieving GDP purchasing power parity.

And in fact these two – the extinguishing of the democracy movement and the economic miracle – are closely linked. Without the massacres of June 3 and 4, 1989, there would be no China miracle: “What’s most ironic is that the economic reforms of elite privatization that China carried out after June 4th were undoubtedly the most shameless and deplorable in moral terms, but also probably the most effective and likely to succeed. The Tiananmen massacre completely deprived Chinese people of their right to speak, and the lack of public participation and supervision in China’s privatization process allowed a minority of officials to treat public assets as their personal property. Officials instantly became capitalists, and privatization reforms attained their goal in a single step. Added to that, the relatively stable investment environment created by suppressive policies attracted a large amount of foreign capital.” (Hu, 2008) As a famous sentence allegedly written by Chinese economist Liu Liqun, “after the gunshot, theft turned to plunder” (枪声-响，变偷为抢). Through the bloody Tiananmen massacre, CCP paved the way for “privatization”, “marketization” and exploitation. It is a continuity of Mao Zedong’s famous remark that “political regimes are born out of the gun barrel” (枪杆子里出政权).
The CCP reaffirmed that “political regimes are protected by the gun barrel.”

In 1978, to survive in the ashes of political chaos and economic collapse due to Mao Zedong’s brutal “Cultural Revolution”, the Chinese Communist Party had to embrace a policy of “reform and opening up”. However, while the marketization and economic globalization continued, the political reform went no further. The CCP has never meant to give up its monopoly of power.

The CCP has much to show for itself: poverty alleviation, urbanization, WTO, the high-speed railway, rockets, the Internet, artificial intelligence, the Nobel Prize, the Beijing Olympic Games (2008), the G20 summit, “One Belt and One Road”, Made in China 2025 Strategy … China’s “economic miracle” in reality became the material basis for the ruling of the CCP, as well as its psychological basis to a large extent, as demonstrated in the term “performance legitimacy” (Holbig and Gilley, 2010; Zhao, 2009). Almost all Chinese citizens’ living standards have significantly improved, and they are full of positive and optimistic expectations for future development, which explains why Chinese people obey the existing system. But, as I argued previously, economic development cannot replace political legitimacy. In modern world, political legitimacy can only come from the people’s genuine endorsement through party competition and free elections. In practice, it cannot even achieve “justification”, since economic growth without rule of law and democracy would inevitably bring much trouble to the society and economy per se. (Teng, 2009)

The CCP took great credit for the economic miracle and even attributed it to the “China model” in an attempt to sell the “China solution” to the world. Some fancy terminologies were invented, like the “Beijing Consensus” (Ramo, 2004), and “Community of Shared Future
for Mankind”. Is China’s miracle that great? What lies behind the glorious appearance? Is the China Model worth emulating?

Reform and opening up came not from the party’s gift but from its sin. Without the closed-door planned economy, mass-mobilized totalitarianism, vandalism and anti-intellectualism of the Mao era, there would have been little need for reform and opening up. The motivation of the reform and opening up is to save the Party, not to move towards a constitutional democracy. Without the disobedience of Xiaogang Villagers and the brave local reformers (Ni, 2018), there would be no reform and opening up. The official propaganda that “CCP feeds more than a billion people” is shameless and baseless. The truth is, of course, that the people feed the party and the government, which have been restricting and undermining market competition, robbing the people of their wealth, and depriving them of their basic freedom.

2. The Shadow of the “China Miracle”

Here are what really are behind China’s economic miracle:

– China’s full-speed economic development is actually based on frenzied plundering by the elite group – a connection between power and business. Socialism with Chinese Characteristic is a beautiful alias of crony capitalism (Pei, 2016). It has created enormous income disparity and social injustice, and has also resulted in serious damage to resources and rapid devastation of the environment. According to figures from China’s National Bureau of Statistics, China’s Gini coefficient reached 0.467 in 2017 after a high of 0.491 in 2008. According to calculations by academic institutions, the Gini coefficient reached 0.61 in 2010, far exceeding the internationally recognized threshold of 0.4 for potential social instability (Xu, 2013).
China is not only one of the most unfree countries in the world, but also one of the most unequal countries.

- China’s “low human rights advantage” is one of the main reasons for its economic miracle. Plentiful cheap labor, low wages, minimal benefits and poor work environment; forced relocations and land clearances; delayed wage payments and lack of collective bargaining rights; bans on independent labor unions, public protests and strikes; labor’s lack of negotiating power with capital and government; collusion between government and business, judicial corruption, etc., all have greatly lowered the cost of Chinese merchandise, giving it an enormous price advantage: “Made in China merchandise has flooded the world, and capital from all over the world has poured into China.” (Qin, 2007) Any country that respects basic human rights and social welfare and that ensures freedom of assembly and the right to vote cannot possibly replicate this advantage. Forced demolitions, mining accidents, black brick kilns, forced labor camps, helpless petitioners, left-behind children, extra-legal detentions, Foxconn workers’ serial suicides, closure of labor NGOs, detention of labor rights activists ...

It can be said that the economic miracle is based on the humiliation, blood, sweat and death of countless Chinese workers. It is ridiculous that the Chinese government has attributed this achievement to the so-called “China model” and peddled it around the world, since if all countries adopted the “China model”, there would not be any “China miracle”; rather, the world would be remade in China’s image through a race to the bottom.

- The blatant plunder of the powerful has caused serious environmental destruction, ecological deterioration and social decay. Under the multiple influences of political fear, thought control, censorship and brainwashing, what permeate the society are cynicism, mammonism, consumerism and social Darwinism. The development of academics,
knowledge, culture and art has been enormously harmed. In the
backyards of skyscrapers and high-speed railways, are literary prisons,
GFW, concentration camps, pollution, jerry-built projects, toxic food
and vaccines, cancer villages, AIDS villages, and on and on. Behind
the apparent prosperity lies the ecological, environmental, moral and
spiritual breakdown, which will bring much deeper and wider damage
to China’s future than just in the life span of the CCP.

- Foreign trade hugely contributed to China’s economic miracle, but the
Chinese government has violated a large number of commitments
made when it joined the WTO, violating international human rights
standards and engaging in unfair competition. The theft of intellectual
property rights, forced technology transfer, currency manipulation,
government subsidies, illegal dumping, overseas money laundering,
commercial espionage, cyber-attacks, media buying and infiltration,
Internet blockade, and so on, have all begun to arouse the vigilance
and backlash of Western society.

- China’s economic miracle has not led to political freedom or an open
society, but rather has greatly strengthened the CCP’s control and
suppressive capacity. The rise of China in reality is not the rise of
Chinese people, but the astonishingly rapid rise of the CCP. People
living in China do not have access to Google, Facebook, Twitter or
YouTube, nor do they have the right to protect their houses or land.
They do not have freedom of expression, religious freedom, or the
right to vote. With its economic rise and technological development,
China has accelerated its march toward an “advanced version of
Orwell’s 1984”.

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3. Post-Tank Syndrome

Forty days before the People’s Liberation Army mobilized to snuff out the protests that had been building in the spring of 1989, Deng Xiaoping allegedly said that the regime would be willing to "kill 200,000 people in exchange for 20 years of stability!" (Chen, 2006)

The CCP did kill a lot of people with tanks and machine guns, in a deliberate massacre, one that has made the Chinese live ever since in what I have called the “Post-Tank Syndrome” (Teng, 2014). Anger and fear turned into silence, silence into indifference, and indifference into cynicism. Brainwashing, a distorted market economy, and corrupt politics have created an atmosphere of consumerism and instilled a widespread nationalism and social Darwinism in China.

After 1989, in the atmosphere of fear and despair, in the temptation of desire and power, almost all Chinese people admire and support those who have power and money. Increasingly indifferent to universal values and morality, people forget, marginalize, and mock freedom fighters and prisoners of conscience. Here we see a paradox of history: the survivors have become the accomplices of the killers.

Yet we also know that Tank Man, one of the most influential images in the 20th century, represents the courage and hope of the Chinese people. The spirit of 1989 inspired some human rights activists, and the resistance has never stopped (Teng, 2019). The CCP’s efforts to realize the Orwellian state have encountered and will continue to encounter resistance. However, when a high-tech totalitarian state is completed, any resistance will be easily wiped out.
4. A high-tech Totalitarianism

An unprecedented “high-tech totalitarianism” is looming in China. The CCP utilizes its lead in Artificial Intelligence to make its total control of Chinese society even more total. China’s Great Firewall, social media, Big Data, e-commerce, and modern telecommunications make it easier for the CCP to keep people under a surveillance akin to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, in which nobody knows if or when they are being watched, but it is always a possibility. The Internet has been used by the CCP as an effective tool for censorship, propaganda, and brainwashing. Facial recognition, voiceprint recognition, gait recognition, DNA collection, and biometric tags have all systematized the CCP’s growing control. In Shandong province, virtual reality (VR) was used to test party members’ level of loyalty to the CCP. The social credit system is a horrible case that may have surpassed the imagination of George Orwell (Marr, 2019). The market-research firm IDC recently predicted that China’s public surveillance-camera network will keep growing, with some 2.76 billion units slated to be installed by 2022. For every Chinese citizen, then, there will be two surveillance cameras, not counting those on their personal devices that can be digitally commandeered at any time by the CCP.

The “high-tech totalitarianism” is effectively functioning in the network of traditional total control mechanisms which the CCP established in 1949 and strengthened for seven decades.

Considering China’s networked stability-maintenance, secret police, black jails, paid Internet trolls, party stoking of nationalist sentiment, expanded control of the media and Internet, brainwashing, mass arrests of rights activists, and cult of personality around Xi Jinping, what we have seen is a high-technology totalitarianism that never appeared before in human history (Teng, 2018a).
5. The West Indulged and Facilitated China’s Orwellian System

Exactly three decades ago, two things happened in China: the peaceful democracy movement and the bloody massacre. All democracies in the world initially condemned the massacre in and around Beijing’s Tiananmen Square, excoriated the Chinese dictators, and supported Tiananmen activists in jail or in exile. As the 1990s went on, however, Western leaders, spurred by commercial interests, again welcomed the People’s Republic of China’s butchers and dictators with their red carpets, eager hugs, and state banquets.

In the United States, leaders of both major political parties sought to avoid a breach with Beijing. Only 17 days after student-led protests were put down by government forces, with a death toll in the thousands, President George H.W. Bush sent a secret letter to Deng Xiaoping and then dispatched an envoy Brent Scowcroft on a secret mission to Beijing to meet with Deng later.

By 1991, the first Bush administration had eased or eliminated many of the Tiananmen-related sanctions placed on China. In 1994, under President Bill Clinton, the U.S. government renewed China’s most-favored-nation status, delinking trade from the Chinese government’s human rights record. In early 2000, Clinton recommended granting China “permanent normal trade relations” (PNTR). In an effort to ensure passage of the measure, Boeing, Microsoft and hundreds of other American manufacturing and agribusinesses spent more than US$100 million lobbying members of Congress with the arguments that “China is advancing on a road of reform toward Western-style democracy”, “economic development will promote China’s political reforms”, “popularization of the Internet will bring freedom of the press to China”, etc. Ultimately the lobbying succeeded; in 2001, China was
granted PNTR and allowed to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). In the intense struggle to remove the link between human rights and trade, Western corporations prevailed over human rights organizations. As China’s economic development latched itself to the express train of economic globalization and the Internet, Western companies reaped the rewards. Then, China was given the opportunity to host the Olympic Games (the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing), the World Expo, a meeting of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum, and the G20 and many other important international events. Not a single country boycotted these games or events. China has repeatedly been voted in as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council despite the fact that its human rights situation is among the worst in the world, and that the Chinese government has arrogantly manipulated the council and undermined U.N. human rights norms as established in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Fueled by a pure profit motive that ignores a balance with universal values, Western companies and countries have indulged the CCP’s expansion and brutality. Many Western companies and multi-national enterprises (MNEs) helped Chinese government to establish the censorship and surveillance systems. For example, Cisco provided equipment and training to help set up and strengthen China’s Great Firewall. Nortel Networks, Microsoft, Intel, Websense, and other technology companies also played a role in facilitating the Great Firewall. Upon the request of China’s state security agency, Yahoo provided its clients’ information, confirming the identity of at least four Chinese writers. This became key evidence to convict them. In order to move back into the Chinese market, Google designed a search engine, called Project Dragonfly, that censors everything that the CCP does not like. Many Western banks hired the family members of top Chinese
officials as full-time consultants. This is just the tip of the iceberg in Western companies’ corrupt dealings with the oppressive regime.\textsuperscript{11}

With the help of Western engagement, money and technology, the CCP not only survived a short global isolation and sanctions after the Tiananmen massacre, but established an increasingly powerful and brutal totalitarianism that is metastasizing globally. Now, China is demanding a rewriting of international norms, attempting to create a new international order in which the rule of law is manipulated, human dignity is debased, democracy is abused, and justice is denied (Nathan, 2017). In this international order, atrocity and corruption are ignored, perpetrators are immune, and dictatorial regimes are united and smugly complacent.

6. China’s Long Arm

In thoughtful observation, one can see the true features of the “China model”. The China model values economic development with a costly price tag of compromised human rights, corruption, inequality, and environmental destruction; brainwashing the people with censorship and propaganda; suppressing the dissenting voices and activities with state violence; and sustaining the international environment’s favor of the CCP’s one-party rule through trade, diplomacy and overseas operations. To put it simply, the China model is “kleptocratic capitalism with technological totalitarianism”.

Along with the rise of China, the CCP has become more and more aggressive on the international stage and a threat to global freedom. Its extraterritorial laws and long arm of enforcement overstretch in many different ways, for example, its abduction of refugees overseas, including dissidents, booksellers, Uyghurs, and businessmen. Its theft, bribery, and propaganda are institutionalized through the Asian
Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), multi-trillion dollar One Belt One Road development program (BRI), South China Sea aggression, international cyber-attacks and espionage, and the “Thousand Talents Program”.¹²

The Chinese Students and Scholars Associations (CSSA), Confucius Institutes, alumni associations, townsmen associations, chambers of commerce, and other such organizations, are all controlled or directed by the Chinese Embassy, Consulates or United Front Work Department.¹³ A report by the Hoover Institution found that the Chinese government has eliminated almost all independent Chinese-language media outlets in the U.S.¹⁴ Such independent outlets are even more limited in Europe, Asia, Africa, Oceania, and elsewhere, where Chinese-language media are more controlled by the Chinese government.

Overseas activists and dissidents do not succeed in evading the CCP’s control. Their family members back in China are intimidated, arrested, or detained. Wang Bingzhang, a leading pro-democracy activist and a permanent resident of the United States, was abducted in Vietnam in 2002 and later sentenced to life imprisonment in China (Dorfman, 2018). In October 2015, Gui Minhai, a publisher with a Swedish passport, was kidnapped from his apartment in Thailand by Chinese secret police. He disappeared for 3 months and then suddenly appeared in a forced confession for China’s state media. After being detained for two years, he was released, but a few months later he was taken away again in front of Swedish diplomats.¹⁵ Gui’s partner, Lee Po, a Hong Kong resident with a British passport, was kidnapped in Hong Kong on December 30, 2015.¹⁶ Dozens of family members of at least six Uyghur journalists working for Radio Free Asia have been detained in China as retaliation for their reporting.¹⁷ In Mexico, Argentina, India, Thailand, Canada and the United States, Tibetans, Uighurs, Falun Gong practitioners and Chinese dissidents have been harassed and physically
attacked by people hired by the Chinese embassy. Professor Anne-Marie Brady in New Zealand, after writing a prominent report on China’s political interference, encountered theft of her computer from her home in February 2018 and her car tires were deflated in November. Her colleagues in China were taken in for questioning.18

Chinese government has nearly destroyed the “one country, two systems” promise for Hong Kong, which means it is breaking its commitments in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984. China has interfered in Taiwan’s politics, through trade discrimination, disinformation, media infiltration and repeated threats to launch a military invasion. China also threatened war against the Philippines, in the context of its violation of its United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) arbitration of 2016. China brazenly manipulated the UN human rights mechanisms by silencing independent NGOs, punishing activists, harassing and intimidating UN staff and experts, blocking and weakening UN resolutions, and collaborating with dictatorial regimes with the worst human rights records (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

7. The Lessons CCP Learned from 1989

It was believed that China’s embrace of the market economy and globalization would promote domestic freedom and democratization, but they did not; on the contrary, China is more totalitarian today than it was in 1989. Economic power and high technology have greatly strengthened the CCP’s control. China is quickly moving toward fascism with Chinese characteristics.

People are interested in talking about the rise of China, but in reality, what has been astonishingly rapid and violent has been the rise of the CCP since the party’s founding in 1921. People living in China do
not have access to Google, Facebook, Twitter, or YouTube; nor do they have the right to protect their houses or land. They do not have freedom of expression, religious freedom, or the right to vote. Even the book *Winnie the Pooh* was banned (McDonell, 2017). Chinese people lack access to fresh air and clean water. Tens of thousands of human rights defenders, lawyers, dissidents, and journalists have been thrown into prison. Political prisoners have died in custody, including the Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo in 2017. The family members of rights activists are targeted. Rights NGOs are shut down. Torture, enforced disappearance, forced eviction, and miscarriages of justice are pervasive and rising to a crescendo. Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetans, Christians, and other religious groups were all severely persecuted. The CCP sent as many as 1.5 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims to concentration camps in Xinjiang (*The Guardian*, 17th March 2019). This is not a “China miracle” or “China dream” but a China nightmare.

Yet the world used to be hopeful that China was improving. It embraced a version of a market economy, entered the WTO, allowed its elites access to the Internet through Virtual Private Networks, and ratified dozens of international human rights treaties. How, then, have the Chinese people found themselves in Orwell’s scenario rather than in a liberal democracy?

When talking about the current state of China’s politics, we should keep this in mind: the CCP does not represent the interests of China or the Chinese people. Its first priority is to perpetuate its one-party rule and the interest of those who are thereby privileged (Teng, 2018b).

Since the 1980s, China’s economic growth, global market, legal professions, and the Internet and social media, have provided space for activist groups and empowered civil society. But at the same time the Chinese government has never loosened its censorship, surveillance, or
dominance. If there is a lesson that the CCP learned from 1989, it is that the CCP should maintain the one-party rule by all means. When the party sensed that civil society had begun to gain more and more resources and influence, it moved to elevate its control. But over the past decades, the so-called “China model”, which as I said amounts to “klepotocracy plus high-tech totalitarianism”, has been pushing the country toward a comprehensive crisis. It has brought massive official corruption, conflicts between officials and citizens, ecological disasters, religious persecution, and ethnic hatred and violence in Tibet and the mass detention camps in the western region of Xinjiang (Teng, 2015).

Most importantly, it is beginning to look as if the economic dividends that China harvested from favorable demographics, cheap labor, and globalization are no longer accumulating but starting to dwindle. GDP growth is slowing down. The solution for the political, social, and economic crisis is either relaxation of control, and the building of rule of law and democracy, or yet heavier repression. The CCP, without hesitation, opted for the latter.

And there is another lesson the CCP has learned from the Tiananmen democracy movement of 30 years ago: it needs to fear the influence of Western ideology as a threat to one-party rule. That is why, besides information control in China, it also tries to control the overseas Chinese communities. The CCP has always made friends around the world by being an important and sincere supporter of every dictatorial regime there is. It has been exporting its repressive technology, experience, and control model to autocrats globally. All these policies serve the CCP’s refusal of democracy to the Chinese people. The party’s goal is to maintain its rule inside China at all costs, and so it sets about making the world safe for the CCP.
Thus has its high-tech Orwellian state become an increasingly urgent threat to other countries and to universal values. Prior policies of engagement with China have been recognized by many scholars and experts as failures (The Economist, 18 October 2018). It is not unreasonable to compare today’s China with Germany of the 1930s: strict one-party rule, nationalistic propaganda, information censorship, cult of personality, religious persecution, concentration camps, secret police, total surveillance, purge of dissidents, rapid economic and military growth, aggressive foreign policy, ambitious global plan, etc. Although there are many differences as well between the two regimes, the similarities are striking. The free world can and must learn a lesson from history. When facing a powerful and ambitious totalitarian regime, to adopt a policy of appeasement (in the name of “engagement”) will bring no security or freedom or sustainable prosperity, but an extremely harrowing humanitarian disaster. It was the lesson the world learned from European history 80 years ago, and should be the same lesson from the past 30 years after the Tiananmen massacre.

Notes

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2. “China just overtook the US as the world’s largest economy” (reported by Mike Bird), *Business Insider*, 8th October 2014.


8. Official estimates at the time were anywhere from 800 to 3,000 civilian deaths; but a British government document declassified in 2017 indicates upwards of 10,000 civilian deaths. See, “Tiananmen Square protest death toll ‘was 10,000’”, *BBC News*, 23rd December 2017.

conversation/did-president-george-hw-bush-mishandle-china>.
10. “CCP export toxins lure Western multinationals” (reported by Zhou Xiaohui), The Epoch Times, 18th February 2016.
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Interpreting China Post-1989
Tiananmen Square Protests: Discursive Formation of “Sinicization of Everything”

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Abstract
This article introduces and conceptualizes “sinicization of everything”, meaning that everything and everybody under Beijing’s control must be rendered Chinese by manipulating the cognition, selecting and extracting the positive elements about domestic politics and practice under the Chinese Communist Party for promotion. By deploying discourse analysis, sinicization of everything has four features: devaluation, manipulation, partiality and sinocentrism. Two cases, namely China is the largest democratic country in the world, and China contributes to the sustainable growth of global economy, are employed to interpret how sinicization is in place through repetition – excessive positivity of China and negativity of the West – over the text. This article provides an alternative in approaching Chinese politics by exploring the premises, logic and belief as well as loopholes behind official propaganda.

Keywords: sinicization of everything, Chinese politics, Chinese-style, democracy, global economy, Chinese characteristics
1. Contexts: Political Climate and Landscape in the Post-1989 Communist China

In approaching China after the Tiananmen Square student protests in 1989, several themes are widely discussed, including state capitalism (e.g., Hseuh, 2016; Li, Liu and Wang, 2015; Naughton and Tsai (eds.), 2015) and globalization (e.g., Yang, 2016; Nolan, 2004; Zheng, 2004). China as a world factory has been in place that contributes to the sustainable economic growth, then becoming the global economic power in the 21st century. Such a transformation, in the main, reshapes the international image of China locally and globally from a communist regime to a regional power in the name of the peaceful rise. China has been regarded as a potential partner contesting the American hegemony. However, while its economic power is in full swing, the political project about the understanding of China is in parallel undertaking.

Undoubtedly, after the protests organized by students in 1989 and followed by the massacre terminating the whole movement, China was facing international isolation in the first half of the 1990s. The authorities understand that (1) the international image of Deng Xiaoping as well as the party-state has been undermined severely in perception after the suppression, (2) such political issues as human rights, democracy, rule of law have been criticized sharply by the Western media given that suppression has been in place, and (3) the nature of authoritarian regime endorsed and upheld by the Chinese Communist Party remains after its establishment in 1949. China adjusts its tone in response to such criticisms in such a way from keeping silence or denial to advocating “Chinese exceptionalism” (Zhongguo guoqing / 中國國情) (Walt, 2012), highlighting the uniqueness of China in historical, societal, economic, political and institutional practices in comparison with the Western world, so the West should not imposed their own lens
to understand and even criticize China as this is unreasonable and senseless. However, Chinese exceptionalism is proposed with the following premises. First, its advocacy is not aimed to embrace diversity, tolerance, differences and flexibility; it is only the excuse used to refute the condemnations and criticisms made by the West about China’s violation of political freedom and civic rights. With regard to the ethical policy of the Beijing authorities, “sinicization” and “anti-religion” are two crucial features and diversification is not the core value of the current regime. Lastly, the assertiveness of the Beijing authorities in criticizing party politics and elections under the democratic system (e.g., Xinhua, 2017) as actually power game manipulated by the businessmen and interest groups, and then proposing that “Chinese-style democracy” is so efficient in enhancing governance, including the competence to execute and implement. Above all, such assertions reveal that the Chinese authorities deploys artful language to confuse the nature of democracy and cover up its authoritarian rule.

This article aims to analyze and interpret the officialindoctrination formulated and delivered by the Beijing authorities, then featuring how the party-state alters the political language over the past decades, and recently, the official imposition of the belief and values upon those being ruled. Sinicization of everything, in this regard, is articulated to conceptualize the process whereby the Beijing authorities deploy language to manipulate politics in terms of shaping cognition, perception and judgment of the audience, thereby establishing hegemony that it is the only authoritative and correct version in approaching China.

2. Emerging and Conceptualizing Sinicization of Everything

In relation to wide coverage of media in the West about Chinese politics, focusing on belief and values, sinicization of everything is designed to
set up an authoritative version of understanding China about its domestic politics and practices, and then use the negative lens to judge and devalue those (especially the West) criticizing China.

Francis Moriarty (2019), a Hong Kong-based commentator, makes the following observation in the light:

Beijing’s wrath is traditionally aimed at the U.S., but in a significant change Beijing’s ambit of anger is widening, and its purpose is more pointed and strategic.

Here’s the new point: China is staking out a position of moral equivalency, aggressively insisting that its systems of governance are every bit the equal of – and even superior to – those of its critics. It’s presenting this case with escalating stridency and populist rhetoric.

China’s leaders are pursuing a national policy that could be called the “Sinicization of Everything.” That’s to say that everything – and everybody – under Beijing’s control must somehow be rendered Chinese.

This includes, for example, the forcible eradication of the ethnic Uighurs’ language, culture and religious faith. It means selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders according to traditional ceremonies administered by Beijing. It means yanking crucifixes off Christian churches, while reaching a deal with the Vatican giving the state-run patriotic church a role in ordaining clergy. It means obliging Hong Kong to legislate a ban on even symbolic displays of anti-China sentiment.

Similar observation is also made by Anders Corr (2019), an American commentator, indicating that “Chinese characteristics” is employed deliberately by the Beijing authorities to distort the nature of the universal values and alter the meanings of human and civil rights in
such a way that justifies the repressive and suppressive measures used and enforced by the party-state:

China’s human rights violations are notorious and many. Included in what is a long list are an estimated 1 to 2 million Turkic Muslims illegally detained in re-education and labor camps in the Xinjiang region, and attempts to eradicate Tibetan and Uyghur languages. There’s a lack of free speech, elections and assembly, arrests of human rights lawyers and the use of torture. There’s also been ongoing credible reports of organ harvesting from prisoners of conscience. Such violations, and the global public criticism they have caused, drives an increasingly powerful and assertive Beijing to promote what it calls “human rights with Chinese characteristics”. The Chinese Communist Party’s notion of human rights prioritizes development and national sovereignty over individual rights, which is to say, the party is committed to globally destroying the core principle of human rights that protects the vulnerable individual from the powerful excesses of government and business.

China is a ringleader globally in actions designed to erode these universal human rights. It uses its growing economic power to influence countries in the United Nations and intimidate, harass, and censor civil society such that the ability of the United Nations to protect human rights is increasingly hampered.

Another article, entitled “Never disclosing the whole truth” in Chinese version, and “A major threat for democracies around the world” in English version, reveals that the Beijing authorities deploy media to buttress its soft power, aiming to resist the influence of the West, and even becoming superior in political discourse through the manipulation of the cognition, selecting and extracting the positive elements for
promotion, and then covering up and eliminating those information that discloses the dirty politics of the communist regime, using a remark of “telling China stories well and spreading positively China’s voice” (jianghao Zhongguo gushi; chuanbohao Zhongguo shengyin / 講好中國故事；傳播好中國聲音) (Mantesso and Zhou, 2019):

When the international arm of China Central Television (CCTV) news rebranded and became CGTN in 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping urged the media organisation in a congratulatory letter to “tell China stories well” and spread China’s voice.

The message was seen as part of Beijing’s ambition to build a new global narrative around China while also challenging liberal democracy as the ideal developmental and political framework. …

The CCP’s aspiration has grown beyond just controlling news domestically – where many Western media outlets, including the ABC, are now blocked in one of the most restrictive media environments in the world – it now wants to create a “new world media order” beyond its borders.

Not only media, but also religion is another salient area for coverage, with the objectives to manipulate the religious groups domestically. Sinicization can be regarded as a practice that party-state ideology and values are in place over every facet of religion in China. Father Bernardo Cervellera, editor-in-chief of AsiaNews, the official press agency of the Roman Catholic Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions (PIME) discusses this issue, arguing that:

Sinicization “is a trap”, a way to “intimidate the Catholic Church”; it has the purpose of “distorting the creed of all religious communities” in China. These are the thoughts of two Chinese Catholics, Peter of
Hebei, and Paul of Shaanxi referring to the program wanted by Xi Jinping to assimilate religions to Chinese culture and society, a program that provides for submission to the Communist Party and verification of assimilation by the Patriotic Association (PA), the Party’s long arm over religious communities. The PA and the Council of Bishops have already prepared a five-year plan for the implementation of sinicization. By the end of August, every diocese in China will have to present its plan at a diocesan level …

[Paul of Shaanxi:] Sinicization is a trap indeed. It forces the Catholic strictly to obey government. On the other hand, sinicization will be a standard for judging what is wrong or not according to the government’s desire. Sinicization is also an intimidation for Chinese Catholic. Because it will be compelling our mind to fear them on everything.

(AsiaNews.it, 22nd August 2018)

By synthesizing the above discussion and interpretation of sinicization of everything in China, four features are proposed:

1. Devaluation: In relation to social, political, cultural and religious control imposed by the party-state, the authorities make severe criticisms toward the foreign powers. However, such criticisms may not be logical and substantial. For example, when the foreign powers criticize the human right’s violation in China, the authorities respond to them aggressively by saying that the party-state strives for the right for survival, maintains national security, prevents the infiltration of the external forces and answers back those ridiculous assertions (shuosan daosi / 說三道四 ) made.

2. Manipulation: Surveillance, censorship and ban made by the party-state in different ways and in different aspects, covering religious to
political activities. The exclusion of the non-official assertions, perspectives and findings aims at monopolizing the understanding of reality. The deployment of the threatening remarks in response to them produces fear.

3. **Partiality**: The selective use of facts and observations to distort the reality so as to articulate the cognition and perception – use of such terms as efficiency, competence, ample food and clothing (*wenbao* / 溫飽) and right to survival to feature Chinese-style democracy. Instead, such terms as checking the government, check and balance, peaceful transfer of power are not mentioned intentionally.

4. **Sinocentrism**: Despite inconsistence, contradictions, distortion or illogic in justifying the practice made by the party-state, the official insistence is in place when addressing criticisms. To show the confidence, the affirmative views are reiterated. Also, the authorities criticize the foreign powers as deliberately imposing their own views on domestic affairs.

By selecting the representative texts, this articles proposes two themes, namely (1) “Democracy with Chinese characteristics” and (2) the contribution of China to promote sustainable economic growth, examining how sinicization of everything is in operation in order to make meanings politically, aiming to alter, challenge and subvert the understanding of universal values, such as democracy, freedom and human rights. Such representative texts with thick description are taken from the official media to enable the deconstruction of sentences or words and exploring the logic behind, and then inferring the premises, values and intentions in production.
3. Sinicization of Everything in China: Two Cases

Case 1: As an efficient implementation of “democracy”

Adopting the online article entitled “China is the largest democratic country in the world” written by Zhen Han, the following techniques are deployed in discursive formation (Han, 2017). First, democracy is a term that can be divided into two styles: the Western-style and Chinese-style and both types are exclusionary. Second, emphasizing that the Western-style democracy leads to political instability and then praising the Chinese-style one as the excellent demonstration of democracy, meaning that the former is inferior, and the latter is superior. By interpreting the text below, the features of sincinization of everything is manifested. In interpreting the democratic experience of the West, partiality and devaluation are manifested over the text in order to justify that democracy in the West is regarded as a power game that powerholders share the interests of their own, and as a means of which the American imperialist intervenes in the domestic affairs of other countries:

When the anti-American Palestinian Hamas organization won the Palestinian election in 2006, the United States simply did not recognize the legitimacy of Hamas. The Iranian president is directly elected by the people, but Europe and the United States have never regarded Iran as a ‘democratic country.’ What is more, in 1973, the US Central Intelligence Agency once supported the Pinochet Group to launch a bloody military coup and overthrew the elected government of Chile’s Allende.

(Han, 2017)

By interpreting the above text, democracy is equated arbitrarily to elections in the Chinese context, but whether the elections in practice in
different countries have the necessary properties of democracy is deliberately ignored, and such traits as being fair, just, open, and equal are not mentioned. Given the dominant nature of the Iranian electoral system, elections and voting are only forms, but the nomination of candidates is discriminatory and violates the principle of democracy. By citing the above examples that are both lopsided and untrue, party-state media criticizes the foreign powers interfering with democracy in other countries, thus accusing them of not respecting democracy at all, a common way used by the pro-government media to define the “Western-style democracy”.

In history, democracy of Athens was based on the so-called “free people” enforcing enslavement upon a large number of slaves. At that time, not only did women have no democratic rights, but slaves were only “speaking tools” and were not treated as human beings. When the United States was founded, it put forward the values and principles of democracy. But it was not until the end of the Civil War in 1865 that American blacks were granted the freedom of rights by the Constitution. In 1920, women gained voting rights after nearly a hundred years of struggle. For decades, the American politics is characterized to be cliquey, family-based, and aristocratic which has become increasingly apparent. The Kennedy, Bush, and Clinton families have prominent positions in American politics. At least three presidential candidates in the history of the United States won most of the popular votes but lost the election. The superior party representatives in the primary election within the party in the United States plays a role in preventing candidates like (Bernie) Sanders who are favored by the lower classes. The contemporary Western democratic system is only a staged evolution of the capitalist political system under the economic and technological conditions of the 21st
century. Its essence is still the political arrangement for safeguarding the bourgeoisie and monopolizing capitalist interests.

(ibid.)

In constructing the discourse, the following aspects are produced intentionally. First, democracy is actually not in place for such democratic countries in respect of their historical developments in the past: highlighting the women, the black and the slaves without the right to vote. Second, democracy is only the power game manipulated at the backstage by the powerholders, such as businessmen and capitalists. The United States is notably mentioned in illustrating the assertion, with the premise that the general public is vaguely and even not knowledgeable about democracy. Democracy does serve for the powerful claiming themselves as people (min / 民) and then deciding (zhu / 主) everything for the powerless as mentioned above. In this context, by employing the decontextualization and partiality in narration, it highlights that democracy in the West is only an illusion in order to put forward the assertion that the “Chinese-style democracy” is the desirable proposal. By distorting the nature of democracy in such a way of democracy being equivalent to election, it misleadingly argues that the weaknesses of electoral system means that democracy is fragile and incompetent, and shows its superficiality and even misunderstanding of democracy, while totally disregarding such features as liberty, equality and fraternity, and even the implementation of participatory democracy at grassroots such as schools, churches, and workplaces.

With regard to the “Chinese-style democracy”, the adoption of positive and assertive approach is salient in order to ensure its feasibility in response to the negative remarks of the “Western-style democracy”:
General Secretary Xi Jinping clearly points out in the report of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China: China’s socialist democracy is the most extensive, authentic and useful democracy that safeguards the fundamental interests of the people. As the most populous country in the world, China is the largest democracy in the world today.

(ibid.)

The deployment of the authoritarian approach in promoting the “Chinese-style democracy”, including the acknowledgement of the speech made by the national and party leader, emphasizes that China is a populous and democratic country in the world. This creates a perception that China has produced a role model for practicing democracy that other democratic states cannot be capable of, which is useful for buttressing its own superiority and pride. Hence, such misunderstanding and misconception toward democracy is a key element by which indoctrination can be put in place, during which the meanings of democracy can be altered in respect of the official views, while injecting such elements as stability, prosperity, dream and glory so that the people are dependent on such an affirmation given the satisfaction of personal desires, and then shaping their cognition and perception, hence becoming for them the only single authoritative version of democracy without having them thinking of the huge gap between discourse and contexts therein in reality:

After more than 60 years of hard work in exploration and practice, China has made historic achievements in the construction of democratic politics. Through the reform and improvement of the party and state leadership system, the existence and practice of the permanent system of cadres has been abolished, and the
institutionalized and orderly change of the leadership from the central to local levels has been achieved. We will revise and improve the Constitution, continuously consolidate and improve the people’s congress system, expand orderly the political participation of citizens, and promote the autonomy of the grassroots. The people have become the masters of their own house (dāngjiā zuòzhǔ / 当家作主) in a comprehensive and sophisticated manner. We will uphold and improve the multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, conduct in-depth political consultations, make democratic supervision, and participate in and discuss political issues, promote the extensive and multi-layered institutionalization of socialist deliberative democracy, and develop a unique socialist deliberative democracy. Efforts will be made to build a decision-making mechanism that understands the people’s feelings, reflects public opinion, and focuses on the collective wisdom, ensuring that decisions are in line with the interests and aspirations of the people. We will reform the personnel system of cadres, establish and improve a mechanism for recruiting talented people, capable and being able to work, and being energetic. We will implement the basic strategy of governing the country according to law, form and perfect a socialist legal system with Chinese characteristics under the Constitution and promote the integration of a country ruled by law, a government under the rule of law, and a society ruled by law. We will establishing the sound restrictions on exercising the full power and mechanism for supervising power, improving the system of punishing and preventing corruption, and ensuring that party and government organs and their cadres exercise their powers in accordance with legal authority and procedures.

(ibid.)
By considering the Chinese contexts, the above text is aimed to prove that the authorities put democracy into practice, using the following keywords to guide the audience in order to shape their cognition and perception:

- Appreciation: historic achievements, unique, the master of their own houses
- Verb (with noun): consolidate, improve, orderly change, participate in and discuss political issues, ensuring, institutionalization, democratic supervision, understand the people’s feelings, reflects public opinion, focuses on the collective wisdom – to demonstrate the accomplishments in a vivid manner
- Adjective: comprehensive, sophisticated, multi-layered, sound (restrictions), energetic – to shape the people’s impression in concreting the ideas

With regard to political developments, such keywords in relation to “democracy” as:

- Abolishing permanent system of cadres, institutionalized and orderly change of the leadership, autonomy of the grassroots, multi-party cooperation, political consultation system (under the leadership of the Communist Party of China), sound restrictions on exercising the full power and mechanism for supervising power, system of punishing and preventing corruption, exercising their powers in accordance with legal authority and procedures

Of course, the Beijing authorities reiterate that institutionalization has been in place, including the reform and improvement of the party and state leadership system, socialist deliberative democracy, a country
ruled by law, a government under the rule of law, and a society ruled by law. The imperial practice of selecting talents is mentioned as well, like setting up a mechanism for recruiting talented people, capable and being able to work, and being energetic.

In connection with the one-party dictatorship, totalistic control, and the elimination of dissidents, official propaganda discussed above aims to construct the Chinese-style democracy as an ideal and utopian type of governance, guiding arbitrarily the people under the repressive rule in such a way that they should accept, adapt and even internalize themselves under the lying society (Havel, 1978) where stability and dominance are paramount. Under such a huge gap between the propaganda and reality, of which the former is illusionary and the latter is suppressive, the people are getting adapted to know how to survive under such a distorting and dehumanizing environment sustained by the communist regime, thereby shaping the cognition and perception in such a way that being abnormal is part of their normal life, and showing the unconditional support for the ruling of the regime which is regarded to be reasonable, legitimate and moral apart from being subservient and incapable, given the fact that the regime is the most powerful agent within.

*Case 2: As a country contributing to the sustainable growth of global economy*

Since the reform and opening up in 1978 and then China’s accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2000, China has become a “world factory” under industrialization and development of special economic zones. The party-state system continues controlling the market under the socialist system and monopolizes production tools. Such officials, cadres, and businessmen with party-state background have quickly got rich and accumulated wealth through power. In addition,
globalization has created a national and private enterprise to invest overseas. Since the 2000s, it has invested heavily in Africa, using economic incentives and cultural exchanges to develop political influence, and then also invested heavily in Western countries and acquired local properties, businesses and infrastructure projects (e.g., Lumumba-Kasongo, 2011; Zhao, 2014; Cabestan, 2015). The strong consumption power of Chinese tourists has created a sense of “Chinese tourists save your domestic economy” and strengthened China’s image of sustaining global economic growth. Behind this remark, however, it is neglected that tourism is only a mutual economic and cultural transaction, neither means nor ends of giving benefits, not a benevolent offering of the rich to the needy.

Unfortunately, in order to recognize and promote China’s influence assertively, state-party media even propose that due to the efforts put by a single country, an economic expansion is in place domestically and globally. In the context of “sinicization of everything”, China has successfully been regarded as a savior of global economy, as manifested in the implementation of free individual visit in Hong Kong and Macau, and then the reception of mainland Chinese visitors under global tourism industry. In such places as airports, railway stations and road signs simplified Chinese characters are provided, and even in some countries, Putonghua-speaking staff, mainly the overseas mainland Chinese students or immigrants, are available to serve those mainland customers who can afford the extravagant items in the shopping malls and arcades, buttressing the perception that “without the mainland Chinese tourists, the local economy cannot be sustained”, and then furthermore that “without the sustainable economic development of China, the global economy will be in decline.”

The following extract is from a junior high school textbook, then taken by a netizen and posted in LIHKG, one of the leading social media
platforms in Hong Kong, talking about the contribution of the Chinese authorities to the Asian countries and regions during the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997:

In 1997, the Asian financial turmoil broke out. At that time, too many Asian countries and regions depreciated their currencies to enhance the competitiveness of their goods, which led to the collapse of the Asian currency and financial markets. However, China insisted on not depreciating the renminbi and protecting other East Asian economies from further shocks. China even provides loans worth $4 billion to those Asian countries and regions in need. These measures helped Asian countries and regions overcome difficulties. This is the first time since the founding of New China in 1949 that the Beijing government played a decisive role in international crisis.¹

For those who lack understanding of the financial turmoil and political economy, the text directs the assertion that “China insisted on not depreciating the renminbi” and “China provided a total of $4 billion in payments to Asian countries and regions in need”, which is considered in which “the Beijing government played a decisive role in the first international crisis”, fully exerting a one-sided understanding of Beijing’s role in maintaining regional financial stability, as its role may be exaggerated.

Another article from People’s Daily Online, titled “The contribution of China’s economy to world economic growth in 2017 is about 34%”, gives the impression that “China has a certain influence on the world economy”. By emphasizing China’s “achievements” and “impact”, different expression techniques are employed.

To establish the perception, the diagram shown below in the report effectively highlights China’s outstanding performance. In the picture,
China is marked in red with the percentage, and the font is enlarged to highlight China’s brilliant achievements, and especially in the diagram on promoting the global economic recovery, that China is unique in performance, as shown by the arrow of moving forward and upward on the steps. A male portrait is used, meaning that its recovery is faster. By comparing the performance of different systems in the world, the economic performance of other regions is shown to be not good, while highlighting its own superiority in both areas of global economic growth and world consumption growth. Of course, there is no explanation about the particularities of different regions depending on such factors as geography and population, which cannot be simply comparable.

Translation:
推動全球經濟復蘇 : Driving the global economic recovery
經濟年均增長 : Annual average economic growth
拉動世界消費增長: Driving world consumption growth
最終消費對世界消費增長的年均貢獻率: Annual average contribution rate of final consumption to world consumption growth
中國: China
美國: The United States
欧元区: Euro Zone
日本: Japan


In interpreting the numerical data shown above, China has been shaped as a savior to save the world economy, as described in the following excerpt:

The sustained and steady China economy has effectively promoted the recovery of the world economy, effectively promoted the development of world trade and brought unprecedented opportunities for development for the people of the world. President Xi Jinping’s speech at the opening ceremony of the Boao Forum for Asia has stated a series of major measures to further expand China’s opening up, which means that China will bring more dividends openly to the world.

China’s development has not only benefited the vast number of Chinese citizens, but also created development opportunities for all developing and developed countries. The person-in-charge said that China’s Belt and Road Initiative has received positive responses from many countries. At present, more than 100 countries and international organizations have participated in the construction of the Belt and
Road in different forms, and more than 80 countries and international organizations have signed cooperation agreements with China.

China’s huge population and stable economic growth have provided space for development for companies all over the world. More and more developed countries have entered the Chinese market, strengthened cooperation with China, and obtained huge profits.

The opening of China’s door will not be closed, and it will only grow wider. President Xi Jinping’s speech at the Boao Forum for Asia clearly expressed China’s position to the world. As a responsible big country, China adheres to openness, mutual benefit and win-win situation, advocates building a community of human destiny, and promotes common prosperity of the world, which will bring more and more opportunities for development to countries around the world.

(Lu, 2018)

From the discursive perspective, the text deliberately creates the perception of party-state competence in developing and shaping the global economy, including vigorously promoting the recovery of the world economy, bringing unprecedented opportunities for development for the people of the world, bringing more open dividends to the world and benefiting the vast majority. By creating opportunities for development, Chinese citizens, all developing countries and developed countries can enjoy stable economic growth. They also have provided space for enterprises from all over the world, strengthened cooperation with China, obtained rich profits, and advocated the construction of human destiny. The community, by promoting the common prosperity of the world, will bring more and more development and opportunities to the countries of the world.

Behind the deployment of these well-chosen terms arbitrarily, China is assumed to be the only economic opportunity in the world, the only
hope of economic development, and even the only continuous driving force. Second, this expectation is based on the fact that when the global economy is volatile and unstable, China is the only economic entity in the world that has been expanding without decline. In response to the above analysis, power relations between China and other countries are not equal: China places itself in the position of economic hegemony offering benefits and manufacturing opportunities to other economically weak powers in order to help them get rich. Therefore, in China’s view of the world economy, China is the only economic power, and other countries are economically weak, being eager to accept and dependent on China’s benevolent offering. Therefore, the global economic growth should also be attributed to China’s contribution, and China is the center of its sustainable growth. The collective perception of China’s economic hegemony is thus constructed and then reflected in the uncivilized behavior of Chinese tourists in foreign countries, where Chinese netizens claim that “Chinese people have money, that is, are to let outsiders know that they have money. When you speak, you have the confidence, hence your voice is louder than other people’s. There are foreigners who are also like that. Don’t demonize us.” (HK01, 15th April 2017)

4. Discussion and Conclusion: Limits and Limitations of “Sinification of Everything”

This article draws relevant texts, and interprets their use of words, the premises behind them and the beliefs and values embodied. The texts’ intention is to establish a set of ideologies based on the positive remarks of the Chinese Communist regime, emphasizing the strength of China under the current leadership. Therefore, being a Chinese should be glorious and proud, even if individual and collective freedom and human rights continue to be violated and undermined in order to maintain the
glory and privileges under social and political stability. As a result, the economic dividends and opportunities claimed by the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party have achieved the prosperity of the nation. In this context, the discourse on distorting freedom and human rights is in place. This is also in line with the collective memory of the Chinese who had experienced a series of political turmoil in the past 100 years, and the chaos associated with a series of political movements since 1949, and hence are eager for stability and in fear of turmoil. When the Tiananmen Square protests broke out in 1989, the Chinese Communist Party had officially used a similar tone to accuse the student movement of being “turmoil”, then turning it into a “reason” for future military repression and massacres to restore order. Afterwards, the term “stability maintenance” began to appear in the 1990s, a term created in response to this official initiative and the “collective values” of the people. Another well-known political term “hiding and keeping a low profile” which refers to the officials deciding to be humble by sweeping assertiveness under the carpet at that moment in preparation for future growth.

After 2000, “stability maintenance” and “hiding and keeping a low profile” could no longer restrain China’s influence. The assertiveness of party-state leadership is in place. The concept of “peaceful rise” emerges: peace serves as a means of concealing its rise while the superiority of the CCP remains without fundamental change; in other words, peace and development are emphasized intentionally to hide its ambition. When the CCP feels confident that such a humbleness is no longer useful, it can reveal its original form and undertake the official dictatorship and exclusive values. Therefore, the CCP has tried to improve its political image through foreign public relations companies, and even to buy overseas media to promote the CCP in the past ten years. Touching upon political events, especially on the inadequacy and incompetence of current leadership, however, cannot be tolerated. By
understanding the international impacts associated with “sinicization of everything”, the mentality of sinoncentrism is projected in which racism is having impact throughout the course, as observed below:

A video produced by Xinhua’s official YouTube channel New China TV at the height of China’s border stand off with India in 2017 highlighted the sometimes clumsy and unsophisticated nature of China’s media apparatus.

Titled the Seven Sins of India, it used racist language and depictions; many thought it revealed a level of ignorance to social conventions acceptable on the world stage.

CGTN was also criticised for a racist rant against foreigners and Jews in 2012 on Weibo by the host of its leading talk show Dialogue – Yang Rui is still presenting the show.

The scale and, at times covert, nature of China’s push has rattled security pundits across the Western world – but questions remain over how effective Beijing’s media projections are.

It has developed a more robust and sophisticated media strategy but its broadcasters appear hamstrung by the requirements of toeing the party line which hinder its ability to produce widely appealing content.

But Peter Mattis warns this is not fundamentally a soft power campaign.

“I think a really key thing to remember about this is that it’s often referred to as a soft power push – and this isn’t soft power,” he said.

“Soft power as it was defined is innately passive, it’s about the attractiveness of one’s culture, values and political systems, and the behaviours that result from those things.

What China’s doing is not soft, it’s actually active and it’s invasive.”
That may be the real kicker.

Beijing is yet to shake off global perceptions that it’s an authoritarian state, without a message of hope or change, to sell to the world.

Instead its tactics are increasingly bullish in attempting to control the medium – not just the message.

(Mantesso and Zhou, 2019)

From the above observation, the fatal blow of “Chinese-style” or “sinicization” is that it is only a set of CCP’s officially constructed monograph, with the aim to hide and beautify its authoritarian dictatorship with illusionary language such as economy, development, cooperation and win-win. It intends to lure countries and the international community with material attractions. In recent years, the Belt and Road Initiative advocated by Xi Jinping is regarded as Chinese-style economic colonialism. It is built through the development of local infrastructure and borrowing to establish and maintain the economic and political dependence on the CCP, and then sustain a political and economic power centered on China. In response to material interests, these countries dare not offend and criticize the CCP, and hence the CCP officials can claim that “sinicization of everything” is recognized by all countries. Therefore, Peter Mattis proposed that “sinicization of everything” is not a soft power campaign, but a sharp one, as political propaganda is only superficial (as cited in Mantesso and Zhou, 2019). In fact, through material control and economic dependence, China forces various countries to keep silent regarding its various immoral acts, then being labeled by party-state media as considering and respecting the Chinese values.

In the discursive perspective, “sinicization of everything” is not a cultural movement constructed in order to address the problems of
practicing democracy and development. It only borrows the body of democracy and development, and then injects the pro-Beijing values during the process, while at the same time, by criticizing the ills of Western-style democracy, regards it as a failed political and economic experiment (Wong, 2017). As a result, “sinicization” is portrayed as the only way out for future global development. Behind the development, however, the position of party-state in extracting and manipulating resources is not mentioned deliberately; democracy is only a core term for political propaganda. Party-state has achieved its highest status in terms of power and control during the course. The CCP’s mouthpiece will inevitably promote “sinicization of everything” which can be regarded as a manifestation of domestic and international influence, and as an intention of consolidating its own discursive capacity. The production of political propaganda film Amazing China² filmed by party-state is evidence. At the same time, the promotion of the Belt and Road Initiative is articulated, advocating “to go out of Western-style centralism, breaking it; reshaping the right to speak under economic globalization.” The Belt and Road Initiative is being shaped in such a way that “globalization of inclusive economy will be in force, then transcending injustice, irrationality of economic globalization and unsustainability.” (Wang, 2016) Of course, the key to approaching discourse analysis is how the government can reshape and influence people’s perceptions of reality and worldview through language and/or images, and examining how the process links powers and how the government produces the specific political language with impacts on cognition and perception. In this regard, “sinicization of everything” can be seen as a project of deploying language, visualizing China as a model of global sustainable development in the new era, capable of challenging hegemony of the West, and then demonstrating the global impacts through political spinning.
Notes

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Transborder Reverberations
Tiananmen Protests and Lessons for Democratization in Vietnam

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Abstract

Tiananmen Protests is a shorthand for a seven-week long, nation-wide social movement that spread throughout mainland China in 1989. Looking back at the Tiananmen Protests after 30 years we can learn some lessons to emulate or to avoid in any democratization process elsewhere. In this paper, I try to single out some episodes of the protests and see them in light of “eventful democratization”, a framework promoted recently by Donatella della Porta, to understand better the process of the 1989 student protests and especially why they succeeded in mobilization but failed in the end which led to the massacre of June 4. This paper also tries to draw a few lessons from the Tiananmen Protests (and from other succesful or failed mobilizations for democracy including the Taiwanese one) that have influenced formulation of a strategy in 2013 for democratization in Vietnam. A strategy will be briefly summarized at the end of the paper.

Keywords: Tiananmen Protests, mobilization, eventful democratization, China, Vietnam, Phan Chau Trinh, Civil Society Forum, strategy, East Asian lessons
1. Description

Tiananmen Protests is a shorthand for a seven-week long, nation-wide social movement that spread throughout mainland China in 1989. In this paper, I try to single out some episodes of the protests and see them in light of “eventful democratization”, a framework promoted recently by Donatella della Porta, to understand better the process of the 1989 student protests and especially why they succeeded in mobilization but failed in the end which led to the massacre of June 4. I think it is useful to devide the players into several groups at different levels of abstraction and also divide this seven-week period into several phases according to specific players.

For the players the crudest division (at P0 level) is to divide them into the rulers and the ruled; a bit more sophisticated one (at P1 level) is composed of: (a) an assemble of not unified students and intellectuals trying to win the support of the rest of the population to represent the ruled on the one hand and; on the other hand, the rulers are composed of (b) the softline faction of leaders with Zhao Ziyang at the top; (c) the hardline fraction with Li Peng at the top; and (d) Deng, the ultimost decision maker, (and other Party elders) in between whose support the two factions (b) and (c) are trying to win.

Because Deng is a true reformist in the economic sphere but very conservative in the political sphere, the faction that won his support would prevail and the other lose. Deng always took the hardline approach toward the student protests as demonstrated by many of his actions in the past, and the most recent one was his attitude towards the student demonstrations of December 1986 which contributed to his decision to remove Hu Yaobang on January 4th, 1987.

Regarding specific timelines, we follow Dai Qing (1999) (she divided the process into five phases from the point of view of
intellectuals and students, our four phases are similar but follow the actual decisions of the rulers which were not available to Dai ten years before. This timeline singles out the events that show vividly the dynamic and mechanisms which (della Porta, 2014) has synthetized into a theoretical framework from China’s experiences and other countries’:

1. The first phase, from April 17th to the afternoon of 23rd, during the first week when Zhao Ziyang, the general secretary, was responsible for managing students’ affairs. On April 19th, the World Economic Herald (a liberal publication in Shanghai) and New Observation, a magazine, jointly held a symposium on the commemoration of Hu Yaobang. On the 22nd of April the students organized their own memorial for Hu on the square while the official one was taking place in the Great Hall. Three students knelt on the steps of the Hall holding a large sign demanding dialogue with the government. The attitude of the authorities was one of unprecedented restraint.

2. The second phase is from the evening of 23rd to 29th, when Zhao was taking the train to North Korea for an official state visit until the time he returned to Beijing. On the evening of 23rd, Li Ximing and Chen Xitong of the Beijing Party Commission asked Wan Li (Chairman of the National People’s Congress, who is NOT a member the Politburo Standing Committee, PSC), to call for a meeting of PSC to listen to their report. Wan Li directed their request to Li Peng, as Li Peng was temporarily in charge of PSC activities while Zhao was abroad. The very next evening of 24th, Li Peng called for a PSC meeting. On the same day, April 24th, in Shanghai, the World Economic Herald published a detailed report on their symposium of April 19th against the warning of the Party Commission not to publish it. And on April 25th, Li Peng and Yang Shangkun reported to Deng Xiaoping about the meeting. After listening to their report, Deng immediately agreed
to label the student demonstrations as “anti-Party, anti-socialist turmoil” and then proposed to resolve the situation quickly. The hardline faction had won Deng’s support. Li Peng had disseminated Deng’s remarks on that very evening to all cadres at all levels and instructed the People’s Daily to issue an extremely hardline editorial on April 26th. In Shanghai, on the same day of April 26th, Party Chief Jiang Zemin removed Qin Benli the editor-in-chief of the World Economic Herald and banned the newspaper which had caused protests among journalists nationwide. Li Peng hoped the People’s Daily’s editorial would scare the students but instead it had made them even more angry that they were ready to go down to the streets to express their opinion because they were greatly encouraged by events that took place during the first phase and the media coverage worldwide therefrom. As a result, demonstrations that took place on the next day, April 27th, involved ten to fifteen thousand students, and many more residents took to the street. Li Peng therefore felt pressured and asked Yuan Mu, the State Council Spokesman, He Dongchang, Yuan Liben and Lu Yucheng to hold a dialogue with students’ representatives from 16 Beijing universities and independent intellectuals on April 29th.

3. The third phase is from 30th of April to 17th of May. After having returned to Beijing, Zhao Ziyang tried to learn what had happened when he was out of Beijing and tried to do his best to manage the protests. On May 1st, Zhao proposed at a Politburo Standing Committee that the Politburo should order the Central Disciplinary Commision and the Ministry of Supervision to open an investigation into his family members for alleged corruption accusations to respond to the students’ demands to fight against corruption and special privileges given to officials. On May 3rd, Zhao discussed with Wan Li, the NPC Standing Committee Chairman, about the student
demonstrations and Wan totally agreed with Zhao; he also tried to persuade others to change the tone of the editorial of April 26th.

On May 4th, Zhao Ziyang delivered his speech to Asian Development Bank delegates that called for dealing with the student demonstration “based on principles of democracy and law.” The students returned to their universities. On May 6th, Zhao discussed with Hu Qili and Rui Xingwen and he “proposed that attention be paid when drafting new press laws to relax restrictions on news reporting, editorials, and commentary” in relation to the students’ demands for press freedom. And on May 9th “Hu Qili organized Zhao’s remarks into a brief that was disseminated to press organizations after Zhao had inspected and approved it.” On May 10th, the Politburo decided that holding discussions with every group involved in the protests would be an ideal path to resolving the students’ issues. On May 12th “Hu Qili and Rui Xingwen briefed leaders of Beijing press organizations at a meeting for dialogue. By that time, more than a thousand people from Beijing’s press organizations had signed a petition and taken to the streets to protest.”

Due to the authorities’ adoption of this kind of attitude, the students in all universities in Beijing agreed to announce the suspension of their class strike. Social order was therefore restored. On May 13th, two days before the official visit of Mikhail Gorbachev and the students’ plan to use the occasion for protest again, Zhao Ziyang delivered a speech to persuade the students not “to disturb international state talks and do damage to the Sino-Soviet Summit.” The students did not respond to Zhao’s plea however, and instead they entered Tiananmen Square to stage a sit-in and hunger strike in which hundreds of them took part. The occupation of the square thus started. The attempts of allies of Zhao, Yan Mingfu and Li Tieying, to negotiate on May 14th failed. Yan even went to the square on May
16th to persuade the students to end the hunger strike, but he also failed.

The protest was not only in Beijing, but in other major cities too. For example, “In Chengdu, the movement’s turning point came in the early hours of May 16th, when more than a thousand policemen scuffled with about two hundred students, beating them with sticks and belts to try to clear the square... this act served to galvanize the movement, even winning it support from university authorities, who had previously locked school gates to prevent students from taking part in demonstrations.” (Lim, 2014: 184)

As for the students’ part, encouraged by the successful mobilizations of the first few weeks, the students’ demands escalated, proposing dialogue with officials, and further, demanding that it be aired live on TV. After the April 29th dialogue, and after the decision of May 10th Politburo meeting which led to Yan Mingfu, a Secretary of the Politburo and an ally of Zhao, going to the square to negotiate with the student leaders without results; Yan and Li Tieying (a member of the Politburo in charge of education) held a dialogue on May 14th with the intellectuals (including Dai Qing) and students’ leaders but it came to a sudden halt when a group of students from the square came and demanded that the dialogue be ended because it was not broadcast live. On May 16th, at the square, Yan even offered himself as a hostage to demonstrate the sincerity of his belief that all issues would soon be solved. The students would like the government to capitulate.

On May 17th Zhao requested a personal meeting with Deng, but when he arrived at Deng’s home that afternoon, it turned out that Deng had called all other members of the Politburo Standing Committee and Yang Shangkun to the meeting. The decision to impose martial law had been made. Zhao Ziyang had been in effect
ousted.

Assessing this phase, Dai Qing stated: “There still has not been at this point sufficient evidence to be able to explain why in this context some radical students’ leaders would have once again caused the situation to escalate. And moreover, used extreme methods, a hunger strike. From the 13th to the 17th, the radicals insisted on conditions which the authorities could never have accepted. They gambled with the lives of the young, and there [sic] wouldn’t yield, even to a minimum request from the government, that is, temporarily restore and give way from the Tiananmen Square for the national affair saluting President Gorbachev.” On the evening of May 17th, Zhao went to visit the hunger-striking students who were in the hospital.

4. The fourth phase is from May 18th to the final suppression by force. Zhao had been effectively ignored by the hardliners. On May 18th, Li Peng, Beijing Party chief Li Ximing and Mayor Chen Xitong (the hardline conservatives) as well as Yan Mingfu, Li Tieying (the reformists) held a meeting with the students’ leaders (Wu’erkaixi, Wang Dan and Xiong Yan). Li Peng considered the meeting not as a negotiation between two sides and asked students to end the hunger strike and treated the students as “children”. And the meeting ended without any results because Li Peng did not consider the student leaders as netotiating partners as they had requested.

On May 19th, having known what would happen to the students, Zhao went to the square making his last effort to persuade the students to leave the square immediately and unconditionally. With tears in his eyes, he could not tell the youngsters who were around him more. What he only said was that “it’s too late for me to meet you. And I’m an aged man, you, you youngsters should take care of yourselves, because you have a bright future.” But the student leaders did not respond. That was Zhao’s last public apperance.
On May 19th, a Politburo Standing Committee meeting was called to announce martial law. Zhao was asked to chair that meeting but he refused to attend. On May 20th, martial law was made public. This once again mobilized the masses. Troops were blocked by citizens from entering the city to implement martial law. The standoff lasted more than ten days, martial law became ineffective and this encouraged more and more people to join the protests. “The people had stood up to the army—using nothing but their bodies and their wits—and had won. For the students, this was a major triumph, a sign that their movement had become a mass movement.” (Lim, 2014: 13)

Although effectively marginalized, Zhao Ziyang tried to rectify the situation by sending a letter to Deng on May 18th, talking to several people to call Wan Li to return home from official state visit abroad and called for a National People’s Congress’s Standing Committe meeting or a Politburo meeting, but all of these efforts were in vain. He was in fact under house arrest, and heard himself intense gunfire from his house on the night of June 3rd. “On the 2nd of June, the reformers’ last effort, representatives of Deng Xiaoping’s eldest son tried to advise the students to initiate withdrawal and the young Deng said he would do his best to reason with his father not to use force. Unexpectedly, it, too, failed to bring success. At midnight on June 3rd, tanks entered the square. Four moderates, a singer, a teacher, a scholar, and editor, with the company of a doctor, went out and reached an agreement with the army, unconditional retreat at an appointed time. The radical leaders didn’t stop them this time and again they had gained help in fleeing. This was the most tragic day in China’s twentieth century political history.” (Dai, 1999)

There are several analyses of the Tiananmen Protests, for example, Lim (2014) and della Porta (2014), particularly those of Craig Calhoun
that have been cited extensively by her. The mechanisms in eventful
democratization, which have been synthetized by della Porta (her table
2.1, page 64) not only from China’s case but from several other cases of
East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, are very
useful. The cognitive, emotional and relational mechanisms as well as
framing of democracy and mobilization of resources were all very clear
in these seven weeks of mobilization in China (della Porta, 2014: 64-65,
134-137, 304). All these causal mechanisms and the framings as well as
mobilization and creation of resources are dynamic in nature and interact
with the actions of the opponents (the rulers) which are always not so
clear to the protesters and may cause misjudgments. For more analysis,
see those works mentioned above and references therein. The brief
description above also tries to highlight those mechanisms and the
escalation process from both sides.

2. Some Lessons

We try to draw a few lessons from the Tiananmen Protests, as well as
from democratization efforts elsewhere, which may be relevant to the
democratization process in Vietnam.

Nonviolent struggle for democratization is a long and difficult
struggle. Its success or failure depends on many factors. We can
distinguish these factors (or parts of these factors) into two types: the
relatively stable ones (in the sense that they change slowly), such as
structural conditions, action resources, prevalent (emancipative) values
(see Welzel, 2013: 45-46), and those factors (or their parts) that can
change quickly during the mobilization process, especially in its intense
phase, such as relations and cognitive, emotional and relational
mechanisms (see della Porta, 2014: 27-65). We call the former ones
structural factors and the latter, emergent ones (della Porta, 2014: 32).
We observe that democratization seems to be more likely to be successful in those cases where the structural factors are more favorable (or put figuratively these background conditions are high enough) either in the form of mass-driven eventful democratization or participatory pact, or elite-driven pacted transition (della Porta, 2014: 16). However, if the structural factors are less favorable, then eventful democratization likely fails ceteris paribus.

According to Donatella della Porta, “in China, nonviolence failed during the Tiananmen Square protests due to the absence of coalitions of the opposition; instead, divisions increased with a lack of leverage for support from abroad, and the regime maintained control of the military. While resilience in fact requires decentralized structures, which, being more democratic, strengthen oppositional consciousness although allowing for coordination, attempts at domination by one part have the opposite effect.” (della Porta et al., 2018: 8) This judgement is in line with that of Dai Qing, “The demonstrators basically had the opportunity many times to withdraw without any great gain but without terrible loss either. And their dignity could also have been maintained. But the movement had already slipped out of control. Many organizations had been established at this time, and some of them considered to take Solidarity as their title. Calculating the authorities’ intention and preparing their own future, the radical leaders employed only the highest emotional intensity in their conversation with the regime, which for those people who continued staying in the square was like pouring oil on fire.”

The civil society organizations were rare or such independent student groupings were just created during the protests, and there were no such independent organizations among workers, intellectuals or other segments of the population because the Chinese Communist Party strictly forbade formation of such organizations or informal groupings.
After Zhao had effectively been ousted and the hardliners had won Deng Xiaoping to their side, the rulers were united. In other words, structural conditions were not favorable for democratization.

The students tried to imitate the Polish Solidarity model asking for dialogue but there were no opposition forces behind them as in the case of Poland.

An extremely important lesson from the Tiananmen protests (and so many others such as currently in Algeria, Sudan or Venezuela) is that the army plays a crucial role, and ways to persuade the military, to win over them (bing yun / 兵運) are important in mobilization for democracy and to “nationalize” the army in consolidation of democracy.

The moderation debate is also worthy to be considered. Moderation has been long considered as favorable for democratic transition (della Porta, 2014: 9, 197-198). However, there are also many cases that proved that radicalization (or contestation) is helpful in eventful democratization (della Porta, 2014: 9, 199-200; Bermeo, 1999). This would mean that we have to consider moderation versus radicalization on a case by case basis or in different phases of democratization (in phase of preparation to transition contestations occurred nearly in every case, but in short period of transition, moderation can create good conditions in elite-driven pacted transition and mass-driven participatory pact, as well as in eventful democratization (which can fail or succeed). I think that we have to consider the Tiananmen protests either as they happened in the preparation phase of democratization (that is the transititon did not start yet in China and in that case the radicalization of the students were justifiable) or as a failed transition (and in this case the radicalization can result in failure).}

Successful lessons of the Tiananmen mobilization of 1989 are very useful, but lessons of its failures are also worth to study to avoid such pitfalls.
3. A Strategy for Democratization in Vietnam

Vietnam and other former socialist countries (particularly PRC) have a lot of similarities but also many differences. Before discussing a strategy for democratization in Vietnam, let me take a step back to an early development of Vietnam at the beginning of the last century.

Maybe you have never heard of Phan Châu Trinh. He was born on 9th September 1872, and passed away on 24th March 1926. From 1905 to 1907 he developed his ideas of non-violent struggle for democracy and popular rights (now human rights) in Vietnam to which I shall return later on. Regarding the tax-protest riots that erupted in Central Vietnam in 1908, despite the fact that Phan Châu Trinh insisted on non-violent methods, he was accused of inciting the public to join in the revolt and he was arrested and sentenced to death. Due to the intervention of the Ligue des Droits de l’Homme (Human Rights League) the death sentence was changed to life imprisonment and later on to house arrest in a village, then he was released in 1910 and deported to France. From April 1911 he spent fourteen years in exile. He returned to Saigon in 1925 and died on 24th March 1926.

Phan Châu Trinh’s ideas to fight for democracy and human rights can be reformulated concisely within his 5 slogans (policies) which we, the Civil Society Forum (CSF), have adopted as ours:

1) (A strategy to) Building Democracy (composes of):
2) Exercise the People’s Rights
3) Invigorate the People’s Spirit
4) Broaden the People’s Mind
5) Enrich the People’s Well-being

Phan Châu Trinh was an astonishing modern thinker of modernization. Let us start with his fourth and fifth policies from the
bottom: “Enrich the People’s Well-being” and “Broaden the People’s Mind”. They were not only his thoughts, but he himself had started a program to put them into practice. By establishing schools, associations, enterprises and encouraging other people to do so, he made an example to others by encouraging people to create the so-called “action resources”, so to speak, using the language of the neo-modernization theory: the material resource (equipment, tools, and income), the intellectual resource (knowledge, skills, and information) and the connective resource (networks of exchange and contact interface) in the basic, fundamental level (Welzel, 2013: 46).

In a recent essay (Nguyen, 2017), I have mapped Phan Châu Trinh’s ideas more than a century ago into those of neo-modernization theories. I have shown that the fourth and fifth policies of Phan correspond to the “action resources” of neo-modernization theory on a basic level and that the values generated by the third policy of Phan, “Invigorate the People’s Spirit”, corresponds with the emancipative values in the next, cultural, motivational level; these values promote and encourage social movement activities (in an upper level of action, expressed by the second policy of “Execise Your Rights”). And these social movement activities of “Exercising Your Rights”, that is just exercise those rights and not waiting for anyone (the government, the ruling party or any person) to allow you to do that in everyday life.

This proactive way of life gives rise to the constant pressure on the authorities to provide legal guarantees for freedoms and ensure that those freedoms are respected in the daily life, that is, those freedoms are entitlements or citizen’s rights at the top level (that empowerment process is the essence of democratization which can be done partially even in the middle of a dictatorial regime and have to be done even in the mature democracies since the number of those human rights that can become entitlements are infinite). This thick, vibrant and inclusive civil
society is crucial not only to the process of democratization leading to democratic transition, but also to consolidation of democracy if a transition did take place.

Unfortunately, in more than a century Vietnam did not follow the wise strategy of Phan and today we are still suffering under a Communist dictatorship. We try to reformulate this strategy and supplement it with 9 principles to form a coherent strategy that befits our times.

Phan Châu Trinh was a firm and consistent non-violent fighter for democracy and human rights. He adopted the nonviolent methods as early as 1905, at the same time as Mahatma Gandhi (1906); Phan was in fact 3 years younger than Gandhi. This coincidence may not be a surprise, I think, because both of them were heavily influenced by non-violent ideas of Indian thinking expressed thousands of years ago, for example, in Buddhist teachings disseminated by the Dalai Lama and Zen Master Thích Nhất Hạnh in our time.

Non-violence is one of the principles guiding our activities in Vietnam civil society in general, and in CSF in particular.

Our strategy for democratization in Vietnam is composed of the above-mentioned five policies and the following 9 principles.

We, at the CSF, follow 9 principles (or core values) in the struggle to transform peacefully the post-totalitarian regime in Vietnam into a true democracy. These are:

1) Legality: CSF and its members act legally, respect the laws, do not fight against the state. The legality here is understood as the conformity with international treaties which Vietnam has joined, with the constitution, laws and other state regulations not contradicting the higher ones (in the following strict order specified by Vietnam’s Constitution and laws: international treaties, the constitution, laws,
decrees by government, circulars by relevant ministries). In other words, legality includes disobedience of state regulations which are in contradiction with the international treaties, constitution, laws, ...

2) Autonomy: all members of CSF have equal rights and obligations in the operation of CSF, no one can ask a member to do what that member does not want. Each member (or group of members) acts autonomously with its creativity, its initiative in its own way in order to achieve the objective of CSF but must accept the core values and principle of CSF and this does not exclude joint-activities.

3) Real name: all members of CSF use real names in CSF’s activities; pen-name is acceptable if it can identify clearly that is the pen-name of the person. No pseudo-name or false name is accepted in conducting CSF’s activities. Integrity is a paramount requirement.

4) Openness: CSF is open and acts publicly. Nothing needs to be hidden. This also applies to each member in doing CSF’s activities.

5) Non-violence: CSF and its members strictly adhere to non-violence. Non-violence has two aspects. First, CSF and its members do not use any violent means to achieve its goal. Second, CSF and its members use all non-violent and legal measures in their activities and jointly with other people or organizations to convince those who advocate violence to abandon their violent policy in order to prevent violent activities of any one or any organization. Violence also means bad, hate speech, other forms of inciting violence, ... and must be avoided.

6) Tolerance: the principle to accept and respect different opinions, those of the minorities in particular, has to be observed strictly.

7) Truthfulness: All information needs to be crosschecked to ensure that it is as precise as possible. Distortion, falsification, counterfeit, lies are not acceptable.

8) Trust: To trust each other is an important principle. It does not encourage any procedure or measure causing doubtfulness. CSF does
not fear infiltration of any forces (including the communists and security forces)\textsuperscript{6}. Membership is even welcome if they accept the objectives, values and principles of CSF as any other member.

9) Solidarity: the spirit of solidarity is maintained in action of groups as well as CSF as a whole; solidarity with other groups or organizations, especially when a member of those groups or anyone has been harassed or maltreated.

CSF, founded on September 23rd, 2013 by those intellectuals who signed Petition 72, is not a hierarchical organization. It is a flat network, a self-organizing network sharing common values, principles and goals. It encourages overlapping, i.e. one person can be a member of several groups. In other words, it tries to be an umbrella network of loosely connected networks. And the strategy for democratization in Vietnam mentioned above has been announced by CSF in the year 2013.

Needless to say, that in the above-mentioned goals, values, and principles you can find so many features of several civil society organizations of former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe and elsewhere in the world, including those in our region (Hsiao (ed.), 2006).

We think that our current situation is quite similar to that of Taiwan in the first half of 1980s before its democratic transition. Then the ruling party of Taiwan, Kuomintang, was a Leninist party and its economy was a capitalist one. The VCP today is still a Leninist party and Vietnam’s economy is a capitalist one. We have learned the experiences of former socialist countries in Eastern Europe as well as experiences from Taiwan, South Korea, the Philippines to formulate the strategy presented above.

To summarize, a viable strategy for democratization in Vietnam is to develop a strong, vibrant and inclusive civil society with the above-
mentioned 5 policies and 9 principles in order to create constant pressure on the authorities and force them to democratize (by negotiation or a rupture).

Notes

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1. All quotes without reference are from Zhao (2009: 3-87).
2. Were the Party elders and specially Deng supportive for Zhao’s political reforms a transition would start. This observation may indict that a failed
transition was indeed the case. And radicalization happened from both sides as shown in the brief discription.

3. Developed by Ronald Inglehart and Christian Welzel.

4. A thick, vibrant and inclusive civil society is important in a succesful democratization process and to avoid “troubled democratization” (see, for example, Donatella della Porta (2014: 237-267) and the warning of Renske Doorenspleet (2019: 70, 240) that “the process of democratization is dangerous” which may happen in case of an aggressive and exclusive civil society (or social movements).

5. As the government of Vietnam used to accuse the dissidents and those informal civil society organizations (CSOs) who advocate democracy and human rights. That accusation is meaningless, if you understand correctly the state as a notion composed of four elements (in an enhanced Weberian sense) and their relations: (1) a state territory, (2) a state population, (3) a state apparatus, and (4) the state ideas and projects. On the other hand, to fight against a government or its policies is a RIGHT, if we use the term government as a specific set of men and women who occupy positions in the state apparatus (particularly, of the elected and/or appointed high officials).

6. We have an open policy to win them over, to convert them (in fact, there were many reform-minded party members among our founders). We try to transform the well-known communist tactics of min yun ( 民 運 ) into dang yun ( 黨 運 ), … to convert them. And the communist party has tried hard against that policy.

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(With exceptions of Doorenspleet (2019) and Lim (2014), seven books
mentioned above plus dozen of other works on democratization are available in
Vietnamese as an effort to Broaden the People’s Mind.)
A Review of the Consensus-building of One Country, Two Systems in the 1980s and 1990s

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Abstract

On the eve of the “decolonization” of Hong Kong, the idea of “One Country, Two Systems” is at the epicenter of political debate. How the idea shapes and is shaped by various political actors, including the Chinese state, the British state, and the democratic activists? How does the ever-evolving concept of “One Country, Two Systems” serve as both the means and ends of the state-building project, thereby structuring actions of the political actors? By addressing these questions, we explore the causes and processes of the consensus building of “One Country, Two Systems”. The conventional wisdom has it that, “One Country, Two Systems” has been a site of contestation between the Beijing Regime, the colonial Hong Kong government and the pro-democracy camp, particularly after the 1989 Tiananmen Crackdown. The struggle and negotiation between the parties are therefore interpreted as a zero-sum battle between a democratic and authoritarian governance. We, instead, argue that the process of consensus-building of “One Country, Two Systems”, a legal framework that is of political, economic,
diplomatic and ideological compromise, continued after the crackdown, an agreement not to be broken.

**Keywords:** Hong Kong, China, Britain, democracy, decolonialization, state-building, “One Country, Two Systems”

1. Introduction

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, the then leader of the Communist China, met with Hong Kong Governor Murray MacLehose in Beijing to discuss the future of Hong Kong. In the meeting, Deng asserted that sovereignty over Hong Kong belonged to China (Mark, 2017b), and neglected MacLehose’s suggestion to publicly extend the land lease of New Territories, a matter that concerned investors, a sign that implicated the future governorship of Hong Kong. At that critical juncture, Deng’s decision signaled that Hong Kong would be returned to the Chinese Communist State in 1997, despite the doubtful compatibility between a capitalist city and a socialist state. In hindsight, scholars concluded that “Deng’s remarks in 1979 basically sealed the fate of Hong Kong – that China possessed sovereignty over Hong Kong and would end British administration after June 30, 1997, practicing instead what would become known as “one country, two systems” in Hong Kong” (Mark, 2017a: 271).

In retrospect, the future of Hong Kong has been a complex process of negotiation and contestation. The enacting of Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the drafting of Basic Law from 1984-1989, and the design and preliminary implementation of “One Country, Two Systems” before 1997, we argue, are all part of the Chinese state-building project, along with its market reform policies since the late 1970s. The resumption of sovereignty over Hong Kong, hence, is the remaking of
the Chinese Communist state and the local state in Hong Kong, a process that has tremendous impacts over the livelihood of Hong Kong people and its political trajectory.

One unintended consequence is that the strategic move of the Chinese state and the strategic retreat of Britain trigger the reformation of the civil society in Hong Kong, an emerging politicized community over the past four decades. Yet, the democracy movement has always been working around a tacit consensus built in the 1980s, a consensus, rightly or wrongly, about the perfection and realization of the political and legal framework of One Country, Two Systems. Localist movements that pursued alternative economic development, such as the preservation movement, anti-express-railway-link protest and pro-Independence movement would not transpire until mid-2000s and after 2014. In other words, the democracy movement was influenced by the concept of One Country, Two Systems for the past four decades, turning the Hong Kong democracy movement into a political project that always partakes, negotiates with, and was conditioned by the making and remaking of One Country, Two Systems. Counterintuitively, even the Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 did not rupture the political consensus of sovereignty resumption. Although the local pro-democracy elites started to organize their own political parties, rarely did they cross the red line to break the framework of One Country, Two Systems.

This paper, therefore, aims to address the following questions: How does the conceptual framework of One Country, Two Systems operate as a dominant political consensus and state-building project in the 1980s and 1990s? How different political actors shape and are shaped by this political process in the 1980s and 1990s, contributing to the consensus-building of One Country, Two Systems?

Firstly, this paper identifies the political and legal framework of One Country, Two Systems as an ongoing state-building project. One
Country, Two Systems is not a self-explanatory concept, but a consensus that is first built between the Chinese Communist State and the British State, and then requires constant maintenance, repair, and reinvention of different political actors. Such a political consensus precludes options such as Hong Kong independence and the extension of British administration, leaving little choice to the Hong Kong elites and public. As it goes without saying that the making of One Country, Two Systems equals a long-term state-building project, propelling the democratization of Hong Kong becomes a means, for many pro-democracy activists, to guarantee future autonomy, prosperity and protection. Given Hong Kong as a prosperous capitalist city in the 1980s, electoral democracy is the only lacking element in the proposed framework of One Country, Two Systems that blends a capitalist city with a socialist state.

Secondly, the political consensus of sovereignty resumption is a forceful agreement that no major political actors dare to break. The two pro-democracy representatives are expelled from the Basic Law Drafting Committee and forbidden to review the final version of the Basic Law, the future constitution of Hong Kong, because they supported the 1989 democracy movement in China. However, the incident did not completely radicalize the democracy activists. Instead of rocking the boat, the democratic activists chose to enhance the internal operational mechanism of One Country, Two Systems by collaborating with the colonial administration to build the local political party and strengthen the administrative institutions for the future.

This paper, therefore, serves as an attempt to re-examine the complex political process in Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s, and it will be organized into four sections. Firstly, we give a brief account of One Country, Two Systems as a state-building project. Secondly, we investigate the emergence of One Country, Two Systems in the context of decolonization, Chinese market reform, and the maintenance of
national unity. Thirdly, we examine the operation of One Country, Two Systems as a political consensus in the 1980s. Fourthly, we trace in what way such a political consensus persists in the post-Tiananmen era in the 1990s.

2. The Idea of State-building and One Country, Two Systems

The concept of state-building is deployed to highlight the participation of the Chinese state, the British and colonial Hong Kong state, and the local Hong Kong elites, especially the pro-democracy activists, in the making and remaking of One Country, Two Systems. Their participations alter and structure the local state apparatus, constantly redefining the ideal and operation of One Country, Two Systems. Scholars who use the concept of state-building tend to study the state’s initial formation, capacity and performance; they usually are more interested in researching on the ability and causes of states to provide legitimate order, effective economic development and social inclusion (Centeno, Kohli, Yashar and Mistree, 2017; Ma, 2007) than critiquing the idea of state-building itself (Chandler, 2006). Instead of stumbling into the debate, we propose to examine the consensus-building of One Country, Two Systems through the lens of state-building. By employing the lens of state-building, it helps capture how the pro-democracy elites are absorbed into the Chinese state-building project to remake Hong Kong as part of China on the political, administrative, constitutional, ideological and territorial level. While being absorbed into the state project, the pro-democracy elites also negotiate with the Chinese and British state actors about the constitutional configuration and the power relation between the Chinese state and Hong Kong state. The absorption of pro-democracy elites into the state-building project, ironically, constitutes a threat to the progress of Hong Kong’s electoral reform.
Whether they should abide by the rules of the game or whether they should rock the boat? Could they muster enough support if they take a radical act? If not, what is the most pragmatic approach?

Although different political actors project a different political agenda into the state-building campaign, perfecting the operational framework of One Country, Two Systems is the common ground agreed and tolerated by most of the political actors in the subsequent decades until the crackdown of the Umbrella Movement in 2014.¹ The intersection between decolonization, the resumption of sovereignty of a nation-state, the market reform of a communist China, and the politicized capitalist city delineates a complex entanglement that shaped the democracy movement of Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s. In short, these forces operate on the level of political and economic discourses, perceptions, practices and ideologies, all of which are crystalized in the relentless contestation of the operational framework of One Country, Two Systems.

3. Post-war Context: Decolonization, Economic Reform, and National Unity

To understand the complex political process of Hong Kong before 1997, the story of Hong Kong has to be situated in the post-Second World War (WWII) context. Britain’s decolonization policy, and Communist China’s urge for national unity and economic reform are equally critical to the birth of Sino-British Joint Declaration, One Country, Two Systems, and the ensuing drafting of the Basic Law.

As a result of its declining imperial power during the post-war order restructuring, Britain adopted a decolonization policy to lessen its financial burden. That said, Hong Kong was a thorny colony. Some historians argued that Hong Kong was both valuable and peripheral to
London: “As a major holder of sterling balances and a regional hub for British trade, in the 1960s Hong Kong was a colony too valuable to abandon voluntarily. Yet Hong Kong was militarily indefensible and constitutionally ‘awkward’” (Mark, 2017b: 258). Because of the 1967 riot that was triggered by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, London decided to conduct a study of long-term policy toward Hong Kong. In 1969, the report concluded that “Hong Kong’s future must eventually lie in China” and that “our objective must be to attempt to negotiate its return, at a favourable opportunity, on the best terms obtainable for its people and for our material interests there”, and Hong Kong’s future was “likely to become an issue in the 1980s” (quoted in Mark, 2017b: 259). In the subsequent years, the Chinese government signaled that it would not take back Hong Kong until the expiry of the New Territories lease. In 1972, following China’s admission to the United Nations, Hong Kong was removed from the category of colonial territories upon China’s request, a move that helped clear the path of obstacles for sovereignty resumption (So, 1999). On the British side, because of the Cultural Revolution from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s, it decided not to actively embark on the discussion of Hong Kong’s future until the new, moderate Chinese leadership emerged and assumed power (Mark, 2017b).

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, against the backdrop of the need to maintain the national unity and to advance the nascent market reform, the new Chinese leaders made clear that it would take back Hong Kong at all cost (Mark, 2017a; Mark, 2017b). The Chinese government not only invited Hong Kong’s governor to Beijing in 1979, but met with the British prime minister Margaret Thatcher in 1982 to spell out its firm stance. The Chinese leaders had at least two incentives to take back Hong Kong. On the economic level, Hong Kong could provide expertise to smooth China’s Four Modernization program in modern management, investment, entrepreneurship and knowledge to Guangdong and other
newly established economic special zones (Vogel, 2011). Deng Xiaoping and other leaders had in mind to reform China’s economy, setting up markets and a new price system, and gaining foreign currency in exchange of new technology and support for industrial projects (Vogel, 2011; Naughton, 1995). On the nationalist level, taking back Hong Kong could alleviate Chinese leaders’ burden to fulfill national unity, satisfying the national sentiment (Mark, 2017a). Given the resumption of United States’ arms sales to Taiwan, the reunification with Taiwan might be a distant task for Deng. Since a military solution towards Taiwan was not feasible, Hong Kong had to be taken back when the time came. The colonial city, unexpectedly, served as the experimental site for One Country, Two Systems, a political project initially invented to make appeal to the Taiwanese regime for guaranteed autonomy and territorial reunification.

When the British government decided to make a concession to the Communist China during the diplomatic negotiation from 1982 to 1984, the Chinese Communist State secured a political victory. The subsequent task was to incorporate Hong Kong into the Chinese Communist State, marking another stage for the state-building project. In a nutshell, the post-WWII context shaped the power dynamics between Britain, China, Taiwan and the U.S, leaving Hong Kong’s future at the mercy of numerous “invisible” hands. Because of the 1982-1984 Sino-British negotiation, the Chinese leaders also realized that the majority of Hong Kong people feared the Communist China, and, hence, executed a rebuilding of the united front in Hong Kong for and beyond 1997 (Vogel, 2011; Xu, 1993). In contrast, Britain and the colonial Hong Kong government aimed at collecting the public’s opinion and gauging to what degree an open election should be implemented, a vague promise stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration.
4. The Political Contestation from Early 1980s to 1989

When Sino-British Joint Declaration was published in 1984, the British state and the Chinese state mobilize others, at least on the surface, to participate in the design of One Country, Two Systems and the drafting of the Basic Law. Although the British colonial government consulted the public on the political reform of Hong Kong, its main strategy remained the maintenance of economic growth and political stability (Chan, 1996). Meanwhile, the Chinese state began to reform and expand its political infrastructure in Hong Kong. It first rearranged personnel in Xinhua News Agency, its administrative arms in Hong Kong, then became active in co-opting the political and business elites into the emerging pro-Beijing coalition through the Basic Law Drafting Committee, and thirdly produced propaganda that promoted an operational framework of One Country, Two Systems with nominal direct-election element under Beijing’s tight control.

After announcing the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, the colonial Hong Kong government soon issued several consultation papers in the next few years to advance the institutional reform of Hong Kong. In July 1984, the government issued a consultation green paper, *The Future Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong*. In November 1984, it announced that 24 seats of the Legislative Council would be indirectly elected next year in its white paper *The Future Development of Representative Government in Hong Kong*. As Chan observed, “the whole tenor of the 1984 white paper was optimistic and clearly contemplated a substantial reduction in the extent of the executive branch’s control of the legislature through the appointment of members of the election to be held in 1988” (Chan, 1996: 14). The first ever election of local legislature was regarded by many “as a necessary and vital inducement behind the Hong Kong people’s grudging
acceptance of the 1984 Sino-British joint declaration” (ibid.). Nevertheless, because of the pressure from Beijing, the colonial government decided to not advocate any specific electoral reform in 1987 when the green paper entitled *The 1987 Review of Developments in Representative Government* was published. Failing to include important constitutional issues raised in 1984, the British authorities smashed the confidence of the public and discredited its role as the people’s representative.

In the meantime, the Chinese state exercised tight and direct control over the drafting of the Basic Law and expanded its administrative arms in Hong Kong, adopting a series of strategies that led to a fully-fledged pro-Beijing ruling coalition after 1997. Since the early 1980s, the Chinese leaders realized they had to train future leaders to govern Hong Kong, a capitalist city under the control of a self-reforming Chinese Communist State after 1997 (Vogel, 2011). To enhance the state’s capacity of leading the political project in Hong Kong, a team of capable communist cadres were selected and assigned to head and reform the underground united front in Hong Kong (ibid.). Xu Jiatun, the new head of Xinhua News Agency, was requested to facilitate political liaison with variegated sectors, inviting social and economic elites to Beijing or hosting meetings in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, Beijing declared that the drafting of the Basic Law was merely an internal issue, therefore setting up Basic Law Drafting Committee (BLDC), consisting of 36 members from mainland China and 23 from Hong Kong; an additional 180 members were selected into the Basic Law Consultation Committee (BLCC), most of whom were drawn from professional and business sectors (Chan, 1996).

The coalition between the Chinese state and local business elites started to realign among themselves. By the 1980s, many businesspeople were still suspicious about the consistency of China’s policy advocacy,
but many already started to invest in the coastal areas where the special economic administrations were established to facilitate China’s market reform. Many business elites also joined hands with the Chinese state in opposing a rapid democratization in Hong Kong, contending that an abrupt change would possibly hamper Hong Kong’s economic prosperity, obstructing a smooth transfer of sovereignty in 1997 (Chan, 1996; Sing, 2004). Chinese officials even criticized Britain’s plan to execute a democratic election in 1988, attacking the idea as failing to converge with the Basic Law being drafted by China and as contradicting the spirit of Sino-British joint declaration (Chan, 1996). Instead of facilitating a direct election in Hong Kong, the Chinese regime publicly denounced a rapid political reform, setting it against Hong Kong’s economic prosperity in its official discourse.

By the 1980s, the emerging democratic activists were still a set of loose network that lacked resources and experience. One of the missions of Xinhua News Agency was to locate these dissidents and co-opt them into the BLDC and BLCC, the two administrative agencies that gave advice and drafted the Basic Law. Although agreed to participate in the committee, some democratic activists utilized their semi-official status to demand democratization by petitioning and lobbying officials in Beijing and London (Lo, 1997). Nevertheless, none of them were able to break away from the debate and framework of One Country, Two Systems, an emerging yet powerful political consensus. Some democratic activists recognized the undefined framework of One Country, Two Systems as an opportunity to demand for a more democratic and reasonable version of Basic Law (Szeto, 2011: 252). On another occasion, both the student unions of the Chinese University of Hong Kong and University of Hong Kong protested against the British administration and the Chinese State, demanding a promise and realization of democracy. When the state actors, such as Xu Jiatun,
performed as liberal-minded with courtesy, many democratic activists, albeit equipped with a critical mind, were willing to collaborate with the Chinese State.

Meanwhile, many political elites felt they had limited choices and resources to lead their own way. Because the colonial authority had never granted the local population sufficient political autonomy to develop mature independent political entity to operate on the level of local and international politics, frontline political participations such as mass mobilization and rally were not familiar practice to the public. To the mind of those political elites, collaborating with the Chinese and British regime to draft the Basic Law, to realize the 1988 direct election, and to refine the institutional framework of One Country, Two Systems were a few of the most viable and pragmatic options to secure a bright future.

It was also worth to note that the idea of One Country, Two Systems was embedded in a specific imagination of political and economic order, an aspiration, if not anxiety, that would shape the trajectory of Hong Kong’s democracy movement on another level. To many Hong Kong people, capitalism, free market economy, and economic prosperity had a promising prospect in the 1980s and 1990s. Against the backdrop of the influx of mainland labor, capital and technology to Hong Kong after WWII, the rapid yet profit-making industrialization, and the welfare provision of public housing, free elementary education and health care among other public services in the 1970s, many Hong Kongers identified themselves as culturally and economically more advanced than their mainland counterparts. Meanwhile, the government had been promoting the idea of positive non-interventionism, a governing philosophy of market-based decision making. Capitalism, free market economy, and economic prosperity then operated as a common sense and appealing truth to guarantee economic prosperity. It partly explained...
the reason why when then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher travelled to Beijing in 1982, she perceived it as an opportunity to educate the Communist Chinese on how capitalism and market functioned (Mark, 2017a). On the Chinese side, Hong Kong was the goose that laid golden eggs. Guaranteeing the economic prosperity of Hong Kong was the primary goal. Taken together, the crafting of Sino-British Joint Declaration, One Country, Two Systems, and the Basic Law all promised the maintenance of a capitalist city, its role of a financial center, and economic prosperity. Branded as one of the four tiger economies that was grown out of late industrialized advantages in East Asia, such political and rhetorical promises were critical to pacify local residents and international investors.

Among the pro-democracy elites, not many disputed such a capitalist aspiration. As some scholars noted, “Like 1991, political stance, not the class line socio-economic issues, formed the main cleavage between the democratic camp and the DAB-FTU [pro-Beijing camp] in 1995 [election]” (Chan, 2009: 186). The same observation could be applied to the political spectrum in the 1980s as well. “The most controversial and heated debates focused on the constitutional structure for the post-1997 SAR – the formation of the legislature through election and the election or appointment of the chief executive of the SAR government” (Chan, 1996: 18). In contrast to the concern of political reform, the purpose, type, mechanism and validity of capitalism, free market economy, and economic prosperity were not as widely criticized and challenged as today. The women movement in Hong Kong was primarily fighting for employment opportunities, marriage and family-related issues, social issues, and legislative and institutional reform (Wong, 1999). Influenced by the first and second wave of feminism, incubating community economy and reworking capitalism were not the primary concern of as many feminist activists as
today. Meanwhile, the labor movement was in its reformation to incubate an independent union, while the most influential unionists were nationalists who, instructed by the Chinese Communist state, yielded to the business sector to oppose a rapid democratization and practiced industrial pacifism to win the tycoon’s support for Beijing. Instead of advancing economic democracy, they hoped to ensure stability and prosperity (Chan, 2009). The demands of the political movement, women movement, and labor movement shed light on the political and economic imagination of the pro-democracy activists at that time, a sign that a specific, hegemonic idea of capitalism outshined any other possible political-economy arrangement. It was little surprise that when the democracy movement took off in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong pro-democracy elites believed that any collective action in Hong Kong should be weighed against the economic prosperity for the latter was the foundation to bargain with the Chinese state in any regard.

Taken together, this mentality translated into the action plan and ideal system that modelled One Country, Two Systems after the Westminster model and the separation of powers. When Martin Lee (李柱銘), a prominent leader of the emerging democracy camp, was consulted in the BLDC, one of his primary concerns was to establish the Court of Final Appeal (CFA) in Hong Kong, a constitutional design that safeguarded the judicial autonomy of Hong Kong. The executive, legislative, and judicial institutions and power should be laid out clearly to maintain check and balance, a constitutional arrangement that was deemed most compatible with a capitalist economy. Nonetheless, the final resolution of BLDC was that while Hong Kong could set up the CFA, the National People’s Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) held the ultimate power to overrule CFA’s ruling, giving NPCSC, in principle, the unrestrictive constitutional, administrative and legal authority over Hong Kong. In reality, NPCSC’s authority and power
could only be maintained through a continuous assertion through
different means.

In conclusion, growing out of the post-WWII geo-politics,
decolonial trend, and China’s market reform, the future of Hong Kong
was uncertain, contradicting, and scarcely open. Surely, common
people’s options were limited by the political boundaries of the
emerging framework of One Country, Two Systems. The British and
Chinese state apparatus were both insufficient to direct the public’s
aspiration and participation into support, mechanism and trust that would
resolve the power inequality and completely reconcile conflicting ideas
of various political futures. Retrospectively speaking, One Country, Two
Systems could even be seen as a political project to consolidate the state
capacity of the future HKSAR government and of the Chinese state over
the local administration. However, the British state was, although
hesitantly, willing to reconfigure the constitutional design of the future
local state, an act that opened up rooms for the emerging pro-democracy
elites to participate in the state-building project. Breathing life into the
One Country, Two Systems became a dominant political consensus at
the end of the late 1980s. Despite the hegemonic consensus, the shape
and form are opened to be discussed and debated, already narrowly
defined and often criticized by the democratic activists.

5. From 1989 to 1997: Tiananmen Massacre and the Aftermath

When the last round of Basic Law consultation was about to end in 1989
and be made public in 1990, the Tiananmen massacre took place in
Beijing, a year before the final version was rolled out. In hindsight,
many Hongkonger tended to portray the democracy movement in China
as a turning point of Hong Kong’s democracy movement, a watershed
that sparked an anti-Chinese Communist turn.3 Mass mobilization in
Beijing and Hong Kong resulted in spectacular scenes during the peak of those movements. Nevertheless, the overall strategy of the democratic camp was never essentially anti-Chinese Communist. The major debate still set the future of Hong Kong through the operational framework of One Country, Two Systems, fearing any instability and economic downturn. Both the British state and the Chinese state had in mind to seal the future of Hong Kong by upholding the consensus of One Country, Two Systems. Only the colonial Hong Kong administration, led by Chris Patten, the only politician-turn-governor, still thought of democratizing Hong Kong’s political system, giving a glimpse of hope to the pro-democracy activists (Ng, 2018). In this section, we will first discuss how the political activists took part in mass movements with a caution, avoiding potential disorder; then, the focus shifts to how the political consensus of One Country, Two Systems remained unchanged after the Tiananmen massacre.

When the democracy movement broke out in China, the leading political activists in Hong Kong always hesitated to lead a mass movement because of the fear of unintended consequences beyond their control. In the initial phase when the democracy movement ignited in Beijing, Szeto Wah (司徒華), for instance, was reluctant to interfere with the politics in mainland China. Cheung Man-kwong (張文光), Szeto Wah’s close ally, had to convince him by lobbying other members to go against Szeto Wah’s will, despite the futile attempt (Hui and Kong, 2011). In the end, the Joint Committee on the Promotion of Democratic Government (JCPDC), to which Szeto and Cheung belonged to, issued a moderate statement, asserting that the movement was “perfectly legal, logical and reasonable (合情合理合法), so that the authorities have to recognize it and dialogue with the students right away” (Luk, 2016: 190).
After the crackdown of the Beijing protest, many Hong Kong citizens long for an escalated mass participation. Some people urged the public to run on the Bank of China, hoping to apply pressure on Beijing in exchange for the personal safety of Lee Cheuk-yam (李卓人), who was a pro-democracy unionist detained in Beijing after June 4, 1989. The call resulted in a 5-billion HKD withdrawal from the bank. Despite the rising aspiration for more radical actions, some core member of JCPDC were reluctant to initiate any protests that would potentially undermine Hong Kong’s socioeconomic order. When the British government asked Martin Lee and Szeto Wah to stop the public from running on the banks, the two activists expressed their concern over the negative impact of such action to Hong Kong’s economy (Szeto, 2011). For many political activists, protest should be held in an orderly manner with certainty. These leaders, therefore, cancelled the plan of a general strike, which initially involved students, shopkeepers and labor, to avoid unnecessary chaos (Szeto, 2011; Ho, 2010; Hui and Kong, 2011). Calling off a general strike was seen by some critics as destroying the foundation of a mass movement and the chance to gain political autonomy at a critical juncture (Chung, 2015). Even when the democratic activists were lobbying for international support, economic stability and prosperity, after all, were the priority. After the 1989 massacre, some U.S. congress people proposed to remove China from the list of the most-favored nation (MFN), a trade advantage given to China; Martin Lee, along with the then-governor Chris Patten, advised against the U.S.’s intent to punish China through economic sanction for the penalty might jeopardized Hong Kong’s economy (Lampton, 2001). All the radicalized repertoires were short-lived and did not help to rework the political consensus of One Country, Two Systems. The very idea of maintaining economic stability in Hong Kong and China is a critical element that deserves more investigation, to interrogate how
such an idea, discourse and ideology intersect with Hong Kong’s sociopolitical development, in the future.

Regardless of the recognition of confidence crisis after 1989, the British state remained firm to execute its retreat plan. Shortly after the crackdown, Britain introduced measures to pacify Hong Kongers. London first allowed people who were born in Hong Kong to acquire British nationality. The colonial government then passed the Bill of Rights Ordinance to enlarge the protection of civil right. However, less than a year after the Tiananmen massacre took place, Britain also reached a “bilateral Sino-British secret deal” with Beijing in the spring of 1990, recognizing the final version of the Basic Law, which was drafted by BLDC, and enacted by NPCSC, but never reviewed by the general public of Hong Kong people (Chan, 1996: 31). Even Chris Patten, the last governor of the colonial administration, was discontent with the secret deal made between the foreign office of China and Britain when he took office of Hong Kong (Ng, 2018). Despite numerous local protests, the British administration decided to “redirect public attention to look forward and focus on the 1991 Legco election” (Chan, 1996: 32), hoping to persuade the Beijing government that electoral democracy could be implemented in Hong Kong. The British response reaffirmed the political consensus of One Country, Two Systems: Hong Kong must be returned to China, its new authoritative ruler.

In the meantime, China decided to tighten its institutional control over Hong Kong. In the final version of the Basic Law, it stipulated a modified version of Article 23, with a firm stance to criminalize subversion against the Central People’s Government (Chan, 1996). China also requested Britain that unilateral electoral reform should not take place before 1997 (Ng, 2018). Furthermore, Beijing declined to resume the membership of the two pro-democracy representatives,
namely Szeto Wah and Martin Lee, in BLDC because of their leading role in Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (the Alliance), a crucial organization that mobilized a million people in the local rally to support the democracy movement in Beijing. Szeto Wah and Martin Lee were accused by the pro-Beijing press for engaging in activities aimed at subverting the Central government (Chan, 1996). Beijing also exerted an influence on the British colonial government to outlaw the Alliance but to no avail.

After the Tiananmen massacre, the British state and the Chinese state maintained a solid stance towards the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. Their stance further isolated the pro-democracy elites, pushing them to collaborate with Chris Patten, the Hong Kong governor who wished to consolidate the political autonomy of the city while it was still under the reign of Britain. As a result, the pro-democracy elites turned to team up with the colonial administration for the local party and institutional building, competing with Beijing on the definition and operation of One Country, Two Systems.

As open elections began to be an avenue for political participation and power gaining in 1991, election gradually became the major political field and repertoire employed by the pro-democracy elites, a strategy that is still deployed to contain Beijing’s encroachment today. The repertoire taken is political, addressing One Country, Two Systems as a constitutional framework that no major political actors could circumvent, not to mention any attempts to break it. Every player should follow what was laid down in the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the Basic Law and One Country, Two Systems. Such political repertoire has a political goal to fulfill, with a hope to turn the yet-to-be-realized constitutional promises into materialized institutional infrastructures. The type of repertoire mainly entails parliamentary politics, such as negotiation, lobbying and election, and extra-parliamentary petition, like
peaceful rally and demonstration that abide to the legal system. Such repertoire targets the change of the political system instead of the socioeconomic system.

In the spring of 1990, Martin Lee, Szeto Wah and other pro-democracy elites formed United Democrats, the first local-groomed political party that took part in an open election. The leaders claimed that the party had a different agenda from the Alliance because the party focused on local issues. Such statement also meant to soften the democratic camp’s anti-communist image. Nevertheless, the core personnel of United Democrats still largely overlapped with the Alliance. In the first ever open election of Legislative Council in 1991, United Democrats won by a landslide, becoming a dominant force that represented the local population (Sing, 2004).

As Chris Patten the last governor enjoyed much more power than his predecessors in the 20th century (Tsang, 2004), winning the election not only gained public support, but enabled substantial policy change. In his first policy address in 1992, Chris Patten declared that the major agenda of his office was to speed up the democratic reform (Ma, 2010). The Patten administration increased the number of directly elected seats and enhanced the decision-making power of the legislature vis-à-vis the colonial administration (Miners, 1994; Tsang, 2004). Leading figures of United Democrats were very keen on Patten’s attitude and they knew that Patten was their best collaborator and competitor to reform Hong Kong’s political system (Sing, 2004). From early 1990s to 1997, the democratic camp had unprecedented influence in shaping the political agenda and policy, a clout that in turn justified their participation in parliamentary politics than mass mobilizing. As legislators, the oppositionists could introduce private member’s bill to advance social change, for instance, the Anti-discrimination bills, the Protection of the
Harbour Bill and the Housing Bill to limit the rental increase of the public housing (Ma, 2007). Reflecting back, some core members of United Democrats recognized the overwhelming workload of being a legislator, a situation that rendered them no energy to organize any mass mobilization against Beijing (Sing, 2004). Most importantly, such a political repertoire, an effort to advance the political, legal and social system through the power gaining, exercising and expanding of Legislative Council, still operated within the political framework of One Country, Two Systems. In conclusion, while the 1989 crackdown had caused doubt, uncertainty, and resistance on the side of civil society, neither the Chinese state, the British state nor the democratic elites wanted to rock the boat, trashing the Basic Law and One Country, Two Systems. The political project of state-building and the emerging political repertoire of election perpetuated the democracy movement in the next two decades until election gradually lost support in the late 2000s (Ng, 2018).

6. Epilogue

This paper has shown how One Country, Two Systems has become a powerful political consensus in the 1980s and 1990s, an interplay between Britain, the Communist China, and the pro-democracy elites in Hong Kong. Such a political consensus becomes an operational framework on the political, administrative, economic and ideological level that no one could afford to deride. The operational framework of One Country, Two Systems, despite being contestable, structures the political repertoire employed by the pro-democracy elites, guides Britain, and serves as an ambitious state-building project of China. Although the operational framework is negotiated between China, Britain and the pro-democracy elites, little room is given to the latter.
After the Tiananmen massacre in 1989, the buffer zone shrank further. Every party could only act within and through the framework of One Country, Two Systems, a political idea that gradually materializes itself through the legal and tacit consensus making of the Chinese state, the British state, and the pro-democracy elites.

Through the making of One Country, Two Systems, the Chinese state and the local state in Hong Kong also constantly remake themselves. Both the British, Chinese and Hong Kong political actors are part and parcel of the state-remaking process of Hong Kong and China. While these parties contested the ideal version of One Country, Two Systems, their participation shaped and are shaped by the framework of One Country, Two Systems. While the pro-democracy elites utilized election to exert leverage on the Chinese and British colonial state, the Chinese state responded with legal means to gain authority and to exert control over Hong Kong. In 1982, the Chinese state amended the Chinese constitution to authorize, legally, the setting up of special administrative zone (Vogel, 2011). The endorsement of Sino-British Joint Declaration and the incorporation of Basic Law into the Chinese constitution were also a renewal of the Chinese legal system. Besides, to co-opt the Hong Kong elites, the Chinese state enhanced Xinhua News Agency’s administrative capacity over time, ultimately turning it into the Liaison Office of the Central People’s Government in 2000. After 2003, the Liaison Office was assigned as the shadow cabinet in Hong Kong, with tremendous political clout that intervened local elections and policy lobbying. Furthermore, through the implementation of Chief Executive election and provisional Legislative Council, members of the National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference were integrated into the composition of the electorate, making it difficult to untangle the Chinese and Hong Kong state apparatus politically, legally, administratively, and
hierarchically. Two years after 1997, NPCSC also exercised its interpretation power, disputing the definition of the right of abode that was already settled by the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong. NPCSC overruled the decision laid down by the Court of Final Appeal, which ruled that the children of Hong Kong citizens had the right to Hong Kong citizenship by birth. Taken together, the Chinese state exerted its authority and expanded its administrative capacity through its articulation of One Country, Two Systems. The expansion of its authority and state capacity never stabilizes, but constantly restructures through a series of incidents. If such state-building process is complex, what does the Chinese state gain or lose in such power and structural transmission? How do we critically evaluate the process and capture the nuanced progress and regression in the future?

Lastly, the dominant political repertoire gradually runs out of steam after the handover of Hong Kong in 1997. As a response to the electoral reform in the early 1990s, election, parliamentary debate, and law-making were some critical political repertoires to build up the professional image, capacity and credibility of the local political parties. Nevertheless, in the eyes of many young turks, the once empowering political repertoire became repetitive around the late 2000s, losing its effect to make any institutional change through law-making or to counter the undemocratic Hong Kong government and Beijing’s intervention. The promise of capitalism, free market economy and capitalist city also become the curse of the city, projecting a future that seems to be outshined and overtaken by its Chinese neighbor. Impatient with the old guard and economic disparity, the young turks launch their own campaign, mainly through mass mobilization and an increasing interest in community organizing. The discontent rose over the years, bursting into the rejection of the old political repertoire. After the Umbrella Movement, there is an increasing attempt to break away from the One
Country, Two Systems framework. Many youngsters start to ask: why should they stand with an undemocratic framework that binds them and does no good?

The rising aspiration for self-determination or independence, however, results in a heavy-handed retaliation unleashed by the regime. The regime deploys political, legal and administrative means in imprisoning activists, disqualifying popularly elected legislators, remodeling the meaning of political neutrality of civil servants, and weakening the authority of Hong Kong’s judicial system through political interpretation by NPCSC. These means and strategies are long developed through the expansion of Chinese state capacity in Hong Kong since the 1980s. Young activists’ approach toward One Country, Two Systems opens up room for new political imagination, but it also comes with a heavy price and challenges, new and old ones that deserve more nuanced and close-up analysis. What are the questions that people should be asking if they could shake and rebuild the framework from ground-zero? In what ways are today’s democratic activists adopting a similar practice as their predecessor thirty years ago? In what way they are acting differently? What are the aspiration, hope, fear and anxiety that propel or hinder the political acts now and then?
Notes

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+ The author name order does not represent degree of contribution.

1. Many pro-independence activists see the Umbrella Movement as a failure to achieve universal suffrage. This partly explains why many youngsters turn to support Hong Kong independence, or at least, are very suspicious of One Country, Two Systems.

2. Not everyone thought the same as Szeto Wah did. Margaret Ng (吳霭儀), for instance, expressed doubts in her memoir, saying that many Hong Kongers were forced to take the political reality of One Country, Two Systems (Ng, 2018).
3. It is worth to note that Hong Kong people do not describe the political movement for electoral reform as democracy movement in the first place. Only after the advent of pro-democracy movement in Beijing, it caused a cultural turn of Hong Kong’s politics, an effect induced by the Tiananmen protest.

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Commentary

The Hard Side of CCP’s Soft Power:
Confucius Institute

Fernando Romeo*
La Plataforma Ciudadana Stop Instituto Confucio

The Confucius Institute (CI, 孔子学院) program is a Chinese Communist Party soft-power initiative which aims, on the surface, to promote Chinese language\(^1\) and culture around the world. There are around 500 CIs worldwide, including one in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU). The program is overseen by Hanban (汉语国际推广领导小组, Office of Chinese Language Council International), the CI headquarters in Beijing.

Unlike other countries’ language and culture programs (such as the Alliance Française, the British Council, the Goethe Institut or the Instituto Cervantes), the Confucius Institute does not settle itself in an independent building, but rather inside university campuses, schools and other institutions depending on foreign jurisdictions. This bilateral relation (foreign jurisdiction-Chinese Communist Party) threatens academic freedom, human rights and national security in those cities where CIs are welcomed.

The CI program is controlled by Sun Chunlan, Politburo member and chair of the Hanban Council.\(^2\)
CI Does Not Have Educational Purposes

Zhao Guocheng, Hanban’s deputy director general, was interviewed by the Beijing Youth Daily on August 3, 2010: “Why has China created the CIs and is proactively pushing forward the CIs to the world?” Zhao Guocheng replied: “It is because China has been attacked and demonized over the past decades. Many people view China with coloured glasses. The primary purpose of setting up the CIs is to promote an accurate understanding of China, rather than the promotion of Chinese culture”.

CI’s Risks, Controversies and Problems

1) CIs censor topics such as the Tiananmen Massacre, Tibet and Taiwan. Self-censorship of university officials and professors may happen in universities with a CI if they fear their activities go against CCP’s interests. The CI agreements usually threatens universities with a clause against tarnishing the CI reputation and losing its funding if so.

2) CIs praise Deng Xiaoping, Mao Zedong and the One-child policy in one propaganda textbook, among other examples of propaganda.

3) CI has discriminatory hiring policies (back in 2011, Hanban website stated that Falun Gong practitioners could not be teachers in CIs).

4) CIs require compliance with Chinese law outside China.

5) CI’s HSK exams (汉语水平考试) are an alleged fraud: In 2010, Hanban stated that the HSK’s six levels correspond directly to the six levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). However, this statement has been rejected by the German association of Chinese language teachers, which argue that HSK level 6 is equivalent to CEFR level B2, instead of a C2 level claimed by Hanban.
6) CIs pose a national security risk and serve as a tool of CCP influence around the world (FBI in the USA and CSIS in Canada have long warned these past years about CIs’ operations).

**Spanish Civic Platform’s Campaign against CI**

1) The civic platform got CI agreements with governments, schools and universities through the freedom of information act and transparency laws.\(^9\)

2) The platform has generated a public debate on the issue by making public and available its findings online. Social media and website proved to be useful to get interviews with the media (journalists found the platform website while searching for CI information on the Internet).

3) Platform members attended a public hearing in Aragon regional parliament on CI risks.\(^{10}\)

4) The platform organized several “In the name of Confucius” (假孔子之名) movie screenings (NTU screened this film last year).\(^{11}\)

5) “Stop Confucius Institute” volunteers translated information about CI risks into Spanish language (according to the Special Eurobarometer 386, only 22% of Spain’s population is able to hold a conversation in English).

6) When doing a letter-writing campaign on the street, people came to our booth and gave us a lot of valuable ideas.

**Why This Is Important**

- CCP wants to control the narrative outside China through CI and other tools to keep its totalitarian power.
- Spain’s lack of China knowledge is a risk for future Spanish leaders in universities to develop a pro-CCP vision of the world and so be in the
future on the wrong side of history. All dictatorships have not lasted too much.

- The CI program can be used by the CCP as a tool of elevating the image of the CCP domestically back in China.
- Foreigners will have less Chinese language and Chinese culture and history knowledge through CI. The CCP benefits from this loophole and lack of knowledge of Westerners to advance on its own agenda.
- Students and parents are seriously misled because CIs benefit from the local prestige of the universities they are attached to, and people do not know which institution is really behind CI.

Alternatives

- Taiwanese model: TOCFL (華語文能力測) exams comply with CEFR.
- Universities and governments should not outsource the Chinese studies to the CCP, and rather keep or create their own independent programs.

Final Remarks

As of May 2019, there have been 33 closures of CI worldwide. In 2018, Pentagon banned the Department of Defense from funding American universities with CIs.

In 2011, Valencia Supreme Court banned a Hanban program in Valencia public schools: Hanban teachers sent from China did not pass through any Spanish official hiring process, although they were going to teach at Spanish state-funded schools.
Notes

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1. CI only teaches Mandarin and simplified characters.


9. Convenios Instituto Confucio España <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/vjd0vr4x3ml99i6/AAAOReHL31SLwLUSigz4qEgda?dl=0>.


11. “《假孔子之名》影片简介”, 《假孔子之名》In the name of Confucius: A documentary exposing the hidden truth behind China’s global push to educate our youth. <https://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/tw/>

12. “闇啓孔子學院” , 《假孔子之名》In the name of Confucius: A documentary exposing the hidden truth behind China’s global push to educate our youth. <https://inthenameofconfuciusmovie.com/tw/cutting-ties-with-confucius-institutes/>


Postscript
Thirty Years after the Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre: Requiem for a Chinese Dream – and Recharting the Path of Nonviolent Action and Civil Societal Movement to China’s Democratic Future

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Abstract

At the 30th anniversary of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and June Fourth crackdown in Beijing, this article examines the legacy of the tumultuous episode unprecedented in the history of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) and scrutinises the prospects and challenges in the struggle of post-1989 Chinese dissent and nonviolent action (NVA), both exiled and domestic, in the context of State-civil societal relations. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)’s Party-State domination has so far continued to be stable, with the NVA movements being disadvantaged by both a low degree of internal solidarity and organisation as well as numerical weakness to effectively engage in concerted action, vis-à-vis the same factors on the side of the State. Without any impending national economic crisis, military defeat or internal power struggle severe enough to destroy the CCP’s ruling
echelon from within and with no sign of the weakening of the State’s will and machinery to suppress those who dare to challenge the CCP’s self-justified legitimacy to rule without being elected to do so, the Party’s rule looks set to continue to stay strong and political democratisation of China seems destined to be long in coming. Ironically, the CCP’s present consensus-based collective leadership, while supposed to prevent the rise of another disastrously strong leader like Mao Zedong, will count against quick democratisation too. Against this backdrop, taking into consideration the divergence and convergence of the strategic and ideological approaches of the democracy movement and civil rights activism as well as the corresponding factors of instrumental activities, bargaining power and ideology on the part of the Party-State, the article analyses the conflict and reluctant symbiosis across the unfortunate State-society divide, assesses the tribulations and prospects of contemporary Chinese dissent and NVA, and ponders on the potential for political change.

**Keywords:** June Fourth, Tiananmen, Chinese Communist Party, authoritarianism, Party-State, dissent, non-violent action, democracy movement, weiquan activism

... while I recognize the dangers to truth of relating scholarship to life, I also believe that we who live by the pen bear some measure of obligation, however tenuous, to those who die by the sword.


1. Tiananmen Thirty Years On

This special issue of the *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal* represents a collection of selected papers in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the
Tiananmen protests and the June Fourth massacre in 1989 from among those presented at the international academic conference on “Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement” held by the New School for Democracy and the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China at National Taiwan University in Taipei on May 18-20, 2019.

In the foreword to this special issue, Perry Link’s prose poem “Why We Remember June Fourth” touchingly gave us a description of the human tragedy that had unfolded during the night of 3rd-4th June thirty years ago. The focus on an individual, human level has made the episode even more poignant, the State’s attempt to obliterate all citizens’ memory of these individual tragedies over the past thirty years so monstrous, and the struggle to maintain that memory so important, not only because of a measure of obligation of the world to those who died by the sword of a ruthless State in 1989, but also a duty to thwart the relentless attempt to force a mass amnesia not only on the Chinese citizens but all people in the world – as highlighted in the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China and the New School for Democracy’s Conference Declaration: by the Party regime that “exploits the strengths of speedy economic development and the powers of science and technology to tighten domestic control and expand its international influence” – for as this article in the subsequent section quotes from Joseph Anton, “Against ruthlessness, remembering was the only defense. The Chinese leadership knew this: that memory was the enemy.” (Rushdie, 2012)

Following the foreword, this CCPS special issue of Upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre: Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement consists of two prolegomenal articles, three papers exploring the significance and implications of China’s 1989 protests and crackdown,
three analysing the development of State-civil societal relations in China post-Tiananmen, and two examining the implications of the 1989 events on Vietnam’s democracy movement and post-Handover Hong Kong’s political governance respectively. This special issue then closes with a commentary on PRC’s global Confucius Institute project and this postscript.

As in Perry Link’s prose poem, Larry Diamond, in the special issue’s first prologue “Thirty Years after Tiananmen: The PRC as an Emerging Global Threat to Freedom”, similarly emphasises the importance of memory, thirty years after Tiananmen, and truthful rendering of history, and discusses the sustaining of the struggle for freedom and democracy in the context of the inseparability of the Chinese Communist Party-state’s, symbiotically and inextricably linked, domestic repression of political dissent and international projection of covert and corrupting influence. In this keynote address to the conference, Diamond reminds us what a perilous moment we are at today, and urges us to be vigilant of the emergence of a superpower that is increasingly belligerent and “aggressive in trying to defeat and pre-empt any historical memory of, or normative embrace of, democratic values or democratic mobilization”. Hence, the continuing domestic repression in the PRC has today taken on a significance far beyond China’s national borders with impacts traversing continents across the globe.

Understanding China’s current sociopolitical situation is thus of critical importance for all who care not only for China but for global human rights, freedom and democracy, a point that is not missed in this special issue’s second prologue by Joseph Yu-shek Cheng (鄭宇碩), Honorary President of the New School for Democracy, that gives the example of the March 2017 side event organized by the Chinese Mission to the United Nations Office in Geneva and the China Society for
Human Rights Studies called “Building a Community of Shared Future for Mankind: A New Approach to Global Human Rights Governance” and a joint statement released in another similar side event, following June session of the Human Rights Council, on behalf of more than 140 countries entitled “Joining Hands to Reduce Poverty, Promote and Protect Human Rights”, reflecting increasingly bold attempt by this global economic powerhouse which happens to be the world’s largest and most repressive dictatorship to subvert the notion of human rights to not only protect but even promote its “China model” of technologically glittering, ruthlessly repressive governance. However, as William Shakespeare says in *The Merchant of Venice* (1596), “all that glisters is not gold”. While the stability of the Chinese Communist Party regime is not to be under-estimated, Cheng observes, its gradual atrophy is still probable in the near future amidst its deteriorating external and domestic environments, and he firmly believes that the pro-democracy movement will continue to demonstrate that the struggle for human rights and democracy in China will never end and that a regime which denies the dignity and rights of its people will never last.

“Thirty years ago, intellectuals, university students and workers in China witnessed the accumulation of political problems including high inflation, bureaucratic speculation activities, abuse of power and corruption.” Thus said in the preamble of the Conference’s Declaration, “On the occasion of paying respects to the deceased Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, they raised a series of demands for the nation’s future: education reforms, the sanctioning of corruption, control of inflation, immediate political reforms by the government, protection of freedom of the media, and ultimately the realization of political democracy.” Jean-Philippe Béja, in his paper “April 27th, 1989: The Day the Chinese People Stood up” under the section *From Protests to Crackdown*, emphasises the importance of remembering, besides the 6.4
massacre, the 4.27 unprecedented large-scale demonstration in response to the publication of the April 26th People’s Daily editorial that effectively defined the student movement as a destabilizing anti-Party revolt that should be resolutely opposed at all levels of society.

The editorial became a catalyst for the protest movement that was to grow in strength through April and May – the largest social movement in the history of the PRC involving millions of participants across numerous cities in China, the first-ever movement of such a scale and scope that the world had till then witnessed taking place in a country anywhere ruled by a Communist Party – before it was bloodily put down with a massacre in the night of 3rd-4th June 1989, an tragic event described by Michel Bonnin as a breaking point in the history of contemporary China that generated a fracture that not only affected time but also space in the next paper in the section, “June 4th, 1989: A Founding Non-Event, a Breaking Point in Time and Space”. According to Bonnin, the event resulted in a fault line in time between the PRC’s rather liberalising period of the 1980s and the subsequent period of increasing repression as well as another in space wherein China took a turn that cut it from the major part of the rest of the hitherto Communist world from Eastern Europe through the Soviet Union to Mongolia where Communist Party dictatorships were toppled one after another from the late 1989 to early 1990. Ironically, such a momentous, fundamental event has been transformed by the ruthless State into a non-event, erased from all domestic official records and media, as well as from the collective memory of the citizens, in its relentless effort to stop the tide of democratic transition to again gaining momentum.

That tide had already been arguably, temporarily halted, of course, as described in the Conference’s Declaration, when “this peaceful Tiananmen Pro-democracy Movement’s demands were not met, but were crushed by military violence; from late night on June 3 to early
morning on June 4, 1989, armed soldiers were mobilized by Party leaders to fire on unarmed students and civilians, resulting in about ten thousand deaths”, or in what Guoguang Wu (吳國光) in the third paper under this section, “The Tiananmen Military Coup d’État of 1989: A Neglected Aspect of History from a Comparative-Politics Perspective”, sees as a military coup d’état that had been prepared during the days following the April 26th People’s Daily editorial through which CCP’s paramount leader Deng Xiaoping (邓小平) announced his hardline stance against the Tiananmen pro-democracy demonstrations. Against a long-held assumption that a coup d’état has been absent in the history of the PRC, Wu sees the Tiananmen crackdown as a response in the form of a military coup with the employment of state violence against the Chinese momentum of democratic transition.

“Today, thirty years since the massacre, the official verdict against the martyrs has yet to be reversed; and no democratic reforms have emerged,” the Conference’s Declaration reminds us, while “the Chinese Communist regime continues to strengthen its control of the people, and its suppression of the demands for democracy and human rights.” In this harsh winter of political repression, individuals with conscience and conviction keep marching on, heeding the confidence exalted by Émile Zola a century ago (“Truth is on the march; nothing can stop it now.”), and the most vocal ones end up being the new martyrs, paying for their brazen activism not only by becoming victims of torture and long incarceration, but also often with their life. One of them is Liu Xiaobo (劉曉波), the gentleman in that iconic image when he smashed a rifle – which the Tiananmen protestors had got their hands to – to pound home the imperative to keep the demonstration non-violent, who has remained the familiar face throughout the decades after Tiananmen refusing to lie low or fade away from the ongoing democracy and civil rights movements, and whose work is the subject of study in the paper by Perry
Link and Weiping Cui (崔衛平), “Liu Xiaobo and the Citizens’ Rights Movement: A New Face for China’s Democracy Movement in 2003”, under this special issue’s next section China Post-Tiananmen. As an active practitioner and supporter of switching from direct protest for democratic reforms, which has clearly been futile in years after the massacre, to a more subtle citizens’ rights movement, Liu Xiaobo’s thinking and his inveterate action, according to Link and Cui, did much to shape the movement that, while being less confrontational, aimed at concrete changes with a ultimate goal of more profound transition than what the 1989 protesters had declared, until it was dealt a severe blow in late 2008 when the State crushed Charter 08 and imprisoned Liu Xiaobo.

Liu Xiaobo eventually died at the hands of this Orwellian State that has been in the decades after the massacre progressing on the scale of ruthlessness and brutality towards what Teng Biao (滕彪) has termed a high-tech totalitarianism in the second paper under this section, “From 1989 to ‘1984’: Tiananmen Massacre and China’s High-tech Totalitarianism”, in the self-serving evolvement of a social resource-wasting regime that, as the preamble of the Conference’s Declaration notes, “has no intention to engage in domestic political and social reforms to improve the people’s rights and welfare; but instead further suppress the pro-democracy movement, and violate human rights and religious freedom” with ever-increasing expenditure on stability maintenance and advanced technology exploited to enhance control of the people. Liu Xiaobo, though, is but one of the tens of thousands of human rights defenders, lawyers, dissidents, and journalists who have been thrown into prison, physically and mentally tortured while in custody, many of whom eventually perish therein like Liu, or come out broken and a shadow of their former self. Such and other prevalent forms of persecution, including beating and torture, enforced
disappearance, forced eviction, and miscarriages of justice, according to Teng Biao, have turned the so-called “China miracle”, which itself was driven by the country’s “low human rights advantage” and hides a hideous underbelly of corruption, deprivation of freedom, environmental destruction, social decay, and violation of international commitment, not into a “China dream” but a “China nightmare”. As the preamble of the Conference’s Declaration further notes, “these so-called achievements of economic and social development have been obtained by the sacrifice of the nation’s human rights, democracy and freedom. Undeniably, these trends have been exacerbated in recent years; and the Party regime exploits the strengths of speedy economic development and the powers of science and technology to tighten domestic control and expand its international influence.”

With that, China today has become the biggest threat to international freedom and democracy, an outcome that Teng Biao points out has been ironically assisted by Western engagement policy which is based on a series of erroneous assumptions. Seeing the influence of Western liberal democratic ideology as a threat to its one-party rule and to nurture like-minded allies across the world, the CCP regime has been extending its tentacles far and wide to control the overseas Chinese communities, support every dictatorial regime there is, and export its repressive technology, experience, and control model to autocrats globally. All these efforts are focused on one ultimate goal, according to Teng Biao, that is to make the world safe for the Chinese Communist Party regime to maintain its political monopoly inside China at all costs, human, material, moral or environmental. Wai-Kwok Benson Wong (黄偉國), in the third paper under this section, “Interpreting China Post-1989 Tiananmen Square Protests: Discursive Formation of ‘Sinicization of Everything’”, focuses on the central role of the instrumental mechanism of such global effort of the CCP in the
manipulation of cognition, selection and extraction of the positive elements about domestic politics and practice under the Party’s rule for promotion, and analyses with discourse analysis the four key features of the “Sinicization of everything” strategy, namely devaluation, manipulation, partiality and Sinocentrism. It is a fundamental political spinning process with global impacts, according to Wong, aiming to reshape and influence people’s perceptions of reality and worldview through language and/or images, and a process that links powers through which the Chinese Communist Party dictatorship produces specific political language with impacts on cognition and perception.

After looking at the significance and implications of the 1989 protests and massacre and the subsequent socio-political development of a China post-Tiananmen, this special issue follows up with a section on Tiananmen’s Transborder Reverberations consisting of two papers on the struggle for human rights and democracy in Vietnam and Hong Kong respectively.

Nguyễn Quang A (阮光亞), in the first paper under this section, “Tiananmen Protests and Lessons for Democratization in Vietnam”, draws lessons from the process of the 1989 Tiananmen student protest movement that he analyses within the framework of “eventful democratisation” as developed by Donatella della Porta and following Dai Qing (戴晴)’s formulation of the timeline of the protest, which have influenced the formulation of a strategy for democratization in Vietnam. From there Nguyễn Quang A, founder of the Civil Society Forum (CSF, Vietnam), proceeds to introduce the NGO’s strategy for democratisation in Vietnam that is based on the ideas of non-violent struggle for democracy and human rights developed in 1905-1907 by Phan Châu Trinh (潘周楨) who was heavily influenced by non-violent ideas of Indian thinking expressed thousands of years ago, for example, in Buddhist teachings disseminated by the Dalai Lama and Zen Master
Thích Nhất Hạnh (釋一行, dharma title of Nguyễn Xuân Bảo / 阮春寶) in our time.

Meanwhile in Hong Kong, after the 1997 “Handover” by the British of its Crown colony to the PRC to become the latter’s “Special Administrative Region” (SAR), as the preamble of the Conference’s Declaration observes, the CCP regime “have stepped up the crackdown on the local pro-democracy movement, arresting dissidents with less and less restraint, disqualifying candidates in elections, and ignoring the institutional arrangements of the separation of power and checks and balances” while also openly refuted the effective implementation of the Sino-British Joint Declaration. While “One Country, Two Systems” has usually been viewed as a centre of contestation between Beijing’s authoritarian CCP regime, the colonial Hong Kong government and the pro-democracy camp of Hong Kong, particularly after the 1989 June Fourth massacre, I-Lun Shih (施懿倫) and Alex Yong-kang Chow (周永康), in their paper under this section, “A Review of the Consensus-building of One Country, Two Systems in the 1980s and 1990s”, argue that the process of consensus-building of “One Country, Two Systems” as a legal framework of political, economic, diplomatic and ideological compromise has continued after the Tiananmen crackdown; however, the rising aspiration for self-determination or independence after the 2014 Occupy Campaign / Umbrella Movement has resulted in a heavy-handed retaliation unleashed by the regime that has never hesitated to deploy political, legal and administrative means to imprison activists, disqualify popularly elected legislators, remodel the meaning of political neutrality of civil servants, and weaken the authority of Hong Kong’s judicial system through political interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC).

The special issue closes with this postscript article, and before that, Fernando Romeo’s commentary notes, “The Hard Side of CCP’s Soft
Power: Confucius Institute”, that look at the not-so-soft “soft power” outreach of a “rogue regime” hiding behind a façade of economic achievements after the massacre, as described in the Conference Declaration, that continues to treat the people demanding political reforms as principal enemies, and aims to infiltrate international academia to control information, restrict academic freedom and muzzle criticism of its political repression and human rights violations.

Before moving on to the subsequent sections of this postscript article, I would like to thank all the contributing authors of the articles in the various sections of this special issue who have taken great effort to revise their papers by incorporating critical peer feedback received at the conference and from other reviewers for inclusion in this journal issue, as well as the discussants, conference participants and other reviewers who have given invaluable assistance in providing critical comments on the earlier versions of these papers for their invaluable efforts in making the publication of this 2019 CCPS special issue of Upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre: Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement possible. We would also like to compliment the New School for Democracy (華人民主書院) and the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China (香港市民支援愛國民主運動聯合會) for having successfully held this highly important conference on “Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-Democracy Movement” at this critical juncture of the thirtieth anniversary of the Tiananmen protests and Beijing massacre. As usual, we are also grateful to Miss Wu Chien-yi (吳千宜) for the journal’s website construction and maintenance. The responsibility for any errors and inadequacies that remain is of course fully mine.

To contribute further to the conference theme of “Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-Democracy Movement” that also
forms the title of this *CCPS* special issue, the subsequent sections of this postscript article will be devoted to the further understanding of the prospects and challenges in the struggle of post-1989 Chinese dissent and nonviolent action (NVA) movements, both exiled and domestic, in the context of State-civil societal relations, which this writer hopes, would prove to be useful as a humble appendix to an outstanding conference and its accompanying volume.

2. “Against Ruthlessness, Remembering Was the Only Defense”

On 17th April 2014, Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez (6 March 1927 – 17 April 2014), Colombian laureate of Neustadt International Prize for Literature (1972) and Nobel Prize in Literature (1982) and author of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* (1967), *The Autumn of the Patriarch* (1975) and *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1985), passed away at the advanced age of 87. “In *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel García Márquez the banana company [...] massacred three thousand striking workers in the main square of Macondo. After the killings there was a cleanup so perfect that the incident could be flatly denied. It never took place, except in the memory of José Arcadio Segundo, who saw it all”, notes Salman Rushdie, the 1981 Booker Prize laureate and 1999 Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, in *Joseph Anton* (2012) while referring to the 3rd-4th June 1989 Beijing (北京) massacre. “Against ruthlessness, remembering was the only defense”, adds the fugitive writer who was the thirteenth on *The Times’s* 2008 list of the fifty greatest British writers since 1945, “The Chinese leadership knew this: that memory was the enemy.”

The massacre in García Márquez’s story is fictitious, just like the fictional village of Macondo where it happened. That occurred in June 1989 is not, although the Chinese Communist Party’s government of the
People’s Republic of China (PRC) has spent the last thirty years trying to convince a generation that has grown up after 1989 that it is. Yet, “certain events are so monumental, so symbolic, so glorious, and speak so eloquently to our highest ideals that they transcend the immediacy of the news”, as Howard Chapnick observes in his foreword to *Beijing Spring* (1989), “History demands that they be preserved.”  

This special issue of the *Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations: An International Journal – Upon the Thirtieth Anniversary of Tiananmen Protests and June Fourth Massacre: Value Renewal and Path Finding for China’s Pro-democracy Movement* – represents a collection of papers in commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the poignant events in Beijing in 1989: the April-to-June demonstrations⁴ in Tiananmen⁵ (天安门) Square that eventually spread to some four hundred cities across China, as the world watched as “incredulous spectators as the Chinese students dared to dream what became an impossible dream”⁶, culminating in the bloody crackdown on that fateful night of 3rd-4th June, when a besieged regime finally responded with a massacre to reclaim the capital from the unarmed peaceful protesters. Chang’an Avenue/Chang’an Jie (长安街，literally “Street of Eternal Peace”) was the main theatre of the June Fourth massacre that spanned across Beijing when People’s Liberation Army (PLA) troops fired into the crowds blocking their advance towards Tiananmen Square during that fateful night of 3rd-4th June 1989. Massacre along Chang’an Avenue/Boulevard (with heaviest casualty on the night of 3th-4th June 1989 but as a whole lasted from about 10 p.m. of 3rd June to the midnight of 5th June) mainly occurred along the route of PLA advance at the Wanshou Lu (万寿路) junction, Muxidi (木樨地) intersection, Fuxingmen (复兴门, Fuxing, i.e, “revival”, Gate) outside Yanjing Hotel (燕京饭店) and Minzu Hotel (民族饭店), and

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Xidan Bei Dajie (西单北大街, Xidan North Street) junction along West Chang’an Avenue at Xinhua Gate (新华门, Xinhua, i.e. “new China”, Gate) and Nan Chang Jie (南长街) junction onto Tiananmen Square (天安门广场) from the western side and from the eastern side of the Chang’an Avenue near Hongmiao (红庙) to Jianguomen (建国门, Jianguo, i.e. “nation founding/building”, Gate), along East Chang’an Avenue near Beijing Hotel (北京饭店) and Nanchizi Dajie (南池子大街, South Chizi Street) junction onto Tiananmen Square. In addition, massacre also occurred along Qianmen Dajie (前门大街, Qianmen, i.e. “front gate”, Street – PLA’s southern approach to Tiananmen that night), at Chongwenmen (崇文门, Chongwen, i.e. “culture/civilisation-revering”, Gate), between Jianguomen and Chaoyangmen (朝阳门, Chaoyang, i.e. “sun-facing”, Gate), the approach to the university district and around Peking University (北京大学), Yiheyuan (颐和园, Summer Palace imperial garden) and Tsinghua University (清华大学). Outside Beijing, similar massacre at that time mainly occurred in Sichuan Province’s capital city of Chengdu (成都).

While the official death toll stood at four hundred and forty-three, 223 of whom were soldiers and police officers, plus 5,000 soldiers and police officers and 2,000 civilians wounded in the crackdown, exiled dissidents estimated the number of civilians, workers and students killed in the Beijing crackdown during the night of 3rd-4th June 1989 to be from 2,000 to 3,000⁹, Soviet sources in 1989 put the number massacred in Beijing as 3,000, as cited by Mikhail Gorbachev at a politburo meeting in 1989¹⁰ and a secret diplomatic cable, released in UK in late 2017, from the then British ambassador to China, Sir Alan Donald, put the number of people killed at at least 10,000.
Not only is Peking a nightmare streetscape awash in atrocity and anguish; the nation at large has become a haunted land. This howling, lurching megaghost is the Chinese Communist Party. In one staggeringly brutal stroke, it shot itself through the heart. It will not recover. A regime that professes itself to be the distillation of popular will has turned on the Chinese people, committing the ultimate sacrilege of eating its own children. Hundreds of China’s brightest, most idealistic sons and daughters, their movement commanding wide public sympathy, were nakedly sacrificed to the cause of preserving an élite.

(Asiaweek, 16th June 1989, p. 16)

While Asiaweek in its 16th June 1989 editorial “The Rape of Peking” lamented a Goya-esque landscape, these lines seem today, by hindsight, a gross underestimation of the resiliency of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)\(^{11}\) and the effectiveness of authoritarian power, given the stark asymmetry in power relations and one-sided monopoly of violence.

In the process of maintaining a tight grip on political power in ensuring the CCP’s perpetuation of its Party-State monopoly while delivering on the economic front and bringing prosperity and wellbeing to the long-suffering people of this giant country, the neo-authoritarian developmentalism followed since June Fourth could be leading the country on a path threaded before by various East Asian countries like Taiwan (Republic of China) and Singapore – a model sometimes termed “State corporatism”. When the enraged and desperate Beijing citizens yelled “fascists” at the rampaging People’s Liberation Army (PLA) armoured vehicles on that murderous night of 3rd-4th June 1989, when Chai Ling (柴玲) in hiding screamed “fascists” in her taped condemnation of the massacre shortly following that night of terror,
when that lone individual\textsuperscript{12} stood in front of and blocked a column of tanks signifying terrifying State power in that poignant image reminiscent of Pablo Picasso’s \textit{Guernica}\textsuperscript{13}, when melancholy and despair descended upon and the tune of \textit{Xuernan de Fengcai} (血染的风采)\textsuperscript{14} surrounded the hunger strikers in the Tiananmen Square, there was little telling of the course to come to pass in China’s subsequent political evolvement. “Fascism” could eventually prove to be an overstatement – other than that night’s slaughter and subsequent arrests and executions, nothing that came in this one-party state in the aftermath of June Fourth remotely approached Franco’s repression against the defeated Republicans and their supporters in the dictator’s “no-party” State\textsuperscript{15} immediately following the end of the civil war, though the term could still be in a certain way fitting if it is defined as the requirement for the faith in and unquestioning loyalty to the one-party State (or in the case of Franco’s Spain, in particular to the \textit{Caudillo}). The post-June Fourth State corporatism, or referred to by some observers as “Leninist corporatism”\textsuperscript{16}, could provide a closer resemblance to Franco’s \textit{Nuevo Estado} (New State), and the “harmonious society” vision declared in recent years does recall Franco’s vision of social cohesion and harmonious relationship between employers and workers via corporatism that would promote a close collaboration between them under the direction of the State and his corporatist policies to regulate the economy by controlling the conditions of work, wages, prices, production and exchange. What has turned out to be is that decades after the June 1989 massacre, notes Jean-Philippe Béja (2009), China represents “doubtless a post-totalitarian regime [continues to be] ruled by a ruthless Party [which] seems to have reinforced its legitimacy”:

[The CCP] has not followed the communist regimes of the Soviet bloc into oblivion. Its policies of elite cooptation, subtle response to social
contradictions, and instrumental support for the “rule of law” have become major complements to its continued control over the press and the political system. It has made concessions to prevent discontent from crystallizing into social movements that might challenge its rule, and it has sent in the police to silence dissidents. Over the course of the same two decades, the opposition has had to wrestle with the trauma of the June 4 Massacre and the huge difficulties that it has raised for anyone who would challenge the CCP’s primacy.

(Béja, 2009: 14-15)


Facing an entrenched CCP looking increasingly formidable, China’s democracy movement by contrast has been seen to be mired by organisational disorder and lack of institutional construction, short of leadership talent, lack of true democratic organisational framework and spirit of devotion, over-reliance on external power and short of pro-activeness, according to Ch’en (1995: 131-134). In other words, the movement is characterised by relative weakness not only in bargaining power but also in the instrumental activities which of course affected its bargaining power too, as portrayed in Figure 1.

While the earliest democracy movements germinated in the PRC around 1978, may it be the “Beijing Spring” Democracy Wall / dazibao (大字报) movement or the democracy movement organised by Fu Yuehua (傅月华) and Wei Jingsheng (魏京生), strictly speaking these could not be considered organised movements; and well-known intellectuals like Liu Binyan (刘宾雁), Li Honglin (李洪林), Wang Ruoshui (王若水), Yan Jiaqi (严家其), Fang Lizhi (方励之),
Su Shaozhi (苏绍智) and Wen Yuankai (温元凯) who were either social thinkers or critics of CCP’s bureaucratism were rarely involved in matters of movement organisation, Ch’en remarks, whether due to political implausibility or perception as unnecessary by personal objective (Ch’en, 1995:128-129). Two Chinese democracy movements that take matters of organisation seriously are, according to Ch’en, the Chinese Alliance for Democracy (中国民主团结联盟) and the Federation for a Democratic China (民主中国阵线). The Chinese Alliance for Democracy was founded in the United States on 27th November 1983 (developed from the “China Spring” movement initiated
earlier in the year), i.e. six years before the Beijing massacre, by Wang Bingzhang (王炳章), Liang Heng (梁恒), Huan Guocang (宦国苍) and Li Lin (李林) and has since developed into a large China political pressure group overseas with over 2,000 members and over 50 divisions and branches in places such as Japan, Hong Kong (香港), France, Germany, United Kingdom and Australia. The Federation for a Democratic China, proposed on 2nd July 1989 by the intellectuals and activists just escaped from China immediately after the June Fourth massacre including Yan Jiaqi, Örkesh Dölet (Wu’erkaixi / 吾尔开希), Wan Runnan (万润南), Su Shaozhi and Liu Binyan, and officially established on 22nd September 1989, is also a large organisation with about 1,500 members, headquartered in Paris with liaison offices in America, Europe and the Asia Pacific. *(ibid.: 129-130)*

### 3.1. Chinese Democracy Movement in Exile since June Fourth, 1989

Nevertheless, effectively the history of the major part of the Chinese democracy movement in exile should be traced back to the June Fourth Beijing massacre of 1989. Many pro-democracy organisations were born during that tumultuous hundred-day mass protests and these included the China Support Network (CSN), Human Rights in China (HRIC) and the Independent Federation of Chinese Students and Scholars (IFCSS). New groups emerged in the years following the massacre: besides the abovementioned Federation for a Democratic China, these include the Party for Freedom and Democracy in China (PFDC) founded in 1991, the Wei Jingsheng Foundation and the Overseas Chinese Democracy Coalition**17**, the Free China Movement founded in 1998 led by Lian Shengde (连胜德), as well as the new anti-CCP news outlets formed at the turn of the new millennium – *The Epoch Times* (Dajiuyuan / 大紀元), the New Tang Dynasty Television and the Sound of Hope Radio – during the beginning of the crackdown on Falungong (法轮功).
However, the core of the democracy movement in exile which is still mainly made up loosely of such US-based organisations like China Alliance for Democracy, the Federation for a Democratic China and the IFCSS appears fragmented and suffers from internal disputes, factional strife and in-fighting, and has little impact against CCP’s continued one-party rule in China, owing in no small measure to the miraculous economic performance and impressive poverty reduction record of China since the bloody crackdown of 1989, the liberalisation of the Chinese society accompanying the no-holds-barred market reform and increasing degree of intra-CCP democratisation even while the party’s monopoly of political power remains ruthlessly non-negotiable.

3.1.1. Organisational effectiveness

In terms of organisational structure, the Chinese Alliance for Democracy consists of the coordinating tiers of headquarter, divisions, branches and smaller groups, supervising committee produced by elections, and tripartite division of power between its alliance committee, supervising committee and headquarter for legislation, supervision and administration respectively in mutual cooperation and restraint, as well as eight departments of information, contact, theoretical study, action planning, organisation, finance, magazine (Zhongguo zhi Chun / 中国之春 / China Spring) and radio (ibid.: 129-130). The Federation for a Democratic China, on the other hand, is made up of the representative assembly (top authority), executive council, supervising council and secretariat, and seven specialised committees under the executive council overseeing foreign policy, mainland policy, Taiwan relations, students overseas, human rights, consultation and fund collection. While admitting that movements such as the Chinese Alliance for Democracy and the Federation for a Democratic China do exhibit proper organisational structure, Ch’en is doubtful of their structural
effectiveness given their loose and encumbering nature and hence the lack of precision and compactness, a trait which he describes as having a structural "shape" but without structure "contents", hence without any significant political effectiveness (ibid.: 130-131).

In terms of organisational purpose, the Chinese Alliance for Democracy’s stated objectives include breaking through news blockade and strengthening propaganda offensive towards PRC, enhancing contacts inside PRC, rescuing and providing long-term assistance to democracy activists, formulating strategies in fighting for freedom and democracy, studying steps of nation-state construction, strengthening international relations, doing well internal contact work, cultivating democratic quality, strengthening internal construction and enhancing alliance abroad for the possibility of forming a party (ibid.: 129-130). The Federation for a Democratic China’s basic ideals, on the other hand, consist of protecting fundamental human rights, defending social justice, developing private economy, ending one-party political monopoly, with the ultimate objective of establishing a democratic China. All these objectives and ideals showcase the typical strategic direction of long-term struggle for systemic change (revolutionary objective of bringing down CCP’s one-party authoritarianism) as shown in the second column of Table 1, and the ideological orientation of viewing the movement’s and the Party-State’s interests as incompatible (thus rejecting the compromise solution of a dictablanda\(^{18}\) or a benevolent ruler within the Party-State) and aiming at terminating one-party political monopoly and replacing it with multi-party free and fair electoral system, as shown in the second column of Table 2. Such strategic direction and ideological orientation also places the post-1989 democracy movements far toward the “transformative” end of the “reformative-transformative” spectrum of nonviolent action (NVA) matrix in Figure 2.
Table 1 Chinese Democracy Movement and *Weiquan* (Civil Rights-defending) Activism: The Strategic Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Democracy Movement</th>
<th><em>Weiquan</em> Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Criterion</td>
<td>Transformative, revolutionist</td>
<td>Reformatory, involutional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of Social Framework</td>
<td>Relatively structural; focusing on a structural analysis of overall sociopolitical relationships</td>
<td>Relatively conservative; focusing on a particular goal within an existing sociopolitical framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aim</td>
<td>Revolution (planned change of system)</td>
<td>Reform (planned change of elements within a system)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational Timeframe</td>
<td>Long Term</td>
<td>Short/Medium Term</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 322), Table 12.5. Based on framework from Weber and Burrowes (1991); Vinthagen (2010).

Further on the democracy movements’ organisational effectiveness, Ch’en (1995) attributed the internal strife, susceptibility to infiltrating control and potential for breaking up (e.g. power struggle between the former presidents Wang Bingzhang and Hu Ping (胡平) of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy and Wang Bingzhang’s breaking way to form the China Democracy Party (中国民主党) to the movements’ encumbering and loose organisational structure (Ch’en, 1995: 131). Not only that these movements are accused of lacking in grassroots participation, they are also criticised for being headed by “celebrities” who lack skills of organisation, administration and leadership especially those formed by exiled activists after the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations, lacking in devotional spirit despite the emphasis on democracy in organisational structure taken at face value, and lacking in power of mobilisation and influence leading to over-relying on the hope.
### Table 2 Chinese Democracy Movement and *Weiquan* (Civil Rights-defending) Activism: The Ideological Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Democracy Movement</th>
<th>Weiquan Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion</strong></td>
<td>Instrumental, practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of Commitment</strong></td>
<td>Despite lack of progress, still committed to NVA as the most plausible and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>effective means to effect change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Means and Ends</strong></td>
<td>Relentless persecution by the Party-State and frustration over lack of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>progress of a moderate approach could</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>be leading to belief that means and ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>are separable, precipitating radicalism, e.g. justification of “lies against</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>lies” in media combat, especially in territorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ethnic minority resistance movements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>which could more easily foster a “we vs. they” mentality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to Conflict with the Party-State</strong></td>
<td>Incompatible interests; aiming at</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>terminating one-party political</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>monopoly and replacing it with multi-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party free and fair electoral system;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rejecting the compromise solution of a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>dictablanda</em> or a benevolent ruler within the Party-State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to Opponent (Party-State)</strong></td>
<td>Disillusioned with the traditional idea of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>waiting for an “enlightened ruler”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(mingju</em> 明君 *) within the system (imperial court in the old days; the one-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>party State today), hence in a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>competitive relationship with ruling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Party-State to destroy the Party’s political monopoly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 Matrix of Chinese NVA

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 296), Figure 12.5.

of external shocks in the form of China’s domestic disturbances and upheavals which are more often than not only reflecting the movement leaders’ simplistic personal subjective evaluations and whimsical predictions (ibid.: 132-134). Such an unenviable situation is reflected in the imbalance in the democracy movement’s assertion (right vertical axis) vs. the Party-State’s domination (left vertical axis) configuration in Figure 1 earlier, and the contrast between the Party-State and the exiled democracy movement in terms of the degree of organisation (with the exception of the similarly exiled Falungong movement and ethnoregional movement for self-determination) as shown in Figure 3.
3.1.2. Leadership conflicts

In contrast with cases such as Burma, it is a fact that contemporary Chinese dissent and NVA suffer from a lack of leadership – the lack of a “centre”, an Aung San Suu Kyi. While the Tibetan resistance movement has its 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso\textsuperscript{19}, and its Uyghur counterpart has Rebiya Kadeer, there is no single figure in the democracy movement for the exiled democracy activists or their counterparts within China to
coalesce around – neither Wei Jingsheng nor Liu Xiaobo (刘晓波), nor any of the exiled former Tiananmen student activists or former labour leaders like Han Dongfang (韩东方). Neither is there any such figure among the relentlessly harassed weiquan (维权, civil rights-defending) activists in the country. Chen Guangcheng (陈光诚)’s indomitable spirit underlined by his disability and accentuated by his incredible escape might make him the much needed symbol of struggle but he is now also exiled, with little hope of returning to China. It can of course be argued that the democracy movement’s fragmentation and the squabbling between Chinese dissidents could also have the potential of being turned into an advantage. After all, democracy is and has to be a messy business, in contrast with an authoritarian system – a “China model” as such – where decision making is usually very much facilitated by the existence of a strongman or a party that monopolises political power by force. “You pays your money and takes your choice”, as Aldous Leonard Huxley says in his 1946 foreword to Brave New World (1932). That said, the lack of solidarity and a united front, nevertheless, still make the movement look weak or even pathetic.

Xu Zhiyuan (许知远) in his book Weizhuang de shengshi (假装的盛世) [feign flourishing age of prosperity] (2012) attributes the endless squabbling between Chinese dissidents to their being products of a totalitarian system and their terrifying experiences under the system, their language and behaviour being a continuation of the system. Witness the astonishing reversal of attitude from Wei Jingsheng’s calling in the International Herald Tribune on President Barack Obama to exert pressure on China to release Liu Xiaobo when the latter was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment to Wei’s later scathing attack on the Nobel Committee and Liu whom he deemed was unworthy of the Peace Prize, citing Liu’s denial of seeing massacre occurring “on” Tiananmen Square during the crackdown on the night of 3rd-4th June.
1989 besides accusing him of being too moderate. It is noteworthy that in a commentary essay in May 1989 Liu had accused the Chinese intellectuals of being hypocritical and servile in their outpouring of accolades towards the just deceased Hu Yaobang (胡耀邦) – the tidal wave of grieve being chock-full of the longing for a benevolent, enlightened ruler (mingjun / 明君) – in contrast with their cold, unconcerned attitude towards the decade-long incarcerated Chinese democracy activist and human rights and freedom fighter Wei Jingsheng. (Xu, 2012: 53-55) One could not help but wonder whether the Nobel Committee’s ignoring Wei Jingsheng, the grand avant-garde of post-Cultural Revolution Chinese democracy activism whose era-shaking manifesto “The Fifth Modernisation” (i.e. democracy) in 1978 landed him a 15-year jail term followed by continuous subsequent persecution before being exiled in 1997, to bestowed the Peace Prize on the newly jailed Liu Xiaobo instead of, more fairly, making the two joint laureates was inadvertently sowing the seed of discord between the two most likely towering leaders of a future post-CCP China should one-party authoritarianism finally give way to multi-party liberal democracy.

Such internal strifes and disarrays are also evident, for instance, in Feng Congde (封從德)’s Liu-si riji (六四日記) (A Tiananmen journal) published in 2009, one of the latest first-hand accounts of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and Beijing massacre in print, whose postscript and chapter notes reveal a dismal web of scapegoating, intrigue, clash of egos, personal agenda and even insinuations of planted moles and agents provocateurs.

Indeed, Wei Jingsheng’s attack on Liu Xiaobo’s Nobel award of 2010 was just a repeat of a past episode, as Xu reminds us, when Wei himself was first exiled to Washington and was subjected to public denunciation by a furious Wang Xizhe (王希哲) who was exiled much earlier than him for the tidal wave of attention which greeted Wei in
1997 had deeply hurt the much earlier champion of Chinese democracy, by then largely forgotten by the public (Xu, 2012: 54-55). It was the same playing out of histrionics came 2010. Xu asks us to understand such intriguing phenomenon by looking at the CCP’s brutality, since Mao Zedong’s time, of thought reconstruction, of destroying personality, and the inhumanity in Chinese prisons and labour camps (ibid.: 55) – just witness how Li Wangyang (李旺阳) was tortured and broken and stripped of all dignity of a human being over the 23 years’ repeated imprisonment since the June Fourth massacre.

At the time in 2012 when the image of Li Wangyang broken by long years of beating and torture and his suspicious death was brought into the world’s limelight, attention was also directed to the plight of those still in jail since participating in the demonstrations in 1989 or in fighting back against the rampaging PLA across Beijing. According to the San Francisco-based watchdog Dui Hua Foundation (中美对话基金会) in 2012, of the 1,602 people thus jailed, seven has still not been released and long years of imprisonment and ill treatment had not only led to a broken body like the case of Li Wangyang but also mental disease, like the activist Yu Rong (余蓉). Li Yujun (李玉君), a hawker who fought the PLA with a burning oil cart during the June 1989 crackdown, who was released in May 2012 after his 23-year long imprisonment, but placed under surveillance for another 8 years, was also said to suffer from mental illness and a broken body after long years of ill treatment and beating in jail.22

While the 23-year imprisonment, beating and torture, and ultimately death, of Li Wangyang could be seen to epitomise the fate of Chinese democracy movement and the inhuman extent to which the Chinese State machinery could be used to crush any expression of dissent and defiance, the suicide of Zha Weilin (轧伟林)23 truly symbolises the increasing dejection and despondency of those who are struggling to
hold on to their principled but forlorn fight for justice in an environment devoid of political morality and decency, where three decades of relentless censorship and GDPism have resulted in the prevalent political apathy, acquiescence and resignation among the citizenry.\textsuperscript{24} As a response to such a reality, to the great masses now with improved living standard under CCP’s brave new world of rugged capitalism, money-making and free-market hedonism represent the rule of the day, while for the powerless intellectuals who still have a principled commitment to social justice founded upon political freedom and human dignity, what lies ahead is a bleak future for the ruminating selves of “human reflexivity […] in situations that were not of [their own] making” (Archer, 2003: 342), “[…] a tremendous void. A pale gray nothingness that is all [one’s] future holds”, as that grimly described in Suzanne Collins’s dystopian novel \textit{Mockingjay} (2010)\textsuperscript{25}.

According to an \textit{Apple Daily} (蘋果日報, Hong Kong) report in February 2014 citing Beijing artist Wu Wenjian (武文建) who as a seventeen-year-old youth was sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment for the crime of “anti-revolutionary propaganda instigation” during the June 1989 crackdown, there was still one last known death-row “June Fourth” inmate called Miao Deshun (苗德顺), sentenced to death for helping to burn a tank during the 1989 Beijing massacre but with two years’ probation, who has by then spent the past 25 years in prison suffering from repeated beating by prison guards with electric baton for unrepentant insubordination and rejecting hard labour correction. According to his relatives, Miao was still being incarcerated in Beijing’s Yanqing (延庆) jail, and as Yanqing is a prison for the old, sick and disabled, Wu was not optimistic about the health condition, after a quarter of a century’s ill treatment in jail, of this valiant youth who stood up in 1989 against the army of a government that shot its own citizens.\textsuperscript{26}
Looking at such State brutality, it is not difficult to concur with Xu that Wei Jingsheng, Liu Xiaobo, Wang Xizhe and countless other less well-known dissidents are not personalities in a beautiful fairy tales. So aren’t the exiled survivors and Tiananmen student leaders of the 1989 massacre. These dissidents who have at least valiantly stood up for freedom and justice at the respective critical junctures also have their respective personal shortcomings and tragic experiences at the hands of a ruthless State, and squabbling and mutual accusations, cautions Xu, are but part of a long journey without an always clear direction and not necessarily leading us towards a conclusion we would expect (ibid.: 55).

### 3.2. The Other Track of Chinese NVA since 1989: Weiquan Activism

Sending the prominent dissidents into exile – be they democracy activists like Wei Jingsheng, leading Tiananmen student leaders or well-known weiquan activists like Cheng Guangeheng – has always been a way out for the Chinese government if it deemed continued persecution too damaging in terms of its diplomatic and economic relations with the West and the rest of the world community. Nevertheless, a different tactic is usually employed to deal with dissidents especially dissident movement leaders who are less well-known. These key organisers of dissident movements are usually charged with crimes like endangering state security or revealing official secrets and sentenced to long imprisonment. At the same time, the government would act as a benevolent patriarch to attempt to address the grievances that had given rise to the movements in the first place. In this way, the government takes back the control of public discourse and makes the movements and their leaders irrelevant and hence nipping any sign of “deviation-amplification” in the bud before it could take the first step to trigger systemic change, all under the façade of territorial unity, political stability and a “harmonious society” (hexie shehui / 和谐社会), the key
conceptual cornerstone since the Sixth Plenary Session of the 16th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China in October 2006 passed the “Resolution on Major Issues Regarding the Building of a Harmonious Socialist Society” (关于构建社会主义和谐社会若干重大问题的决定).

This is how modern dictators work, in contrast to the despots of the yesteryears, notes William Dobson in The dictator’s learning curve (2012), “in the more ambiguous spectrum that exists between democracy and authoritarianism. Most strive to win their people’s support by making them content, but failing that, they are happy to keep their critics off balance through fear and selective forms of intimidation.” (Dobson, 2012, ppb 2013: 6) By sending the leading activists of the New Citizens’ Movement to prison and with the detention of another dozen of activists similarly involved in pressing for asset disclosure by officials, the Xi Jinping administration is warning the civil society that his CCP one-party State remains the sole authority to implement the anti-corruption campaign and it has its discretion to do it in its own way (see projectable changes in Figure 4, as against the societal emergent changes) even if that means doing it with selective investigation and prosecution very much tied to intra-CCP factional rivalry, and pressure from societal activism in this regard would never be tolerated and would continue to be seen as organised challenge to the CCP rule.

The CCP’s current treatment of weiquan activism is intriguing, for a distinction between system-threatening and non-system-threatening protests has always been important for explaining State response in the PRC. Referring to Muslim marchers in 1989 protesting the publication of a Chinese book entitled Xing fengsu (性风俗) [sexual customs] that they claimed denigrated Islam, Dru Gladney (1991) drew a parallel with the other, more well-known, protest of 1989:
Figure 4 China’s Sociopolitical and Socioeconomic Transformation Pre- and Post-June Fourth, 1989: Projectable and Overt and Subliminal/Latent Emergent Changes

Projectable change post-1989: Deng’s pragmatic brought continuous economic reforms leading to economic miracle; four cardinal principles of reforming and upholding CCP’s political supremacy; thought control; resistance to bourgeois liberalization; Deng’s “stability above all else” directive led to Party-State’s ruthless repression; socialism with Chinese characteristics; Party-State’s promotion of fundamental definition of human rights as just the people’s rights to be led, to be sheltered, to be educated and to be employed; continued Dengist stance against adopting North Atlantic democracy and its pseudo politics (tribute separation of powers) for checks and balances, promoting central state nationalism and cracking down on peripheral nationalism; controlled intra-Party democratization, grassroots democracy: village elections, “stick and carrot” co-optation and control of intellectuals, building of “harmonious society”, central state’s task constant to local repression under the.webdriver preoccupation: crackdown on Falun Gong; becoming world’s 2nd largest economy while on the rise to challenge the US.

Emergent change post-1989: emergence of middle class, rise of social and civil movements; March 2008 “Tiananmen Square in 2005: Occupying the Square”; public participation and activism

Subliminal or latent emergent change post-1989: Taiwan’s democratization (December 1991: “Handover” of Hong Kong (1997) and Macau (1999); Zeng Qinghong’s passing (2007) and deactivation of membrane (2009); deepening socioeconomic inequality; interethnic contradictions; economic and social crisis; school killings; “mass incidents”; gangsters and forced relocation; deepening corruption and guan-xi culture, worker suicides; plight of hongneng; ecstasy of Chen Guangcheng, miracle of Zhu Weimin and Li Wangyang’s allegedly “being mistreated”; progress in political reform in Vietnam and Burma and the restoring of political rights for Aung San Suu Kyi symbolizing renewed hope for Burma democratization...

Creating a new situation

Uncovering roots of crimes, widening preconceived moral principles

Turning point: Facing the real will to change, dealing with resistance to change

Alternative U-process of transformative change

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 284), Figure 12.1.

Just prior to the bloody suppression of the 1989 democracy movement in China, in the midst of the flood of protesting students and workers who, for a remarkably lengthy moment in history, marched relatively unimpeded across Tiananmen Square and the screens of the world’s television sets, another comparatively unnoticed, but nevertheless significant, procession took place [...] the protest began with mainly Hui Muslim students who were joined by representatives of all 10
Muslim nationalities in China, including some sympathetic members of the Han Chinese majority [...] this procession was on its way to Tiananmen Square, the so-called “Gate of Heavenly Peace”, which soon opened on to a hellish nightmare of indiscriminate warfare in the streets of the terrorized city. This procession to the Square also made its way along Changan Jie, “the Avenue of Eternal Peace,” that shortly thereafter was to be renamed “Bloody Alley” by Beijing’s citizens [...]  

(Gladney, 1991: 1-2)

Gladney moved on further to draw an interesting picture of stark contrast in State responses between this case of “protest to the government” and the other case of “protest against the government” in those same days staged by the students and workers and their supporters from all walks of life around Beijing and other Chinese cities who eventually paid dearly by blood:

Remarkably, and in another dramatic contrast to the crackdown on the student Pro-Democracy Movement, the state took the following actions in response to this Muslim protest over an insignificant Chinese book: The government granted full permission for all the Muslim protests, often despatching police to close streets, stop traffic, and direct the marchers [...] By stressing the legality of the Muslim protests, what Barbara Pillsbury noted as their “protest to the government,” rather than against it – the fact that the Muslims had permission and were often escorted by police – the state-controlled press sought to juxtapose the legal Muslim protest with the illegality of the student protests.

(ibid.: 3-5, italics in the original)
One of the most prominent student leaders who led the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square was Örkesh Dölet (Wu’erkaixi). It is interesting to note that Örkesh Dölet was then a Beijing Normal University student of the Muslim Uyghur nationality. However, unlike the protesters in the parallel State-permitted demonstration in Beijing at that time against Xing fengsu, Örkesh Dölet’s involvement in leading the pro-democracy movement since the Tiananmen days till today transcends ethnicity, and it was notable that his condemnation – jointly issued on 7th July 2009 with Taiwan’s China Human Rights Association (中國人權協會) – of perceived government repression in the July 2009 Xinjiang disturbance was issued, while not denying his ethnic identity, as a civil rights activist, in comparison with some pronouncements made by former Nobel Peace Prize nominee Rabiyyä Qadir (Rebiya Kadeer), chairperson of the World Uyghur Congress. Nevertheless, in the eyes of the Party-State during those turbulent days of 1989:

The students [demonstrating on Tiananmen Square in 1989 against corruption and for democracy], as an unrecognized voluntary association, were considered unlawful, riotous, and a threat to the state’s order. For that they were met by a military crackdown. The actions of the Muslims [marching against the book Xing fengsu], as members of state-assigned minority nationalities and believing in a world religion approved by the state, were considered permissible. For that they were inundated with state-sponsored media and assisted in their demands. The difference, from the Chinese state’s standpoint, was one of order and disorder, rationality and confusion, law and criminality, reward and punishment.

(Gladney, 1991: 5-6)
Successful it might seem to be, the CCP regime’s reassertion of its legitimacy and unassailability has in reality not been immune to a series of challenges, some rather severe and unexpected, since June Fourth, exemplified by the horrific events of March 2008 in Tibet and July 2009 in Xinjiang. Regrettably, in facing such challenges, the regime has never been able to grow out of the tendency to recycle the “black hand” (heishou / 黑手) theory – the “shopworn conspiracy theories that blame mass protests primarily on the CCP’s foreign and domestic enemies, reflecting the classic Leninist insistence that social protest in a Communist country cannot just happen, it must be instigated” (Tanner, 2004: 143) – which is unfortunately so apparent in the ruling regime’s response to the Xinjiang crisis or the Tibet riots. For this “black hand” theory, Murray Scot Tanner (2004) gave an example from the 1989 Beijing massacre:

In the days after the Tiananmen demonstrations, this Leninist conspiratorial worldview was typified in a report on the protests issued by Gu Linfang, the Chinese vice minister of public security who was in charge of “political security.” To document a conspiracy in 1989, Gu painstakingly listed dozens of allegedly nefarious contacts among protest leaders; reformist Communist officials; foreign academics; and, of course, Western and Taiwanese intelligence agencies. The vice minister railed against party reformers for coddling schemers who fomented rebellion. A Leninist to his marrow, Gu refused to concede any acceptance of what social scientists have known for decades, that whenever a society grows and changes as rapidly as China has, an increase in political protests is a normal development.

(ibid.)
Similar State response can be observed following the 5th July 2009 Xinjiang riots when Nur Bekri (Baikeli / 白克力), chairman of the Xinjiang Uygur Zizhiq, declared on 18th July 2009 the source of the riots being “the triumvirate of terrorist, secessionist and extremist forces”\textsuperscript{30} and Wu Shimin (吴仕民), vice-chairman of China’s State Ethnic Affairs Commission, stated on 21st July 2009 that the July Fifth riots had absolutely nothing to do with China’s nationality (ethnic minority) policies. Without the courage to face up to domestic realities, any solution to the root problems leading to either June Fourth or July Fifth would remain illusive.

Coming back to weiquan activism, the Party-State’s stance is clear: the State welcomes protests to it but it retains the full discretion of how to deal with the grievances. Organising campaign to force the hand of the State like what the New Citizens’ Movement was doing is equated to protesting against the State for the action is tantamount to questioning the ability, discretion and ultimately the power, authority and legitimacy of the State, and the action will not be tolerated. Such crackdown on the weiquan activists is in spite of the fact that most of their protest activities are expressed in single-issue demonstrations which the one-party State has apparently so far found tolerable to a certain extent. Contrary to the democracy movements, weiquan activism does not call for eliminating CCP’s one-party authoritarianism and weiquan activists do not deny the possibility of just relying on reform from within the CCP rather than to subject themselves to persecution by the State for the severe crime of “inciting subversion of State power”. Unfortunately, as we have seen earlier, such prudence did not prevent a host of weiquan activists from being convicted and given heavy sentences under the charge, though others like the leaders of the New Citizens’ Movement were convicted on a different charge.
In an interview by the Yangguang Shiwu (阳光时务) magazine\textsuperscript{31} shortly after she assisted Chen Guangcheng to escape from house arrest, Her Peirong (何培蓉, “PearlHer”/Zhenzhu 珍珠) reiterated that she was not a pro-democracy activist but just a simple person who felt the need to assist those other civil rights activists who were being persecuted by the authorities ever since, as a volunteer helping the child survivors of the 2008 Sichuan Province\textsuperscript{32} earthquake, she got to know about the injustice done to Tan Zuoren (谭作人) and Huang Qi (黄琦) because of their exposure of and investigation into the real death toll of students and the “tofu dregs” (豆腐渣) schoolhouse scandal.\textsuperscript{33} Despite her apparent contempt for the Shandong government that perpetuated the injustice towards Chen Guangcheng, Her Peirong said during the interview that she was more concerned with effectiveness of her action than unending rhetoric criticising the government, for it is always important to leave “face” for the government, i.e. to be realistic in order to open space for positive interaction with the government in solving problems, and that she would rather believe in gradualism in building a democratic society. Such utterances of moderation of course also reflect the vulnerability of the civil rights activists, especially those less known internationally and hence more helpless in the face of State persecution and abuse, who desperately need to protect themselves against the recurring severe charge of “inciting subversion of State power” (煽动颠覆国家政权罪) that the State has been unfailingly using to put them away.

Such divergence in strategic approach and ideological orientation is illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2 earlier. Nevertheless, in the light of the arrest and conviction of Xu Zhiyong (许志永) and other leaders of the New Citizens’ Movement (Zhongguo Xin Gongmin Yundong / 中国新公民运动) and the earlier persecution of Chen Guangcheng, Huang Qi,
Tan Zuoren, Zhao Lianhai (赵连海) and others, though some on a different charge, there are apparently points to ponder in veteran artist-civil rights activist Ai Weiwei (艾未未)’s expression of disdain for such naivety on the part of the weiquan activism: “Xu Zhiyong is representative of many young scholars who focused on social issues and sought practical ways to bring about reform. I know many of them and consider them friends. But when they say they have no enemies, I fear they are being unrealistic.”

Finally, related to such a divergence, there has been a debate recently even among the pro-democracy activists and June Fourth survivors over the conventional use of the term “pingfan” (平反, i.e. to rehabilitate or to redress a mishandled case) in the demand “to pingfan June Fourth”. The concern is understandable as the demand for the CCP regime “to pingfan June Fourth” is rightly, as argued by those opposing the use of the term, tantamount to admitting the legitimacy of the CCP regime who is merely asked to rehabilitate the 1989 protests as a patriotic movement, to release those remained jailed for the protests and to apologise to and compensate those injured during the brutal crackdown or persecuted thereafter and families of those who were slain on the Chang’an Avenue and elsewhere in Beijing in June 1989, and to allow the long-exiled former protesters to return home. Hence, while no one doubts the political defiance shown by the exiled democracy movement, the continued use of the word “pingfan” could probably explain the internal dilemma concerning the determination and the ultimate aim of the movement and its leadership, as well as throw light upon the current disarray of the movement.
3.3. Necessary Conditions for Assertive Action and Institutional Domination: Democracy Movement and Weiquan Activism vis-à-vis Party-State

The three factors of instrumental activities, bargaining power and ideology, according to Vaughan and Archer (1971), represent necessary (though might not be sufficient) conditions of success for assertive groups. On the other hand, facing these assertive groups is institutional domination whose success also depends upon the existence of three necessary conditions, namely monopoly, constraint and again, ideology. Juxtaposing Vaughan and Archer’s two constructs gives the composite schema as shown in Figure 5. Monopoly is used here in the Weberian sense of the word, referring to CCP’s monopoly of political power. The corresponding feature on the side of democracy movement or civil rights activism comprises instrumental activities defined as the sum of actions to devalue the political monopoly of the authoritarian ruling party on which domination is based.

For the dissidents, instrumental activities are not enough, whether for successful civil rights assertion or striving for political liberalisation. Bargaining power, according to Vaughan and Archer, is as necessary as “an alternative to the use of violence and yet implies a degree of organization which would make revolt effective if reform were denied” (Vaughan and Archer, 1971: 27). However, its two components of numerical strength and organisation are crucial to its effective use and success – the two elements which both the democracy movement in exile and the weiquan activism are presently lacking. The fragmented democracy movement in exile has not been able to command any credible bargaining power in an environment of astounding economic power and international clout of CCP-ruled China as well as the collective amnesia on the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and Beijing massacre resulted from more than two decades of successful information
**Figure 5** Assertion, Constraint and Institutional Conflict

![Diagram showing the relationship between constraint on opposition, political monopoly, institutional conflict, instrumental activities, bargaining power, ideology, and constraint on opposition]

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 288), Figure 12.2. Schema based on Vaughan and Archer (1971: 16-32).

wipe-out inside China for those born or educated after 1989, and nationalism and national pride that came with increasing national strength – sentiments that the CCP has been unabashedly relying on to justify its continued unchallengeable political monopoly as the “party that delivers”.

Most importantly, with the absence of both the elements of numerical strength (referring more to actively mobilised members of a movement than simply to sympathisers and moral supporters in general) and organisers – despite the emergence of Falungong as an exiled resistance group which has shown impressive solidarity, numerical strength, organising skill as well as focused dedication to a cause that the wider democracy movement lacks – the NVA movements’ pressure on the Party-State as the dominant group still remains insignificant in terms of making the latter relinquish some of its position-related advantages, the success for which necessarily depends on the conjuncture of these two elements (Vaughan and Archer, 1971: 27).
Under this situation, the Party-State domination has continued to be stable, with the NVA movements being disadvantaged by both a low degree of internal solidarity and organisation as well as numerical weakness to effectively engage in concerted action, vis-à-vis the same factors on the side of the State (ibid.: 27-28).

According to Margaret Archer, each mode of human reflexivity “is a distinctive way of deliberating about oneself in relation to one’s society. It is the modality through which the active agent continues to align her personal concerns with her social context.” (Archer, 2003: 349) The method of alignment varies, though, directly with the mode of reflexivity being exercised, adds Archer, while conclusions are being reached on the prioritised concerns which are in turn crystallised into determined projects, and certain orientation has been arrived at towards the reflexives’ encounters with constraints and enablements, while “the internal conversation, as the fundamental process mediating between structure and agency, also canalised the personal-societal relationship in different directions, according to its mode – thus articulating the precise form of the micro-macro link” (ibid.).

Such canalisation of personal-societal relationship, or in the present context the relationship of the civil society (reflecting the stance of particular reflexives) with the Party-State, would result in the divergences not only within a movement, e.g. the disarray in the exiled democracy movement, but also between movements. The latter, for instance, can be seen in the contrast between the current state of relationship between the weiquan activism’s assertion and the Party-State’s domination (which while coercive, does exhibit certain degree of tactical flexibility as in the case of the Wukan (乌坎) uprising and the Shifang (什邡) incident) that could at the risk of oversimplification be probably described as a reluctant “mutualistic symbiosis” (see Figure 6),
**Figure 6** State Domination and NVA Assertion: Mutualistic Symbiosis

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 335), Figure 12.9. Schema based on Vaughan and Archer (1971: 16-32).

i.e. to a certain extent benefiting both sides, and the relationship between the exiled democracy movement and the Party-State which – probably with the exception of the particular cases of ethnoterritorial resistance movements which have been able to maintain continued influence on events in the particular territories – could probably be described as a “commensalistic symbiosis” (see Figure 1 earlier), i.e. a fluid relationship of association yet at the risk of indifference and oblivion, if not, as observed earlier, for the injection of the more focused and better organised element of the Falungong resistance movement. Such divergence of course could not solely be attributed to the mode of
reflexivity, but also to a higher degree to the variations in the properties of State domination and NVA assertion, shown by the left and right vertical axes of Figure 1 and Figure 6, which with reflexivity, form a complex nexus of micro-macro, agency-structural factors and influences. This is of course not to mean that a possible better synergy between the democracy movement and weiquan activism in putting aside strategic and ideological differences to pursue a common goal of political freedom, civil liberties and social justice (as depicted in Figure 7) has to be precluded, though the objective environment currently in existence in the country would make an imminent realisation of such synergy rather implausible.

3.4. The Ambiguous Role of Political Violence

George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-four* (1949) talks about a totalitarian Party-State that controls life and creates human nature: “We control life [...] at all its levels. You are imagining that there is something called human nature which will be outraged by what we do and will turn against us. But we create human nature. Men are infinitely malleable. Or perhaps you have returned to your old idea that the proletarians or the slaves will arise and overthrow us. Put it out of your mind. They are helpless, like the animals. Humanity is the Party. The others are outside – irrelevant.” (Orwell, 1949, re-pub. 1954: 232) Irrelevant – as probably often felt by the exiled Chinese democracy activists in their individual real “ruminating self” that intervenes in between the field and the habitus (Bourdieu, 1990, 2008) while constructing in foro interno their existential projects for sociopolitical change the effectiveness and pertinence of which are contingent upon “human reflexivity; namely, our power to deliberate internally upon what to do in situations that were not of our making.” (Archer, 2003: 342) Truly, in the interplay between the State and the civil society, much like what Kristensen’s law in public
choice theories postulates, the negotiation between human agencies tends to be asymmetrical. In entrenching and expanding its power, the ruling regime as a rule would resort to exploit such power asymmetry not only through the overt repression of dissent in the preservation of stability as an ongoing stalemate – one of the possible results of social conflicts from the neo-Marxist perspective – but also by forging and re-forging alliances with societal groups based on common interest and the cooptation of the societale élite including segments of the intelligentsia. All these, of course, depend on the State’s ability to monopolise the concentrated means of coercion and violence. In this, China is not unique, as Charles Tilly (1985) observes:
At least for the European experience of the past few centuries, a portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives: the idea of a social contract, the idea of an open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers, the idea of a society whose shared norms and expectations call forth a certain kind of government.

(Tilly, 1985: 169)

While that brings to mind Thomas Paine’s iconoclastic dictum that “government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one,” Tilly notes that apologists for a government usually argue that the government offers protection against local and external violence and these apologists call people who complain about the price of protection “anarchists”, “subversives”, or both at once. Tilly basically finds an analogy of such a government that perpetuates its power through violence, in one sense or another, with a racketeer:

Back to Machiavelli and Hobbes [...] political observers have recognized that, whatever else they do, governments organize and, wherever possible, monopolize violence. It matters little whether we take violence in a narrow sense, such as damage to persons and objects, or in a broad sense, such as violation of people’s desires and interests; by either criterion, governments stand out from other organizations by their tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of violence.

(ibid.)

Witness the 3rd-4th June 1989 Beijing massacre.
But as veteran Tiananmen student leader Wang Dan (王丹) says in his Ph.D. thesis “A comparative study of state violence in mainland China and Taiwan in the 1950s” (Harvard University, 2008), “under totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, violence is not simply a means to maintain control. Instead, it provides an institutional support for the regime […] Violence is effective because it creates omnipresent fears in society – fear of mutual-accusations between colleagues, fear of being watched by the secret police, and fear that personal opinions might lead to punishment. Such fears lead to self-censorship, first by individuals and then by the entire society. State violence establishes a prison in every individual's inner consciousness, and this prison is the secret to the success of the dictatorship.” With violence being an integral component of the Party-State since the Mao years, it would not be realistic to hope for an imminent change in the CCP’s approach in ruling the country.

Nevertheless, a new worrying phenomenon that is emerging recently from the opposite side of the Party-State vs. civil society divide, albeit restricted in its origin to ethnoregional peripheral nationalism – namely the increasingly violent backlash against CCP’s central authoritarian State dominance in the frontier ethnic region of Xinjiang which seems to be turning from attacking State apparatus to terrorism targeting innocent citizens – inevitably raises the question of the effectiveness of such approach in forcing changes in State policy. Table 3 shows the spate of attacks, lately increasingly on civilians, throughout China, during the first five months of 2014, all believed to be linked to Xinjiang’s ethnoregional nationalism. It has been a widely observed phenomenon that while government responds to challenges from ethnic community organisations that seek to influence public policy, “within an inverted and complementary paradigm [...] ethnic communities take shape as response to stimuli which induce a process of ethnogenesis”
Table 3 Terrorist Attacks in China in the First Five Months of 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Attack</th>
<th>Casualty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24th January 2014</td>
<td>Xinjiang police, while dealing with terrorist incident in Xinhe County (新和县) were attacked with incendiaries.</td>
<td>6 suspects died by suicide bombing; 6 suspects killed by police; 5 suspects arrested; 1 policeman slightly injured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14th February 2014</td>
<td>Attack on police in Xinjiang’s Wushi County (乌什县).</td>
<td>3 suspects died by suicide bombing; 8 suspects killed by police; 1 suspect arrested; 2 policemen and 2 civilians injured.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st March 2014</td>
<td>Knife attack on civilians in Kunming 昆明 train station, Yunnan Province.</td>
<td>29 civilians died; 143 civilians injured; 4 suspects killed by police; 4 suspects arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30th April 2014</td>
<td>Bomb and knife attack on civilians in Urumqi 乌鲁木齐 train station, Xinjiang.</td>
<td>3 civilians died; 79 civilians injured; 7 suspects arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th May 2014</td>
<td>Knife attack on civilians at Guangzhou 广州 station, Guangdong Province.</td>
<td>6 civilians injured; 1 suspect killed by police; 1 suspect arrested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22nd May 2014</td>
<td>Car crashing and bomb attack on civilians at Urumqi’s morning market.</td>
<td>31 civilians died; 94 civilians injured.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Gheorghe, 1991: 842-843). Such an inverted paradigm, as shown in the lower flow line in Figure 8, wherein State policy has induced reethnicisation and polarisation among ethnic minorities or even ethnogenesis in places like Spain’s Andalucía or some other imagined communities, as described by Benedict Anderson (1983)\(^{38}\). This is exactly what is occurring in China’s ethnic frontier regions of Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia where the CCP central State’s repressive, uncompromising and inflexible political paradigm verging on internal colonisation, coupled with massive Han demographic and economic
invasion leading to resource exploitation and local cultural and environmental destruction, is pushing local resentment, reethnicisation and polarisation to an extreme of desperation (as reflected in the horrifying Tibetan self-immolations) or to a boiling point (as manifested in the regional unrests and Xinjiang-based cross-province terror attacks).

Xinjiang, of course, is not the only trouble spot among the ethnic regions. In mid-July 2011, for instance, over a thousand ethnic Mongolian herdsmen demonstrated against alleged government-business collusion in an ethnic Han Chinese businessman’s low-price purchase of over ten thousand mu\(^3^9\) of grazing land, according to the New York-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center.\(^4^0\) The subsequent development of the purchased land had allegedly brought in hundreds of ethnic Han workers with trucks and bulldozers whose brutal intrusion into the ethnic Mongolian village concerned had resulted in the death and injury of over a hundred livestock and the injury of over 20 herdsmen who were trying to defend their rights. Another 20 more herdsmen were injured in the thousand-strong demonstrators’ clash with the police in mid-July.\(^4^1\)

**Figure 8** Interrelationship of Ethnic Fragmentation and State Policy

![Diagram showing the interrelationship of ethnic fragmentation and state policy](image)

Source: Yeoh (2013b: 537), Figure 20.3.
This, in fact, is not the first such incident in 2011. Earlier, on 25th May, over two thousand ethnic Mongolian students and herdsmen demonstrated in front of the government building in Xilinhot (Siliyinqota) following the death of a herdsman after being hit by coal truck on 10th May while protecting his grazing land against destruction by ethnic Han’s economic development drive that has caused increasingly acute resentment among ethnic Mongolians who see themselves as the oppressed people of Inner Mongolia, devoid of political power and falling prey to the insatiable rapacity of the Han Chinese migrants – an extension of the dominant central Han political power of the country – who are destroying their traditional economy, culture and environment. Also, in May, demonstrations erupted in the regional capital Hohhot (Kökeqota) ending with the arrest of 50 students and other citizens, and according the Southern Mongolian Information Center, by early June at least 90 students, herdsmen and other citizens had been arrested in Inner Mongolia’s demonstrations, with many students seriously injured in their clash with the police.

The herdsman’s death was not an isolated case in Inner Mongolia. There was another case occurring also around that time that involved the death of an ethnic minority young man being hit by an excavator in a fight with the miners over issues related to environmental pollution due to mining activities. The Inner Mongolia troubles came at a time when tensions were high due to that year’s approaching anniversary of the June Fourth 1989 Beijing massacre, and when this multiethnic nation was still reeling from the shock of the 14th March 2008 Lhasa riots and the 5th July 2009 Xinjiang ethnic conflict. There are indeed many similarities between the newer incident in Inner Mongolia and the 2009 ethnic violence in Xinjiang, as shown in Table 4.
Table 4 “Mass Incidents” in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang: Comparison and Contrast

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inner Mongolia, 11th May 2011</th>
<th>Xinjiang, 5th July 2009</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trigger</strong></td>
<td>Rights-defending herdsman killed by coal truck</td>
<td>Uighur workers killed by Han 漢/ 汉 Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Background</strong></td>
<td>Herdsmen’s livelihood in great difficulty and poverty blamed on mining activity on their grassland</td>
<td>Poor development in Uighur areas leading to acute poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Way of protest</strong></td>
<td>Peaceful demonstrations</td>
<td>Violent Uighur backlash killing Han Chinese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slogan of protest</strong></td>
<td>“Remembrance of the killed! Stop mining!”</td>
<td>“Blood for blood! Han Chinese get the hell out of Xinjiang!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>Mongolian students and herdsmen</td>
<td>Uighur youths</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>State response</strong></td>
<td>Suppression with army and riot police; making arrests before situation worsened</td>
<td>Suppression with army and riot police; making arrests after conflict</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Yeoh (2011: 427), Table 11.

Hence, it can be seen that public protests in the ethnic “autonomous regions” have been growing alarmingly in recent years, though only in the case of Xinjiang’s Uyghur nationalism has an ethnic self-determination movement which is initially a legitimate protest against an authoritarian central State and the State’s collusion with capricious, exploitative ethnic Han business interests been apparently veering into terrorism against non-Uyghur innocent civilian targets. However,
to advocates of nonviolent action, political violence against an authoritarian State or a dictatorship could be counter-productive:

Armed resistance, even for a just cause, can terrify people not yet committed to the struggle, making it easier for a government to justify violent repression and use of military force in the name of protecting the population. Even rioting and vandalism can turn public opinion against a movement, which is why some governments have employed agents provocateurs to encourage such violence. The use of force against unarmed resistance movements, on the other hand, usually creates greater sympathy for the government’s opponents. As with the martial art of aikido, nonviolent opposition movements can engage the force of the state’s repression and use it to effectively disarm the force directed against them.

(Zunes, 2009)

This is indeed something that the democracy movement and human rights activism in general and advocates of ethnic self-determination especially in the frontier regions need to take heed of, as evident in the world support for China’s anti-terrorism declarations after the increasing incidents of attacks on civilians by suspects with background of ethnoregional nationalism, specifically Uyghurs.

Moreover, while political violence tends to increase along with government violence, political scientists have observed the relationship between government violence and most types of political violence to appear to be curvilinear (as depicted in Figure 9), i.e. a threshold will be reached “where increased government violence coincides with a rapid decline in the collective violence of citizens” (Greene, 1990: 143). The threshold varies from case to case and depends on the intensity of the citizens’ hostility for the particular regime in question, while the
cohesion of the political élite on both sides remains key to the citizens’ revolutionary potential vis-à-vis the authoritarian regime’s capacity for counter-revolutionary violence (ibid.) in a process referred to by Irwin and Faison (1978) as a “political jujutsu”46 in which shifts of attitude are important as well as shifts of behaviour “because both sides adjust their actions according to how they gauge their support”, as illustrated in Figure 10. On all counts, the current situation seems to be absolutely more favourable on the side of the Party-State.

**Figure 9** Political Violence and Government Violence: A Curvilinear Relationship

Source: Greene (1990: 144), Figure 10-1.
Ever since the party hardliners shot down Hu Yaobang’s bold suggestion in 1980 of moving Tibet policy from what he perceived as what was then equivalent to colonialism to more satisfactory ethnic autonomy partly by allowing ethnic Tibetans to have more than absolute two-third majority in cadre proportion (“mianshui / 免税, fangkai / 放開, zouren / 走人”), government violence in the form of draconian suppression as in Xinjiang and Tibet has always been the way of the Party hitherto in dealing with unrests in the ethnic regions – an ironhanded approach that can be traced back to the Cultural Revolution brutalities including the attack on the so-called “Inner Mongolia’s February Counter-Current” (内蒙古二月逆流) and the Shadian (沙甸) massacre.

Judging from the current trend and in view of Xi Jinping’s hardline approach to the escalating Xinjiang tension and the regime’s continued inflexible policy towards Tibet in these remaining years of the moderate
spiritual leadership of the 14th Dalai Lama (which might not last for too long) of the Tibetan government in exile, political violence looks set to escalate in these ethnic regions. However, contrary to what happened in Romania in 1989, such ethnic uprising against the authoritarian government of the CCP would not look likely to spread into the Han-dominant China proper; instead the Han majority’s State-cultivated ethnocentric, xenophobic and chauvinistic patriotism and nationalism as well as the deep-seated fear of China breaking up will continue to be useful for Beijing in avoiding effective challenge to the CCP’s enforced strict political monopoly in the Xi Jinping era of “benign” free-market, anti-corruption authoritarianism.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that reaction to State violence in the ethnic regions does not necessarily mean a prelude to ethnic cessation. With a common cause for liberation from the clutch of a common enemy – the authoritarian Party-State – a spark in an ethnic region could well ignite a cross-ethnic nation-wide uprising. The Romanian Revolution that ultimately resulted in the violent overthrow and execution of longtime Romanian president Nicolae Ceaușescu and spelt the end of both the Socialist Republic of Romania and the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) which, unlike other former ruling Communist parties in Eastern Europe that reconfigured themselves into social democratic or democratic socialist parties during the anti-communist “Revolutions of 1989”, just melted away in the wake of the revolution, first started in the form of a protest among the ethnic Hungarians of the city of Timișoara in the country’s ethnic Hungarian region of Transylvania in response to an attempt by the government to evict Hungarian Reformed Church pastor László Tökés whom the government had alleged of inciting ethnic hatred after an interview of Tökés by the Hungarian television. The ethnic Hungarian protest soon expanded into a furious backlash against harsh government crackdown and spread throughout the country.
Situation went out of the regime’s control when in the capital București (Bucharest) in the morning of 21st December 1989 the supposedly politically frightened and apathetic crowd spontaneously coalesced into a revolutionary critical mass during Ceaușescu’s speech condemning the Timișoara uprising. Such an unexpected development then led to Ceaușescu’s flight the next day and arrest and execution three days later that signaled the fall of Communist Party dictatorship in Romania. It is apparent that the fate of the Ceaușescu regime was sealed when the rolling waves of event first emanating from Timișoara began to unthinkably change the attitude of the traditionally politically frightened and apathetic “neutrals” among the masses.

3.5. Politicising the Apathetic, Winning over Neutrals

With economic success and mesmerising projects showcasing astounding national strength and glory to negate the desire for regime change, may it be that of the weiquan activism, Falungong resistance or the wider spectrum of the democracy movement, the CCP’s Party-State domination has continued to be stable. In view of that, ideological or institutional “attractiveness” is all the more important in the struggle against authoritarianism, as winning over uncommitted third parties (as seen above in the Romanian Revolution) is absolutely crucial for any chances of success in NVA assertion, in a process of “political jujutsu” (Irwin and Faison, 1978) referred to earlier in which shifts of attitude and behaviour are both important because the respective support gauged by both sides would determine the adjustment in their actions. Above the “third parties” in Figure 10 are “opponents” who, from the perspective of the NVA proponents, represent potential converts especially among State-coopted intellectuals, emerging middle class, disgruntled working class but also moderates and reformers in the ruling echelons and bureaucracy, and from the point of view of the Party-State, the dejected
and demoralised leaders and members of NVA who feel lost outside the country’s economic success and who are at the edge of losing conviction in the movements that they feel are increasingly becoming irrelevant in the eyes of the world while facing the continuously growing strength of the Party-State and the China it rules, just like the perceived outcast described in Salman Rushdie’s reflection in Joseph Anton: “Dead, he might even be given the respect due to a free-speech martyr. Alive, he was a dull and unpleasantly lingering pain in the neck.” (Rushdie, 2012, ppb 2013: 415)

Such tactics as described above are crucial for if “the assertive group has limited members willing to engage in concerted action and a low degree of internal organisation, while the dominant group has a strong and highly organised portion of its membership engaged in applying constraints, domination is likely to prove stable” (Vaughan and Archer, 1971: 28). However, while such variations in relative numerical and organisational strength on the two sides could significantly account for their relative degrees of success in this process of “political jujutsu”, as Vaughan and Archer caution, a parameter inevitably influencing this power interplay that has to be taken into consideration is “the alliances either group can form in order to acquire wider support for either domination or assertion” (ibid.), i.e. not only the active and passive opponents but also the “neutrals”, the uncommitted third parties, to win over as we see in the example of the Romanian Revolution, as portrayed in Figure 10. This is where “soft power”, backed by “hard power” together forming what has been called “smart power”, comes in to count. This is where the present China’s rising next-superpower status is making the CCP’s authoritarianism continue to look unassailable. This is where the analogy between the legacy of 1989’s hundred-day mass protests and June Fourth massacre and that of Emperor Kuang-hsü ( 光绪 )’s Hundred Days’ Reform ( 戊戌變法 / 百日維新 ) of 1898 and

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the martyrs of the Yellow Flower Mound (黃花崗七十二烈士) of 1911 fails. The CCP today is not similar to the decrepit and ineffectual Ch’ing (清) court in its waning days; the PRC today does not resemble the “Sick Man of East Asia” (東亞病夫) at the turn of the last century. This shows how difficult it is in reality for the side of NVA to politicise the apathetic, win over the neutrals and to galvanise diverse social forces into joint action against a formidable, frighteningly ruthless one-party regime. Contemporary China is no basket-case Romania of Nicolae Ceauşescu, and there is not going to be a spark from a Chinese Timişoara to ignite a conflagration.

4. Hong Kong and the Spirit of Operation Siskin: Protecting Mainland China’s Last Corner of Free Speech and Civil Liberties

Nevertheless, there is an earlier example of how at a critical juncture in contemporary China diverse social forces were galvanised into an almost inconceivable joint action against a ruthless central State: the now legendary “Operation Siskin” or “Operation Yellowbird” (黃雀行動) in the wake of the June Fourth massacre of 1989.

Known as “Secret Passage” at an earlier stage, “Operation Siskin” was a loosely structured Hong Kong-based rescue syndicate hurriedly put together by some key members of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China (the Alliance / 香港市民支援愛國民主運動聯合會 / 支聯會), Hong Kong actors-cum-filmmakers John Shum Kin-fun (岑建勳) and Alan Tang Kwong-wing (鄧光榮) and businessman and triad boss Chan Tat-ching (陳達鉉, “Brother Six”/六哥) in the immediate aftermath of the June 1989 Beijing massacre. While the United States and Hong Kong’s British colonial government were undoubtedly involved in the rescue missions to various degrees and the costly and highly dangerous operations were
financed mainly by Hong Kong businessmen and its underworld among other benefactors, Operation Siskin owed much to the organising strength and network of the Hong Kong underworld, mainly the smuggling triads, which successfully rescued, by one estimate, more than 300 to 400 wanted student leaders, democracy activists, scholars and writers, mainly from June to the end of 1989, but with sporadic operations lasting till June 1997, just before the “Handover” of Hong Kong to China.\textsuperscript{51}

4.1. Lesson One: Operation Siskin as a Textbook Example of Galvanising Diverse Social Forces in Facing a Ruthless State

In an interview by the \textit{Sunday Telegraph} (UK) of 18th May 2014 as the 25th anniversary of the Beijing massacre was approaching, Chan Tatchung, now retired, gave an account of how it all began with a meeting with Alan Tang Kwong-wing and Shum Kin-fun in a hotel in Kowloon (九龍) arranged by Hong Kong activists in which he was asked whether he was willing to participate in a dangerous mission to rescue the students and he agreed and plunged into action. Chan put the final amount spent as 10 million Hong Kong dollars, mainly used to pay the speedboat operators and some to bribe mainland Chinese officials, in the incredible secret operation “that spirited at least 150 people out of China under the noses of the authorities”, according to the \textit{Sunday Telegraph}.\textsuperscript{52}

For the protection of lives and careers, many details including the identity of those involved have remained unrevealed. During the past two decades, most of the well-known figures in the Operation and various other possible participants\textsuperscript{53} have since passed away, including Szeto Wah (司徒華), chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China from 21st May 1989 till his passing on 2nd January 2011 and a member of the Hong Kong Legislative Council from 26th September 1985 to 12th September 2004,
Alan Tang Kwong-wing, singer-actress Anita Mui Yim-fong (梅艷芳), and the Hong Kong democrat Leung Wah (梁華) whose mysterious death in neighbouring Shenzhen (深圳) was alleged by some to be the work of the Chinese security agents. While government officials in southern China appeared to be keeping an eye closed towards Operation Siskin, the rescue action which was mainly carried out in the dark nights was still highly dangerous and in fact resulted in the death of four of Chan Tat-ching’s operatives during rescue action and three others being arrested by Chinese police. According to Lee Cheuk-yan (李卓人), former chairman of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China, the French Consulate provided the major assistance in issuing about a hundred visas to the fugitives even without approval from Paris.

4.2. Lesson Two: Urgency in Guarding and Supporting Hong Kong as the Last Corner of Mainland China where Political Freedom Is Still Possible

While Operation Siskin represents a brazen joint effort of a response at a critical juncture in the yesteryears which is slowly fading into oblivion in collective memory, Hong Kong continues to stand proud in the Greater China area – just like China’s “renegade province” across the Taiwan Strait today with a vibrant liberal democratic political system and a free and decent civil society brimming with vim and vigour – with her uniqueness in being the only corner of China under PRC’s jurisdiction where large-scale public demonstrations against China’s one-party authoritarianism are still possible. This is manifest in the annual large-scale remembrance of the 4th June 1989 Beijing massacre and the annual “Handover” anniversary demonstrations – in which from 150,000 to over 510,000 Hong Kong people took to the streets upon this year’s 17th anniversary on 1st July 2014, just after about 22 per cent
(787,767 in number) of Hong Kong’s registered voters in an unofficial referendum organised by the pro-democracy activist group Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP) voted for full democracy and free elections for the city’s next leader.57 These are besides other specific demonstrations like that in 201258, the year of the suspected “being suicided” (bei zisha / 被自杀) of Li Wangyang, in defense of freedom and democracy, protesting against “party-official-business collusion” and calling for a thorough investigation of Li Wangyang’s cause of death, as well as gatherings and demonstrations against the CCP regime’s encroachment into the enclave’s political and civil liberty, e.g. its introduction in 2012 of “brainwashing” curriculum into the Special Administrative Zone’s education institutional framework. “We have the freedoms we fight for, and we lose those we don’t defend.” (Rushdie, 2012, ppb 2013: 528) It is heartening to see that this is a point still well understood by the Hong Kong society, almost two decades after the “Handover”. In 2019, the 1st July protest rally reached its highest in number at 550,000 marchers, just shortly after nearly 2 million people took to the streets to protest against an extradition-to-China bill.

The “brainwashing” curriculum encroachment, nevertheless, is but just part of the long-running, on-going process of consolidating China’s hegemony in the local Hong Kong society through the former’s United Front Work which includes, according to Lam and Lam (2013), “the soft tactics of integration, cooptation and collaboration, as well as the hard tactics of containment and denunciation”. Lam and Lam summarise China’s treatment of different political players in post-“Handover” Hong Kong – through “education, persuasion, threats and inducement” and in the case of denunciation, outright political exclusion – in terms of integration (developing common instrumental interests as well as “common wills and feelings”) and cooptation (with Chinese Communist agents actively and selectively recruiting and appointing “supporters to

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political institutions and power positions, so that alternative views of its supporters can be put in line with those of the Chinese authorities”) in dealing with the majority and supporters; collaboration (ensuring “that the targets do not join force with the opposition, whether or not they explicitly support Beijing”) targeting the moderate, wavering middle; and containment (with Chinese Communist agents checking the democrats’ expansion or influence and fragmenting the opposition camp to neutralise its influence) and denunciation (with China publicly condemning and accusing, outright rejecting and verbally threatening the democrats and refusing to communicate with them in order to “halt their influence immediately and permanently”) excluding or constraining the influence of enemies (ibid.: 306-307). For a diagrammatic depiction of such strategic moves by the Party-State, see the right panel of Figure 10.

Within such an atmosphere overshadowed by China’s United Front Work, a question presents itself, as Yeung (2013: 163) asks: should Hong Kong’s chief executive “be a political leader, in its full sense, or just an administrator?” Yeung then gives his take on this regarding Donald Tsang, Hong Kong’s second chief executive (2005-2012):

That Tsang saw his appointment as a job he would strive to get it done is widely seen as indicative of the mind-set of civil servants […] His “boss- servant” mind-set has been manifested in his body language when he met with mainland Chinese officials and leaders in Beijing. Television news footage of him listening attentively and taking down notes carefully on what state leaders such as President Hu Jintao had to say has reinforced the public perception of him being a loyal servant. It is also open secret that he had addressed to the former Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office Director Liao Hui as “laoban”, or boss, when they met although they enjoyed a similar rank in the Chinese hierarchy.

(ibid.: 163-164)
The sad implication of this situation is that, sighs Yeung,

The excessive show of humbleness of Tsang when dealing with Beijing officials has weakened his role and position as a champion of the interest of Hong Kong people when it comes to issues such as democratic development where the city and the central government do not see eye to eye.

(ibid.: 164)

It is against such backdrop that the spirit of the Hong Kong people in fighting for their rights and freedom has come out to be so noble. Upon the 30th anniversary of June Fourth, while looking back at that critical juncture in 1989, the passing of Hong Kong’s democrat stalwart Szeto Wah on 2nd January 2011 seemed to signal the closing of a chapter on the memory of the valiant Siskin Operation of the yesteryears. Yet the spirit of Szeto Wah and of Operation Siskin live on. Twenty-two years after “Handover” and three decades after the launching of the almost inconceivable Operation Siskin, the Hong Kong people have not only persisted in standing up for their rights and freedom but also continued to hold on to their fight for justice and freedom for all China with vim and vigour in this last corner of the country where speaking one’s mind is still possible – the latest gesture in this regard being the setting up of the world’s first permanent June 4th Museum (六四紀念館) in the enclave.

Located in a commercial building in Hong Kong’s Tsim Sha Tsui (尖沙咀) district in Kowloon, the 70-ft² museum sponsored by the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China during its launching on 26th April 2014 was met with confrontation from pro-Beijing organisations and threat of legal action from the building’s owner while other occupants of the same building
want the museum shut down, citing safety concerns – actions which the museum's backers believe are being orchestrated by CCP officials.\textsuperscript{59} Undaunted by such threats, Szeto Wah’s successor Lee Cheuk-yen, the then chairman of the Alliance, said that among the groups of visitors to the museum were Hong Kong students and mainland Chinese tourists, in line with the purpose of establishing the museum, i.e. to break through the information blockade and memory wipe-out and distortion imposed by the Chinese government over a quarter century, to remind people what really happened in 1989 in order to urge on the struggle for a liberal democratic China.\textsuperscript{60} The museum was eventually forced to close in 2016, and only managed to re-open at another location three years later.

Yet the overall prospects remain grim. Just shortly after the 6,500-person rally organised by Hong Kong journalist in February 2014 to decry against increasing levels of coercion against the Hong Kong press and the candlelight vigil on 4th June 2014 in Victoria Park to commemorate that year’s 25th anniversary of the 3rd-4th June 1989 Beijing massacre which was attended by 100,000 to over 180,000 people\textsuperscript{61}, on 10th June the CCP government released an unprecedented, alarming 14,500-word White Paper\textsuperscript{62} – which was described by Hong Kong’s pro-democracy advocates as “sending a shiver up the spine” and representing a sea-change to their understanding of what “one country, two systems” should be – affirming Beijing’s “comprehensive jurisdiction” over Hong Kong and stating that Hong Kong must be run by “patriotic” people of Hong Kong, as stated in item 3 (“The Hong Kong People Who Govern Hong Kong Should Above All Be Patriotic”) under section V:

There are lines and criteria to be observed in implementing “Hong Kong people governing Hong Kong,” that is what Deng Xiaoping stressed, Hong Kong must be governed by the Hong Kong people
with patriots as the mainstay, as loyalty to one’s country is the minimum political ethic for political figures […] In a word, loving the country is the basic political requirement for Hong Kong’s administrators. If they are not consisted of by patriots as the mainstay or they cannot be loyal to the country and the HKSAR, the practice of “one country, two systems” in the HKSAR will deviate from its right direction, making it difficult to uphold the country’s sovereignty, security and development interests, and putting Hong Kong’s stability and prosperity and the wellbeing of its people in serious jeopardy.63

There is nothing strange for this White Paper issued by the State Council in emphasising patriotism, but the catch is: in the befuddled realm of the CCP State = China = Chinese people cognition of the one-party monopoly of her Beijing overlord, what is being asked of the Hong Kong people is not just patriotism towards China as a nation, but also loyalty to the CCP who has continued to stifle dissent and deny citizens’ free political choice with brutal coercion while justifying itself with economic achievements as the only rightful political party to have absolute, effective rule over the country in perpetuity.

5. Top-Down Political Change Is a Real Possibility, but Unfortunately Not around the Corner

For an authoritarian country like China, William Dobson, author of The dictator’s learning curve (2012) was rather pessimistic about the prospect of huge revolutionary change in the short and medium term.64 As organisation, preparation and good understanding of the authoritarian regime are absolutely essential to bring down an authoritarian regime, we have already seen that China’s (exiled) democracy movement as a whole is desperately weak in these aspects, and the symbiosis depicted
in Figure 1 earlier (or Figure 6 in the case of the *weiquan* activism) is at best an unbalanced one or worse one characterised by the almost absolute domination of the Party-State vis-à-vis the NVA whose survival very much counts upon the State’s willing tolerance for diplomatic goodwill and pretension of progress in human rights.

Would changes come as top-down in the PRC? Dobson sees no encouraging sign that the CCP is seriously working on that, for the current priority of the Party seems to be a single-mindedness in strengthening and protecting its one-party political control. Referring to the view that the first 30 years of the PRC were spent on Mao’s “class struggle” and “perpetual revolution”, the second 30 years on economic development, and the third 30 years would be on how to achieve good governance, Dobson indeed sees the possibility of a top-down transformation, but as the country is now in the very early stage of the third 30 years, future development is very uncertain and very much depends on how the CCP would view the whole process of change.65

5.1. **Opportunity Missed for Top-Down Political Reform**

Besides that of the Tiananmen crackdown, the year 2014 also sees the 25th anniversary of the passing of Hu Yaobang, the late reformist chairman and general secretary of the CCP purged by Deng Xiaoping and other Party elders in 1987 for being too tolerant of the wave of their perceived threat of “bourgeois liberalisation” among intellectuals in the late 1980s. Hu’s passing away on 15th April 1989 triggered the student protests in Tiananmen Square that eventually led to the June Fourth massacre that shook the world. Hu Dehua ( 胡德华 ), the third child of Hu Yaobang, in a recent interview by Hong Kong’s *South China Morning Post*, lamented the lack of political reform and press freedom in China and regretted that, with the purge of his father (who had ironically been highly respected both in and outside of the Party for executing the
reversal of the internal Party purges of the Mao years, including the rehabilitation of Xi Zhongxun (习仲勋), the current president Xi Jinping’s father), China lost the opportunity for political reform in the 1980s, given that Hu Yaobang who believed in the need for simultaneous political and economic reform had planned in 1986 for the launching of the news and publication freedom laws which were scuttled by the Party after he was purged a year later.66 “Reforms have their specific windows in history,” lamented Hu Dehua, “Once missed, how do we know when will the next window arrive?” Being the first step and the most fundamental legislation in political reform, press and speech freedom laws’ dismissal 27 years ago meant that such legal protection of Chinese citizens’ basic rights might just forever remain an unattainable dream. How ironical this renders Xi Jinping’s talk of a “China Dream”? Just a dream of the glory of China standing tall among nations, a China continued be under the iron grip of a CCP intolerant of all political competition and dissent, a China in which the dream of her citizens for the freedom of speech and political choice continues to be trampled and quashed as the errant ways of “bourgeois liberalisation” seen as but a curtain raiser for the concerted effort on the part of the enemies of the State to eventually bring about the grim scenario of a “Peaceful Evolution” (à la John Foster Dulles)67.

Among the legacies of Hu Yaobang, Hu Dehua was proudest of his father’s promotion of democracy and rule of law, staunch principled objection to rule by repression, rehabilitation of victims of Mao’s political campaigns, ending of discrimination against the so-called “black five types” (hei wu lei / 黑五类) and other political enemies and abolition of the practice of individual’s class entry in the filling up of government forms, thus for the first time giving PRC’s citizens freedom from fear. As the University of Science and Technology Beijing ( 北京科技大学) professor Zhao Xiao (赵晓) sums up in an essay posted on
the Internet on 14th April, Hu Yaobang had repeatedly proclaimed his remonstration: “How could it be possible for an unfree people, shackled and repressed spiritually and in organisation, to freely compete with the world’s developed nations?” After the purge of Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang (赵紫阳) – who became the Party’s general secretary and first vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission – at the 13th Party Congress in October 1987 proposed the one and only political reform package in the history of the Chinese Communist Party which attempted to introduce reforms such as the separation of powers between Party and State (Zhao, 2009a: 286; 2009b: 315; 2009c: 364). Zhao passed away in 2005, being under house arrest for sixteen long years until his death for his refusal to repent his decision to oppose the 1989 Beijing-Tiananmen crackdown and to urge for the accommodation of the hunger-striking students’ demands. In his letter to the 15th Party Congress in 1997 during his house arrest, Zhao lamented the halting of the political reform he initiated: “Because of the impact of the [Tiananmen] incident, the political reform initiated by the 13th Party Congress died young and in midstream, leaving the reform of the political system lagging seriously behind. As a result of this serious situation, while our country’s economic reform has made substantial progress, all sorts of social defects have emerged and developed and are rapidly spreading. Social conflicts have worsened, and corruption within and outside of the Party is proliferating and has become unstoppable.” (Zhao, 2009a: 79; 2009b: 97; 2009c: 112)

The tragedy of Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, the two rare embodiments of the “conscience of China” from within the CCP’s ruling politburo, reflected a recurrence of the fate of the Hundred Days’ Reform of 1898. Hu and Zhao are the 1980s’ version of Emperor Kuang-hsü, their think tankers like Yan Jiaqi and Bao Tong (鲍彤) are the new K’ang Yu-wei (康有为) and Liang Ch’i-ch’ao (梁啟
Deng Xiaoping the butcher of Beijing is Empress Dowager Tz’u-hsi (慈禧太后) resurrected, and the violently suppressed students of Tiananmen Square and the valiant people of Beijing who stood up to give their lives in protecting the students and the cause they championed are the new martyrs of the Yellow Flower Mound. It would be natural to move forward with this analogy to equate the CCP with the Manchu imperial court of the Ch’ing Dynasty (满清) on the wane in the early 1900s, but the fact would then be flying in the face of such generalisation, for the CCP of today is nothing like the Ch’ing court of the early 1900s in a China that was decadent, poor and backward and humiliated internationally, ripe for a revolution to break out.

As Samuel Huntington points out, “modernity breeds stability, but modernization breeds instability” (Huntington, 1968: 41)\textsuperscript{74}, admittedly thirty years of economic reform, by bringing about a sea change in economic life and rule of game, has unleashed forces and momenta – whether in March-June 1989 in Beijing (as depicted in Figure 11), March 2008 in Tibet or July 2009 in Xinjiang, whether with or without an ethnoregional content – that had caught the ruling establishment by surprise and overtaken its ability to catch up and understand and to effectively accommodate. On the conception of revolution as a process, it has been observed that “conditions which produce a revolution are no different in principle from those that produce a smaller or even an unsuccessful protest movement.” (Geschwender, 1968: 128)\textsuperscript{75} Raised expectation of what is now perceived to be possible has fuelled the passion for speedier targeted change and in the context of ethnicity or ethnoterritoriality brought back the long-suppressed ghost of identity investment which the ruling establishment could be ill-prepared to accommodate. However, whether they be the 1989 anti-corruption-turned-pro-democracy demonstrations in Beijing or the 14th March 2008 riots in Tibet or the 5th July 2009 riots in Xinjiang (which precipitated

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**Figure 11** China: Expanding Demand for Political Institutional Change, 1978-1989

By 1989 greatly expanded popular demand for a more liberal and just society had diverged so much from existing situation of accentuated corruption and social injustice as by-products of market-oriented economic reform unaccompanied by liberal democratic political reform and result of Deng Xiaoping's intolerance for "bourgeois liberalization" – an intolerable gap has developed between what people wanted and what they got.

Reform since 1978 had raised popular demand for a more liberal and just society – a tolerable gap remained between what people wanted and what they got.

People took to the streets at this time.

Source: Yeoh (2013a: 297), Figure 12.6. Based on Davies's J-Curve Theory of Revolution; see Vander Zanden (1988: 584), Figure 21.2 (adapted from Davies, 1962: 6, Figure 1).

the rising terrorist attacks of the subsequent years), they were at best one-off and did not spell the doom of CCP's rule, much unlike how the Empress Dowager Tz'u-hsi and her conservative Manchu aristocrats' suppression of Emperor Kuang-hsü's organic reform campaign had

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precipitated Sun Yat-sen 孫逸仙 (孫中山)’s revolution that completely overthrew the Ch’ing monarchy – due to a host of developmental factor variations resulting in (see Figure 12):

[…] a curvilinear relationship between revolutionary potential and economic development or – in all its social and political ramifications – “modernization.” […] Revolutionary potential is low in traditional societies because of the low incidence of economic change that consequently exerts minimal pressures for adaptation on established political and social institutions. Revolutionary potential increases with the development of a market economy in agricultural production, with urbanization and industrialization, and according to the rate of economic change, the extent of foreign control, and the coincidence of the developmental crises associated with modernity. Revolutionary potential then declines as new authority patterns, welfare institutions, and the social norms related to modernization are firmly established at an advanced stage of economic development.

(Greene, 1990: 166)

Similarly, in their work “Modernization: Theories and facts” (1997), Przeworski and Limongi contended that an increase in economic modernisation, and thus an increase in the per capita income of a country increases the possibility of a democratic transition to occur, but only until the per capita income of the said country reaches US$6000. Above that level, authoritarian governments grow stronger and the possibility of the country’s democratic transition becomes weaker as per capita income increases. To put that plainly, the American political theorist Robert Kagan argues that, contrary to the prediction of the “modernisation theory” that economic modernisation, liberalisation and prosperity would propel political liberalisation too, the richer a country
gets “the easier it may be for autocrats to hold on to power. More money keeps the bourgeoisie content and lets the government round up the few discontented who reveal their feelings on the Internet.” (Kagan, 2008, cited in Chu, 2013: 81)

**Figure 12 Revolutionary Potential and Modernization: A Curvilinear Relationship**

![Graph showing a curvilinear relationship between Revolutionary Potential and Modernization](image)

Source: Greene (1990: 167), Figure 11-1.
5.2. The Retreat of NVA Assertion and Lack of Urgency for Party-State To Compromise

Facing a strong, ruthless regime, there is a prevailing view of acquiescing to a “democracy, Chinese style” and of giving up challenge against the CCP regime, and talk of letting the increasingly “catch-all” CCP to take its time to move along its “intra-party democracy” path to eventually evolve into popular democracy for the country. However, Nobel Peace Prize nominee Professor Gene Sharp warns us that when fundamental issues such as those related to human freedom or the whole future development of the society are at stake, “negotiations do not provide a way of reaching a mutually satisfactory solution. On some basic issues there should be no compromise. Only a shift in power relations in favor of the democrats can adequately safeguard the basic issues at stake. Such a shift will occur through struggle, not negotiations [...] The point here is that negotiations are not a realistic way to remove a strong dictatorship in the absence of a powerful democratic opposition.” (Sharp, 2010: 10)\textsuperscript{76} This is not to say that an authoritarian regime as strong as the present CCP would actually negotiate in any realistic way with its political opponents, including those in the country’s restive frontier regions whose desperation is recently increasingly translating into terror action striking the China proper – witness the Kunming, Beijing, Urumqi and Guangzhou attacks. “Negotiations, of course, may not be an option at all”, Sharp remarks, “Firmly entrenched dictators who feel secure in their position may refuse to negotiate with their democratic opponents.” (\textit{ibid.})

Even if the all-powerful authoritarian regime is willing to embark on a certain extent of democratisation at its own pace in a best-case scenario for the democracy advocates, as Guillermo O’Donnell and Philippe Schmitter (1986) opine, while a transition from authoritarian
rule could probably produce a democracy, it could also terminate with a liberalised authoritarian regime (dictablanda) or a restrictive, illiberal democracy (democradura) (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 9)\textsuperscript{77}. While shadows of the remnants of her ghostly past still linger to haunt the one-party State, there are already telling signs that the continuing transformation from a dictadura (dictatorship) into a dictablanda leading further to a highly restrictive democradura in the near future is the most possible direction the CCP regime is heading to and indeed planning to head to, given the fact that the Western, “bourgeois liberal” multi-party competitive electoral democracy (democracia), together with its notion of separation of powers, has already been ruled out of the cards, or at least not until mid-2000s. In fact, following Professor Zhou Tianyong from the Central Party School, China’s authoritarian one-party political system will and should remain unchanged until at least 2037 (Zhou, Wang and Wang (eds), 2007: 2, 6, 45-46)\textsuperscript{78}. This is in line with what Deng Xiaoping stated in 1987, that direct general elections could only be held after half a century had passed in the 2000s, and at the moment the country had to make do with indirect elections above the county level and direct elections only at county and below county level, given the colossal population and inadequate level of cultural quality of the people (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 19-20)\textsuperscript{79}.

5.3. **Top-Down or Bottom-Up: It Could Be a Long Way To Go**

Chiang Ching-kuo (蔣經國) has often been referred to as the best dictator China has ever had (at least for those who are not bent on severing completely the history of Taiwan, Republic of China, from the overall history of China) for his willingness to end the authoritarianism of Kuomintang and bring multi-party competitive liberal democracy to Taiwan. In short, a top-down political institutional change. Such a change, as has occurred in the former Soviet Union, in Taiwan, in the

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Republic of Korea, could yet happen in China, though the process could be slow, given the present national economic and military strength which would make such top-down fundamental change seem less urgent. Yet one could be overestimating the CCP regime’s staying power and underestimating its inherent weaknesses. Just look at the usual level of jitteriness of the regime every time when the National Congress of the Communist Party of China (中国共产党全国代表大会) is approaching, just look at how a government ruthless as such could virtually tremble at its citizens holding a flower in the street, how a government could basically declare a war on a flower or on words like “democracy”, “freedom” and “human rights” on the Internet – one can then realise to what extent a government’s lack of self-confidence could be, and to what extent a government could see in every person in the street a potential agent of subversion.

Nevertheless, taking note of the hypothesis that a society’s revolutionary potential is directly related to the severity of military defeat, economic crisis and fragmentation of the ruling élite but inversely related to the regime’s political legitimacy (Greene, 1990: 150), without any impending national economic crisis, military defeat or internal political struggle severe enough to destroy CCP’s ruling echelon from within and with no sign of the weakening of the State’s will and machinery to suppress those who dare to challenge CCP’s self-justified legitimacy to rule without being elected to do so, the Party’s rule looks set to continue to stay strong. Political democratisation of China is destined to be long in coming. Ironically, China’s present consensus-based collective leadership, while supposed to prevent the rise of another disastrously strong leader like Mao Zedong, will count against quick democratisation too. Counting on a benevolent strong man (China’s millennia-long notion of a mingjun) might sound ridiculous in other parts of this modern world, but ironically at least a Chinese Mikhail
Sergeyevich Gorbachev who is strong enough to push for real political reforms might just come in handy.

In an interview by Voice of America just prior to 2014’s June Fourth anniversary, Wang Dan, who holds both a Master’s degree in East Asian history (2001) and a Ph.D. (2008) from Harvard University, was asked the hypothetical question of what he would tell or wish to tell President Xi Jinping’s daughter Xi Mingze (习明泽) who is presently studying at Harvard if he happened to meet the latter. After expressing his lack of personal interest in Xi Mingze, Wang Dan said that, nevertheless, since her father was Xi Jinping, he would hope that she would talk properly to her father about the importance of democracy to the feeling of honour and pride of every Chinese. If Xi Jinping considered himself a Chinese, he should hope that China would be more democratic, and as the daughter of Xi Jinping and also feeling the honour of being a Chinese, added Wang Dan, Xi Mingze should persuade her father not to continue obstructing the tide of history. This would be the only way to enable every Chinese, including Xi Mingze herself, to have the true honour and pride of being a Chinese.  

Such hope for a closet Gorbachev who could be persuaded to eventually come out to do what is right when the time is ripe (or when the older and more conservative members of the politburo have retired) is real. Without economic crisis, without military defeat, any discretionary decision to move away from the current one-party authoritarianism towards multi-party competitive liberal democracy could well be coming from a strong man’s personal political will. Contrary to all hopes and dreams of the democracy movement, such political reforms would most likely not be bottom-up because the objective urgency for such changes simply does not exist at the moment in this rising superpower whose economic (and military) power advancement continues to be the object of both envy and apprehension.
of the world. In a country full of unprecedented hope of prosperity under a ruling Party that is ruthlessly protective of its absolute, unassailable political monopoly, yet executively efficient and currently even showing good political will in bringing corruption down to a tolerable level, why should the people at large risk chaos and bloodshed in fighting for a liberal democratic dream that has been seen to turn sour in Russia, Thailand, the Philippines, the Arab world, and even India? Why would the masses still not be contented with this, as Aldous Huxley calls it in his 1946 foreword to Brave New World (1932), “welfare-tyranny of Utopia” – a totalitarianism “called into existence by the social chaos […] and developing, under the need for efficiency and stability”? “You pays your money and takes your choice”, shrugs Huxley, metaphorically.\footnote{\textit{\textsuperscript{81}}}

However, ultimately, so long as Mao’s portrait is still hanging high on Tiananmen, where is the hope for China’s political liberalisation? Until the perpetrator of some of worst horrors of China’s long torturous history is finally taken down from the altar and the Party through which such horrors were being perpetrated is finally prepared to face the verdict of the people through electoral choice, all talks of a “China Dream”, of a China standing proud among the modern nations would forever ring hollow, for a mark of infamy continues to hover over the empty pride maintained by brutal internal repression on dissent, trampling on human rights, and self-justified monopoly of political power by naked coercion. Meanwhile, in a new take on Bertrand Russell’s analogy between Judeo-Christian eschatology and Marxist socialism – Dialectical Materialism = Yahweh, Marx = the Messiah, Proletariat = the Elect, Communist Party = Church, the Communist Revolution = the Second Coming, Punishment of the Capitalists = Hell, and the Communist Commonwealth = the Millennium (Russell, 1946)\footnote{\textit{\textsuperscript{82}}} – this is all that is being asked of the masses of today’s PRC: to be contented with the “China Dream” wherein Mao remains in the
messianic pantheon; a rejuvenated, increasingly catch-all and technocratic Communist Party continues to be the umbrella Church to all societal groups religious or otherwise; and a CCP-ruled, stability-above-all-else, high-growth economic and military leviathan constitutes the centre of the imminent *Pax Sinica*, or to the ever unrepentant devil’s advocate at least “a spectacular vision of a happy hell” (Ryan, 1988).\(^3\)

**Notes**

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4. Or paraphrasing *Yazhou Zhoukan*, “the hundred days of People Power that made one proud to be a Chinese” (“Preface”, 亞洲週刊 (*Yazhou Zhoukan*), Chingt’ientungti te ipai jih（驚天動地的一百日）[a hundred days that shook heaven and earth], Hong Kong, 1989, p. 4).

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5. Tiananmen (天安门), i.e. Tian’an Gate (gate of heavenly peace).
7. *Yazhou Zhoukan* (亚洲周刊) (1989), *Chingt’ientungti te ipai jih* (驚天動地的一百日) [a hundred days that shook heaven and earth]. Hong Kong, p. 80.
10. *ODN*, 19th August 2011. (东方日报 / Oriental Daily News / ODN is a Malaysian daily in Chinese, with China news sources mainly from the Hong Kong and Taiwan media.)
11. Or officially the “Communist Party of China” (CPC, 中国共产党).
12. An unknown protester some had identified later, though unconfirmed, as a young man named Wang Weilin (王维林), whose fate remains unknown to date.
13. Pablo Diego José Francisco de Paula Juan Nepomuceno María de los Remedios Cipriano de la Santísima Trinidad Ruiz y Picasso (25th October 1881 – 8th April 1973). *Guernica* (1937), arguably Picasso’s most famous work, is his portrayal of the German bombing of Guernica during the
Spanish Civil War.

14. Usually translated as “Blood-stained glory” but literally “Blood-stained elegance”, a song written in 1987 originally to commemorate those who died during the Sino-Vietnamese War, the melancholic tune came to be a hymn to the determined but forlorn struggle of the hunger strikers during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989.


17. Formed by Wei Jingsheng, the grand avant-garde of post-Cultural Revolution Chinese democracy activism exiled in 1997.


19. Tenzin Gyatso is the 14th Dalai Lama, who was born Lhamo Dondrub on 6th July 1935. “Tenzin Gyatso” is the shortened form of the religious name “Jetsun Jamphel Ngawang Lobsang Yeshe Tenzin Gyatso”.

20. Leading intellectual dissident activist from the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations and hunger strikes to Charter 08 – for which he was sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment – Liu Xiaobo was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize on 8th October 2010 but was unable to receive it as he was serving his 11-year sentence. He received his Ph.D. from the Beijing Normal University in 1988 with his thesis “Shenmei yu ren de ziyou” (审美与人的自由) [aesthetics and human freedom].

21. Meaning in addition to the pursuit of the “Four Modernisations” of China’s agricultural, industrial, national defense and science sectors declared by Deng Xiaoping at that time.
22. ODN, 4th June 2012, 7th June 2012, 8th June 2012, 9th June 2012, 10th June 2012; 11th June 2012; 13th June 2012; Bajiu Yidai Tongxun (八九一代通讯) [89 generation bulletin], Issue 2, 30th May, 2012; “关于要求严肃调查李旺阳死亡真相的紧急呼吁 / Urgent appeal for credible investigation into the truth of Li Wangyang’s death”, initiated by journalist and human rights activist Bei Feng (北风, Wen Yunchao / 温云超), then Peking University’s economics professor Xia Yeliang (夏业良) and scholar of historic documentation (US) Wu Renhua (吴仁华), 6th June 2012 <http://www.peacehall.com/news/gb/china/2012/06/201206070601.shtml>.

23. Zha Weilin was a member of the Mothers of Tiananmen group led by Professor Ding Zilin (丁子霖) whose son, like the children of all other members, was killed by the PLA during the June Fourth massacre. After 23 years of fighting for justice on behalf of his younger son Zha Aiguo (爱国) who was shot dead by the PLA in the night of 3rd June during the crackdown and suffering from repeated police threats and surveillance, Zha Weilin left home and was found to have hanged himself in a yet-to-open underground car park on 25th May 2012 at the age of 73. The police cordoned off the area, took away his body and had it cremated on 27th May. Zha’s wife and elder son said that they had persuaded Zha not to kill himself, after finding sometime earlier a suicide note in which Zha had written his name and work unit and stated his decision to fight for justice with death after more than two decades of petitioning the government in vain. In its obituary for Zha, the Mothers of Tiananmen group strongly condemned the government’s inhumanity and urged it to immediately return the suicide note, which had been presumably confiscated by the police, to Zha’s family. (ODN, 29th May 2012; “Tiananmen Muqin qunti fugao” (天安门母亲群体讣告) [obituary by Mothers of Tiananmen], 27th May 2012, from Mothers of Tiananmen (天安门母亲群体), posted
by Ding Zilin (see *Bajiu Yidai Tongxun* (八九一代通讯) [89 generation bulletin], Issue 2, 30th May, 2012).

24. Besides Zha Weilin who killed himself just before the massacre’s 23rd anniversary and Li Wangyang who was suspected of “being suicided” immediately after, Fang Zheng (方政) who went on stage on his wheelchair during the Victoria Park commemoration that year in Hong Kong which was attended by the largest number ever of 180,000 people also stands to represent a poignant living proof of State cruelty and hypocrisy. A student of the Beijing Academy of Physical Science, Fang Zheng lost both his legs in the early morning of 4th June 1989 in saving a fainted student during their evacuation from the Tiananmen Square from a row of approaching tanks along West Chang’an Avenue. While he successfully pushed the girl out of harm’s way, his own legs were crushed by a tank. Though the authorities had asked him to state instead that he was hit by a car, the gruesome photograph shot by a foreign reporter of his shattered body lying at the crossroads of Liubukou (六部口) stands to symbolise the brutality of the ruthless crackdown and cut through the lies and conceits fostered by the authorities in subsequent decades in whitewashing the unfortunate “incident”. (*ODN*, 2nd June 2012, 6th June 2012; *Bajiu Yidai Tongxun* (八九一代通讯) [89 generation bulletin], Issue 2, 30th May, 2012)

25. “But when I open the door to step out into the world, there’s only a tremendous void. A pale gray nothingness that is all my future holds.” (Suzanne Collins, *Mockingjay: The final book of The Hunger Games*, New York: Scholastic Press, 2010, p. 166)


29. 世界維吾爾代表大會。
31. Kuang Da (旷达), “Nanjing núzi Zhenzhu: Wo bushi yingxiong” (南京女子珍珠：我不是英雄) [Pearl from Nanjing: I’m not a hero], *Yangguang Shiwu* 阳光时务, 18th May 2012.
32. Provincial-level administrative units in the People’s Republic of China refer to the country’s 31 sheng (省, i.e. provinces of Anhui / 安徽, Fujian / 福建, Gansu / 甘肃, Guangdong / 广东, Guizhou / 贵州, Hainan / 海南, Hebei / 河北, Heilongjiang / 黑龙江, Henan / 河南, Hubei / 湖北, Hunan / 湖南, Jiangsu / 江苏, Jiangxi / 江西, Jilin / 吉林, Liaoning / 辽宁, Qinghai / 青海, Shaanxi / 陕西, Shandong / 山东, Shanxi / 山西, Sichuan / 四川, Yunnan / 云南 and Zhejiang / 浙江), zizhiqu (自治区, i.e. “autonomous regions” – each a first-level administrative subdivision having its own local government, and a minority entity that has a higher population of a particular minority ethnic group – of Guangxi / 广西 of the Zhuang, Nei Monggol/Inner Mongolia / 内蒙古 of the Mongols, Ningxia / 宁夏 of the Hui, Xizang/Tibet / 西藏 of the Tibetans and Xinjiang / 新疆 of the Uyghurs) and zhixiashi (直辖市, i.e. municipalities directly ruled by the central government – Beijing / 北京, Chongqing / 重庆, Shanghai / 上海 and Tianjin / 天津).
33. At that time she began an Internet donation campaign to provide the two jailed activists’ families 1500-2000 yuan monthly for subsistence, as she has also been long doing for other incarcerated activists. She then turned her attention also to the plight of Chen Guangcheng and his family, and made six trips to Linyi’s heavily guarded Dongshigu 東師古 village to attempt to visit Chen, despite being warned repeatedly by the guobao (国保, national security officers) in Nanjing of the danger and knowing well that other activists including Hu Jia (胡佳) and Wang Keqin (王克勤) had been beaten up by the guards while trying to do so. Others who had been rouged up in their attempts to visit Chen

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Guangcheng include the Hollywood actor Christian Bale who, accompanied by CNN reporters, tried to reach Chen’s residence on 15th December 2011. (A yuan (元) of remibi (人民币) was equivalent at that time to about US$0.161.)

34. “Xu Zhiyong, the quiet lawyer holding beijing to account: the campaigner’s demands that officials obey the law have been met with fury” (by Tom Mitchell), The Financial Times, 24th January 2014. <http://www.ft.com/intl/cms/s/0/d9a136da-838d-11e3-86c9-00144feab7de.html#axzz31aLuJJFj>

35. “Society in every state is a blessing, but government even in its best state is but a necessary evil; in its worst state an intolerable one […] man] finds it necessary to surrender up a part of his property to furnish means for the protection of the rest; and this he is induced to do by the same prudence which in every other case advises him out of two evils to choose the least”, said Thomas Paine in the beginning paragraphs of Common sense (1776).


37. ODN, 24th May 2014.


39. 1 mu 亩 = 0.0667 hectares.

40. ODN, 26th July 2011.

41. Ibid.

42. ODN, 31st May 2011.

43. Due to the abnormal size of China’s population and in particular the size of China’s citizens of the Han ethnicity, a distortion or misrepresentation emerges in the application of the term “multiethnic” to China as the country’s large populations of minorities – about 110 million in total, including the 16 million Zhuang, 10 million Manchu, 9 million Hui, 8 million Uygurs, 5 million Mongols and 5 million Tibetans – are practically dwarfed almost to invisibility by the sheer size of the Han population
(about 92 per cent of the total population of China). In fact, based on the "critical mass" theory (advanced, among others, by Semyonov and Tyree, 1981), societies are considered multiethnic only if minorities constitute more than ten per cent of their population.

44. ODN, 29th May 2011.


46. Jūjutsu (柔術) is a Japanese martial art of close combat, using no weapon or only a short weapon, for defeating an armed and armored opponent by manipulating the opponent’s force against himself rather than directly opposing it with one’s own force. Jūjutsu, which dates back to the 17th century, is an ancestor of Aikidō (合気道) referred to by Stephen Zunes (2009) above, which was developed in the late 1920s.

47. Hu used six characters to summarise his policy suggestion: “mianshui (免稅), fangkai (放開), zouren (走人)”, i.e. tax abolition, loosening control, and moving Han cadres en masse out of Tibet. (See: Wang Dan (王丹), “Chongwen Hu Yaobang de Xizang zhengce” (重溫胡耀邦的西藏政策) [reviewing Hu Yaobang’s Tibet policy], Apple Daily (蘋果日報, Taiwan), 10th March 2014. <http://www.appledaily.com.tw/realtimenews/article/forum/20140310/357377/王丹：重溫胡耀邦的西藏政策>.

48. As well as the attack on the so-called "Ulanfu Anti-Party Treason Clique" (乌兰夫反党叛国集团) and the ruthless witch-hunt to find members of the fabricated New Inner Mongolian People’s Revolutionary Party (新内蒙人民革命党 / 新内人党).


50. Or Qing.

51. See: “黃雀行動背後港人捨命救危內情” [inside story of how Hong Kong people risked their lives to embark on rescuing those in danger behind the Operation Siskin] by Jiang Xun (江迅), originally published in Yazhou Zhoukan (亞洲週刊) [Asia week], Issue 23, 14th June 2009; reproduced in Bajiu Yidai Tongxun (八九一代通讯) [89 generation

52. ODN, 20th May 2014; “Tiananmen Massacre 25th anniversary: How Chinese triads enabled the Great Escape” (by Malcolm Moore), The Telegraph (UK), 18th May 2014. The difference in number from that given in Jiang Xun’s article above could be due to Jiang’s account of the whole operation being extended from the immediate rescues in 1989 to 1997 just before the “Handover”.

53. Referring to personalities reportedly to have been involved, but unconfirmed, in the covert operation in some way, whether in terms of direct organisation and operation, financial support or otherwise.

54. Of the four who died in the rescue operation, two were killed in speedboat accidents in thick fog, two died when their speedboat engine caught fire while being pursued by Chinese police (“陳達釗披露：黃雀行動幕後英雄還有梅艷芳” [Chan Tat-ching reveals: Anita Mui was also a behind-the-scenes hero of Operation Siskin], 澳洲日報 (Daily Chinese Herald, Australia), 28th May 2009 <http://dailynews.sina.com/bg/chn/chnnews/ausdaily/20090528/2344305965.html>; “營救八九民運領袖 前線總指揮首次披露黃雀行動幕後英雄鄧光榮、梅艷芳” [rescuing 1989 democracy movement leaders: frontline commander-in-chief reveals for the first time Operation Siskin’s behind-the-scenes heroes Alan Tang and Anita Mui], 蘋果日報 (Apple Daily, Hong Kong), 29 May 2009 <http://

55. Ibid.

56. More than 510,000 by organisers’ “conservative” estimate (which is the highest estimates in a decade); 98,600 by police’s estimate; between 154,000 and 172,000 by Hong Kong University researchers’ estimate. See “Passions run high as Hong Kong marches for democracy” (by James Pomfret and Clare Baldwin), Reuters, 1st July 2014 <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-idUSKBN0F632A20140701>; “Police arrest 511 after big HK democracy rally” (by Kelvin Chan of Associated Press), ABC News, 1st July 2014 <http://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/big-hk-democracy-rally-fuelled-fury-beijing-24375097>.


58. Participated by 40,000 people, according to organisers’ figures.


61. 100,000 by police’s estimates and over 180,000 by organisers’ estimates.
65. Ibid.
66. ODN, 16th April 2014.
67. First formulated by John Foster Dulles, former United States Secretary of State, during the Cold War in the 1950s, the “Peaceful Evolution” theory “envisioned a ‘peaceful’ transition from autocracy or dictatorship to democracy in a communist country” which is seen by the Chinese leaders as the American strategy of infiltration and subversion through the propagation of Western political ideas and lifestyles, incitement of discontent and promoting local challenges against CCP’s one-party political monopoly, and hence represents the biggest threat to CCP’s continuous rule – and for leaders of the CCP, “nothing is more important than safeguarding party rule.” (“Hu warns successors over ‘peaceful evolution’” (by Wu Zhong), Asia Times, 11th January 2012 <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/NA11Ad02.html>)
68. Ibid.
69. Besides his declaration that China is at the “initial stage of socialism” which served to clear the way for further market transformations. See “A brief biography of Zhao Ziyang”, in Zhao (2009a: 283-287); “趙紫陽年表” [chronological table on Zhao Ziyang], in Zhao (2009b: 311-316; 2009c: 359-365).
70. Or Guangxu.
71. Or Kang Youwei.
72. Or Liang Qichao.
73. Or Cixi.
75. Cited in Greene (1990: 14).
78. See Bo (2009: 10-11).
79. Cited from《邓小平文选》第3卷 [selected works of Deng Xiaoping, volume 3], Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe (人民出版社), 1993 年版, 第220～221 页。
80. “其实说实话，我对她本人没有什么兴趣。但是，因为她的父亲是习近平，那我就希望她能好好地跟她父亲谈一下。中国好，中国坏，中国是是否会民主，这涉及我们每一个中国人的光荣和骄傲。习近平假如认为他是一个中国人，他就应当希望这个国家更加民主。作为他的


82. Russell, Bertrand, History of Western philosophy and its connection with political and social circumstances from the earliest times to the present day, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1946, Book Two, Part 1, Chapter IV (second edition (reset) published in 1961, see page 361).


84. In the epigraph, well-known public intellectual and writer Murong Xuecun (慕容雪村) reflects upon the adamantine, contemptuous comments of the official news broadcaster on the lone individual who stood in front of and blocked a column of tanks which signified terrifying State power on Chang’an Avenue in plain view of the world’s news cameras in the morning 5th June 1989 after a night of terror: “稍有常识的人都会看出，如果我们的铁骑继续前进，这个螳臂阻挡的歹徒，难道能够阻挡得了吗?” “Muron Xuecun” is the pen name of Chinese author Hao Qun (郝群). To hear the cold, steely voice of the State, watch, e.g., video “六四天安门事件《3小时纪录片》大陆禁片” at <http://www.youtube.com/wa

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tch?v=vF2YACrLP8w&feature=em-hot-vrecs>. Recently Murong was briefly detained by police officers in Beijing for interrogation from 8th-9th July 2014 when he returned to China — the detention was believed to be related to a June Fourth commemoration held at a gathering at an apartment on 3rd May where an essay he had written about Tiananmen was recited (“Author held in Beijing after a spate of detentions” (by Edward Wong), *The New York Times*, 8th July 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/07/09/world/asia/chinese-author-is-detained-by-beijing-police.html?_r=1>). Those attended the gathering were detained and later released, but Pu Zhiqiang, the most well-known participant, remains in custody.

85. Starr (2004), cited by the author of the article.
86. Ji (1990: 200), cited by the author of the article.
87. 100,000 by police’s estimates and over 180,000 by organizers’ estimates.
88. “The soul of wit may become the very body of untruth. However elegant and memorable, brevity can never, in the nature of things, do justice to all the facts of a complex situation. On such a theme one can be brief only by omission and simplification. Omission and simplification help us to understand — but help us, in many cases, to understand the wrong thing; for our comprehension may be only of the abbreviator’s neatly formulated notions, not of the vast, ramifying reality from which these notions have been so arbitrarily abstracted.” (Aldous Huxley’s “Foreword” to his *Brave new world revisited*, Chatto & Windus Ltd, London, 1959, re-published by Grafton Books, London, 1983, p. 7)

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