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# Prospects for Western-Style Democratization in China: Failure to Move Toward Power Sharing

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SETON HALL UNIVERSITY

PROSPECTS FOR WESTERN-STYLE DEMOCRATIZATION IN CHINA:  
FAILURE TO MOVE TOWARD POWER SHARING

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN THE  
DEPARTMENT OF ASIAN STUDIES

BY  
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## Abstract

Although China is rapidly developing economically, militarily, and socially, it remains an authoritarian country. Since the diplomatic breakthrough by Richard Nixon with China in 1972, successive administrations in Washington have held out the hope to American citizens that China inevitably would democratize. Because of China's economic and growing military power in the international arena, the United States government and other free nations believe that it is important to urge the Chinese government to be responsible in terms of its protection of human rights and support of other democratic tenets, domestically and internationally, as well as to be a role model for other developing-nation governments in its friendly coexistence with the West and adherence to international norms. However, the central government and most citizens of China do not see the need for their country to democratize along the lines of Western democracy. This thesis explores why China is unlikely to democratize in the foreseeable future, even if there is continued modernization and further growth of China's middle class. It provides a definition of democracy against which the political realities of China are measured. Lack of religious freedom, a poor track record on human rights, and ineffective pro-democracy movements are closely analyzed. There have been various projections that the rising middle class eventually will demand political participation and, therefore, that China will move assuredly toward Western-style democratization. The thesis argues that this scenario is not likely, in part because the rising middle class lacks a basic understanding and appreciation of the fundamentals of democracy, as revealed by "pro-democracy" movements such as the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, that in fact did not seek Western-style liberal democracy. Particularly in the case of 1989, the movement was an opportunity for participating students to challenge the government to

meet their needs, rather than a demand for a fundamental change in China's authoritarian political system. Since 1989, the "pro-democracy" movement has all but vanished, and members of the middle class seemingly have become advocates of preservation of the authoritarian status quo. This could change if current economic realities in China become harsher, but indications for now point to the continuation of China as an authoritarian one-party state.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The care of human life and happiness, and not their destruction,  
is the first and only object of good government.

—Thomas Jefferson to Maryland Republicans, 1809.

Thomas Jefferson and other founding fathers of the United States were responsible for establishing a political system of governance called democracy. The meaning of Western-style democracy is resisted and sometimes misunderstood by countries that criticize this form of government. In authoritarian countries such as the People's Republic of China (PRC), there is little basic understanding of the fundamentals of democracy as they are known and practiced in East Asia's five countries that are rated as liberal democracies (Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Indonesia, and the Philippines), let alone in the West, where democracy is much more firmly rooted. The democratic movements in China that were led by mostly educated members of the middle class were largely a response to problems in economic transition, rather than aimed at securing democracy in China. None of the democracy movements ever called for the overturn of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). With the exception of Wei Jingsheng's call for a fifth modernization, democracy, during the Democracy Wall Movement of 1978-1979, these movements were chiefly an expression of misapprehension about changing economic and social conditions, as well as calls for the government to meet the needs of the protesters. Taking into consideration Beijing's political repression, including suppression of student movements, persecution of religious groups whose activities are not controlled by the government, alleged proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, unfair trade practices, and demand

for the continued one-party state, it is fair to say that China remains absolutist and unlikely to lean toward democracy in the near future.<sup>1</sup>

For nearly a century, China's leaders and the government have promised its people some form of democracy. However, the term democracy was understood differently by Sun Yat-sen, Mao Zedong, and Deng Xiaoping,<sup>2</sup> and in none of these cases did the leader understand democracy as it was embraced in the West. Sun Yat-sen's vision of democracy was colored by the ideas of Confucius, and he "added Western elements only when they were useful to the Chinese environment."<sup>3</sup> Confronted with a disastrous beginning to the Republic of China, founded in 1912, Sun proposed a three-phase process to achieve self-government after a revolutionary party won control of power: (1) a three-year period of military rule followed by, (2) political tutelage government under a revolutionary party, and, eventually, (3) self-rule, governed by a republican constitution. Phases one and two unfortunately resulted in a party dictatorship led by Chiang Kai-shek.<sup>4</sup> Mao Zedong promised a new China, which would ensure a democratic dictatorship under the proletariat. In his famous essay, "The People's Democratic Dictatorship," Mao suggested that, in order to abolish classes and create

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<sup>1</sup> Minxin Pei, "Is China Democratizing?" *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 1998) <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.shu.edu/pqdweb?index=7&did=25112129&SrchMode=3&sid=1&Fmt=4&VInst=PROD&VType=PQD&RQT=309&VName=PQD&TS=1232313374&clientId=5171&aid=1> (accessed January 18, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> John L. Thornton, "Long Time Coming: The Prospect for Democracy in China," *Foreign Affairs* (January/February 2008), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20080101faessay87101/john-l-thornton/long-time-coming.html> (accessed February 1, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Eric Chiyeung, "Building Constitutional Democracy on Oriental Foundations: An Autonomy of Sun Yat-sen's Constitutionalism," <http://hc.rediris.es/09/articulos/pdf/16.pdf> (accessed February 1, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Edmund S. K. Fung, *In Search of Chinese Democracy: Civil Opposition in Communist China 1929-1949* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 31.

Great Harmony, socialist and communist society would have to be established.<sup>5</sup> In the process, Mao led China into class warfare that destroyed the lives of millions of victims. Deng Xiaoping led China out of the anarchy of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, and declared that “democracy was a major condition for emancipating the mind.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, he issued the Four Cardinal Principles in March 1979, precisely to prevent consideration of political liberalization, and repeatedly suppressed movements that were characterized as democratic in China, including the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989. Despite the various manifestations of China’s so-called democracy, defined differently by different leaders, China remains an authoritarian country. In truth, “democracy in its most general sense has never actually been tried in China.”<sup>7</sup> The Chinese Communist Party has full control of political power, and China lacks many freedoms, as well as other fundamentals of a true democracy.

The chapters ahead explore the nature of China’s authoritarian regime, and analyze the reasons why China is unlikely to experience political liberalization in the foreseeable future, despite the predications of American presidential administrations, going back to Richard Nixon’s in the 1970s. Although successive administrations since Nixon’s have held out hope to the American public that China’s steps toward democracy have been inevitable, realities in China have shown little evidence that any generation of communist leadership, including the current fourth generation led by Hu Jintao, has been inclined toward power sharing and placing its confidence in the hands of the people.

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<sup>5</sup> R. Keith Schoppa, *The Columbia Guide to Modern Chinese History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), 293.

<sup>6</sup> Thorton, “Long Time Coming: The Prospect for Democracy in China.”

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Nathan, *China’s Transition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 63.

## **Chapter2**

### **China's Failure to Liberalize:**

#### **Lack of a Fundamental Understanding of Democracy**

The definition of democracy that underlines the analysis of this thesis is based on a Western view of a democratic political system, which challenges the control of power of authoritarian governments such as China's. On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,<sup>1</sup> to promote peace, freedom, and justice in the world. The Declaration is based on Western-style concepts of democracy, which encourage freedom of speech and expression of individualism by each human being. All countries that are members of the United Nations are expected to honor and promote these values. China, one of the five members of the Security Council at the United Nations, has historically violated and continues to disregard them. It has failed to establish a political system that protects human rights, and its one-party system twists the accepted understanding of Western-style democracy, using the term "democracy" in its own contorted fashion. For example, village elections in China are controlled by state officials. Each participant has a voting record known by the government, and most of the time the elected officials are Chinese Communist Party members. As further example, according to the Chinese Constitution, all China's citizens have a "right to the freedom of religious belief." Yet, each year, a number of leaders and members from the Catholic, Protestant, Islamic, and Tibetan Buddhist faiths are sent to prisons or labor camps. The Falun Gong, whose members practice a mixture of Taoist

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, "The Universal Declaration of Human Rights," <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html#a30> (accessed February 17, 2009).



and Buddhist beliefs, was declared an “evil cult” in 1999 and targeted for severe suppression. Falun Gong members often have been tortured inhumanly, and in many instances, they have died, owed to the brutality. State officials, who control the media, falsely accuse religionists and their movements and groups of being disruptive to society, when in reality the Chinese government does not uphold the freedoms and rights that the Chinese Constitution allegedly provides. The media is a mechanism to advance the government’s control. For example, in an article of December 2008, *China Daily* clarified the concept of religious freedom in the PRC: “Freedom of religious belief does not mean religious activities are also free from government regulation or legal obligations. To believe in a religion or not is a personal issue and a free choice, but religious activities, which might affect other people, must be bound by law.”<sup>2</sup> In sum, if the Chinese government declares that a religion is disturbing to society or that it is an evil cult, state officials have the right to imprison or otherwise harm the members of the offending religious group.

### **China’s Malformations of Democracy**

Internationally, China sides with the regimes of countries such as Sudan, Pakistan, Iran, Venezuela, Myanmar, and Russia that are internationally condemned for violating human and civil rights. Western countries, such as the United States, stopped oil trade with Sudan and banned weapons sales to Venezuela in protest against abuses by the regimes. For decades, China has financed the Sudanese government, which has used the funding to kill innocent civilians in Darfur. In February 2009, China and Venezuela agreed to

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<sup>2</sup> Liu Hongji, “A Breach of Constitution under Pretext of Religion,” *China Daily*, December 5, 2008, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2008-12/05/content\\_7274510.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2008-12/05/content_7274510.htm) (accessed February 18, 2009).

“double their joint investment fund to \$12 billion and signed a raft of agreements to boost co-operation.”<sup>3</sup> The Chinese government claims that trade and friendly relations with countries that violate human rights are not based on politics, but rather on economics.

Not only does China support dictatorships abroad that deny their citizens the chance for human fulfillment, but also Chinese officials misconstrue the definition of democracy in China, by claiming that China endorses democratic values, yet undermining basic fundamentals that make up a stable democratic political system, such as free, fair, and frequent elections, public control of the national agenda, and the protection of human rights as well as religious and other freedoms. Democracy originated in the West. It has been adopted in former British colonies such as India, Canada, and Australia, and is popular even in Hong Kong, where there has been a vigorous democracy movement, albeit the region is not a democracy. It spread, heavily influenced by the United States,<sup>4</sup> to Japan, during the American occupation following World War II, and to South Korea and Taiwan, in the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. Western philosophers such as John Locke and John Stuart Mill promoted Western-style democracy by fostering the concept of natural rights and limits on government. These concepts have helped to cultivate political stability and prosperity where they have been embraced. At the time of Hong Kong’s retrocession to China’s sovereignty, Christopher Patten, Hong Kong’s last British governor, noted:

Freedom, democracy, the rule of law, stability, and prosperity are found most frequently in one another’s company. The relationship between these aspects of the good and open society will be tested in all parts of Asia, but

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<sup>3</sup> “China and Venezuela Boost Links,” *BBC News Online*, February 19, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7898809.stm> (accessed February 19, 2009).

<sup>4</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: University of Oklahoma, 1993), 299.

most fiercely in China, whose die-hard leadership is intent on demonstrating that Leninism and capitalism can happily co-exist.<sup>5</sup>

### **Defining Western-Style Democracy**

Before beginning a discussion of democracy in China, it is important to define democracy in general terms according to a Western view, in order to analyze the different concept of “democracy” that is espoused by China’s government and generally by mainland Chinese people. Effective participation and free, fair, and frequent elections are two fundamentals of democracy in the West. Citizens have an equal opportunity to elect their leaders, thus they can participate in shaping the national agenda. Through free, fair, and frequent elections, citizens can have their voices heard, and elect a leader whom the majority of the people want. These and other fundamental concepts of democracy are essential in the democratic political system not only to protect citizens from the abuses of an authoritarian government, but also to provide essential rights, general freedom, self-determination, and opportunity for human development.<sup>6</sup> Because countries that have transitioned into democracy historically have provided peace and prosperity for their citizens,<sup>7</sup> it is unlikely that democratic countries will go to war against each other. To date, they have not.

Democracy protects its citizens from authoritarian governments and dictators who are often driven by their paranoia, self-interest, ideology, religious belief, or just by a

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<sup>5</sup> Christopher Pattern, *East and West: China, Power, and the Future of Asia* (New York: Time Books, Random House, 1998), xii.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Dahl, *On Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 45.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

plain impulse.<sup>8</sup> “Under Joseph Stalin’s rule in the Soviet Union (1929-1953), many millions of persons were jailed for political reasons often because of Stalin’s paranoid fear of conspiracies against him.”<sup>9</sup> Adolf Hitler, another autocratic ruler, was driven by his ideology that led to the death of tens of millions of people during War World II, and was responsible for the deaths of millions of people whom he wished to exterminate.<sup>10</sup> Although democracies are based on majority votes, and so-called tyranny of the majority is often found in the democratic political system, democracy still protects its citizens from autocratic rulers and obeys the “universal code of human rights that is effectively enforced throughout the world.”<sup>11</sup>

In order for a country to have democracy, there not only must be effective participation of adult citizens, and free, fair and frequent elections, but also voting equality, enlightened understanding of policies and their consequences, and citizen control of the public agenda.<sup>12</sup> Effective participation means, “Before a policy is adopted by the association, all the members must have equal and effective opportunities for making their views known to the other members as to what the policy should be.”<sup>13</sup> Also, every citizen must have an equal opportunity to vote, and, therefore, all the votes must count as equal. In order to have a fairly elected leader, the elections must be held

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 37.

impartially, freely, and frequently, permitting citizens to express their preferences and to maintain control of the public agenda.<sup>14</sup>

Although democracies have flaws, democracy is widely believed to be the best form of government. Beyond ensuring equitable elections, democracy regulates conflict, provides for legitimate government, and promotes social stability as well.<sup>15</sup> By regulating conflict, democracy avoids corruption and encourages the government to settle disputes through legal process rather than through violence.<sup>16</sup> Instead of controlling many aspects of people's daily lives, as done by the political system in China, democracy allows its citizens to speak freely about their leaders; moreover, the government is inspired to make decisions based on the public interest. If elected officials do not respond to public interests and needs, they can be removed from office by voters. Policy issues usually are debated in the public forum before resolution by the government, which allows the people to express their opinions about them.<sup>17</sup> By stabilizing the government and providing checks and balances, democracy protects its citizens from abusive dictators and allows candidates who are running for office to settle their disputes and differences in a peaceful manner.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Nathan, *Chinese Democracy: Lessons of Failure* (Berkeley, CA: California University Press, 1986), 22.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

## **China's Failure to Democratize**

The PRC has never had a national legislature elected through direct election by the nation's adult citizens, or a strong opposition political party running in an election.<sup>18</sup> Although in 1912 China attempted to establish a democratic republic, for the past century, China has failed to move in the direction of democracy, and legislative members have been unable to suppress the authority wielded by the party-state. Any movement toward democracy was either subjected to severe limits, or marked by corruption.<sup>19</sup> In 1912 and 1913, a parliament was elected, consisting of a Senate elected by provincial assemblies and a House elected by all male officials, consisting of about 10.5 percent of the population.<sup>20</sup> The parliament was weak and never was permitted to exercise its claimed power.<sup>21</sup> Later in 1947 and 1948, the national government held elections for the National Assembly, Legislative Yuan, and Control Yuan.<sup>22</sup> "Once again these elections were never completed, nor competitive, due to various reasons, including the wartime conditions and the Kuomintang dominance of politics."<sup>23</sup> China did not progress in a direction of democratization, because the elections were corrupt, unfair, infrequent, and the political groups were unprincipled. At times, the participating voters refused to accept the outcomes of elections, and the political actors outside the institutions did not obey the laws that were passed by the legislature or respect the legal freedom of the press.<sup>24</sup> In present-day China, village elections are led by corrupt leaders, and include nepotism and

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

vote buying.<sup>25</sup> About 90 percent of village chiefs are Chinese Communist Party members, and if a non-party member is elected, the CCP quickly recruits the individual, so that the party remains in charge.<sup>26</sup>

As the Chinese Communist Party remains in power and the citizens cannot freely choose their leaders, corruption undoubtedly will remain widespread in China, as there is no permissible political opposition to power holders. Because few persons in China have had an appreciation of the fundamental concepts of democracy, throughout history, China has failed to establish an elected party that is capable of replacing the authoritarian government.

#### *CCP's Corruption*

Presently, corruption within the CCP remains a serious problem. Over 97,000 CCP officials were disciplined in 2006, and 80 percent of them were found guilty of taking bribes or violating financial regulations.<sup>27</sup> In March 2007, Zheng Xiaoyu was sentenced to death for taking bribes to approve untested medicine.<sup>28</sup> The medicine approved by Zheng Xiaoyu killed and harmed many people in China. The former director of the Food and Drug Administration took bribes and gifts worth of more than \$832,000.<sup>29</sup> The CCP's corruption and the failure of the Food and Drug Administration to monitor compliance to laws have caused the lives of innocent people. In September 2008, the tainted milk scandal killed six infants, and sickened 300,000 people in China, other parts

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<sup>25</sup> Thorton, "Long Time Coming: The Prospect for Democracy in China."

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> "China's Top Drug Regulator Gets Death Sentence," *MSNBC*, May 29, 2007, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/18911849/> (accessed March 4, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

of Asia, and Africa.<sup>30</sup> Ice bars and yoghurt also have been contaminated with the industrial chemical, melamine.<sup>31</sup> Milk stations were unregistered and unregulated, and have been blamed for watering down milk and adding nitrogen-rich melamine, a chemical used in the manufacturing of plastics, which falsified the quality checks for appropriate levels of protein.<sup>32</sup> The melamine scandal resulted in the arrests of dozen of farmers who were accused of violating the public trust, and of using toxic chemicals to save money.<sup>33</sup> In January 2009, death sentences were given to three dairy milk producers, Zhang Yujun, Geng Jinpin, and Gao Junjie, upon conviction of selling 600 tons of melamine-tainted milk to dairy companies.<sup>34</sup> Although the CCP arrested and convicted persons who were said to be responsible for the melamine milk scandal, the Chinese government failed to regulate the nation's dairy industry that caused deaths and injuries not only among the people of China, but abroad as well. Another case, which erupted in February 2009 concerning the top milk company in China, Milk Deluxe, revealed osteoblast protein, a dangerous substance that can cause various cancerous tumors, in the company's product.<sup>35</sup> The United Nations and the World Health Organization have pressured China to enforce stricter laws on food safety. The government of the United States, along with European Union and other governments, including those of Indonesia, Taiwan, Japan, Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Burundi, Brunei, and Tanzania,

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<sup>30</sup> Jane McCartney, "China Launches Crack-Down on Export Milk," *Times Online*, September 23, 2008, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/asia/article4807667.ece> (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> David Barboza, "Death Sentences in Chinese Milk Case," *New York Times*, January 22, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/23/world/asia/23milk.html> (accessed March 24, 2009).

<sup>34</sup> "Leading Chinese Milk Brand Accused of Causing Cancer," *Asia News*, February 13, 2009, <http://www.asianews.it/index.php?l=en&art=14476&size=A> (accessed March 28, 2009).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*



banned products made from Chinese-produced milk.<sup>36</sup> In recent years, China has exported tainted food products with harmful pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and antibiotics. Products that China does not monitor kill or injure innocent people. Widespread corruption within the one-party government not only blocks democratic development, but also violates human rights, domestically and internationally.

### *Repudiated Freedom of the Press*

Lack of freedom of the press also inhibits democratic progress in China. The government exercises great control over the media through government ownership and censorship.<sup>37</sup> There are various restrictions which the press must follow, and journalists are not allowed to travel freely. The government made an exception only from January 2007 into 2008, in the run up to and during the Beijing Olympics (except in Tibet) for foreign and mainland journalists to travel and report throughout China.<sup>38</sup> Even foreign journalists, however, were prohibited from reporting about the anti-government protests in Beijing during the Olympics. Since then, Chinese authorities have extended regulations, and foreign media must obtain permission from local authorities to enter Tibet.<sup>39</sup> March 10, 2009, marked the fiftieth anniversary of the failed Tibetan uprising, and provoked many demonstrations against China's government.<sup>40</sup> The authoritarian regime advocated strong military presence, and high restrictions on the Internet as well as text messaging usage in

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<sup>36</sup> "EU Bans Baby Food with Chinese Milk," *CNN*, September 28, 2009, <http://cnn.com/2008/WORLD/asiapcf/09/25/china.milk/index.html> (accessed March 23, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Thorton, "Long Time Coming: The Prospect for Democracy in China."

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> "China Must Address Press Freedom in Tibet," *CPJ*, March 9, 2009, <http://cpj.org/2009/03/china-must-address-press-freedom-in-tibet.php> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>40</sup> "Two Tibetans Arrested Amid Ongoing Media Restrictions," *CPJ*, March 18, 2009, <http://cpj.org/2009/03/two-tibetans-arrested-amid-ongoing-media-restricti.php> (accessed April 20, 2009).

Tibet.<sup>41</sup> On March 24, 2009, *Google* search engine reported that the *You Tube* video-sharing Web site was blocked in China, because supporters of the Dalai Lama had broadcast a video that showed the Chinese military brutally kicking and beating Tibetan protestors during the March 2008 demonstrations.<sup>42</sup> The CCP not only “filters Internet content and blocks material that is critical of its policies,”<sup>43</sup> but also it imprisons and threatens local as well as foreign members of the press who are critics of the regime. During the March 2008 riots in Lhasa, the Chinese authorities arrested two local filmmakers, Dhondup Wangchen and Jigme Gaytso, for taping interviews and making a documentary about the lives of Tibetan residents under Chinese government rule.<sup>44</sup> The filmmakers were held in prison for seven months, and no family members were ever informed of their arrest.<sup>45</sup> Another case, which took place in February 2009, involved a newspaper reporter, Liu Xu, who was stabbed and threatened by “unknown” persons.<sup>46</sup> Xu’s Internet biogs included items censored by the Chinese authorities, such as the melamine milk scandal and other incidents involving government corruption.<sup>47</sup> Because 2009 marks the twentieth anniversary of the June 4,1989 Tiananmen Square massacre, as well as the tenth anniversary of the April 10,1999 Falun Gong crackdown, the government has been on high alert to prevent anti-government demonstrations, and on the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Miguel Heft, “You Tube Blocked in China, Google Says,” *New York Times*, March 24, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/25/technology/internet/25youtube.html?\\_r=1&adxnml=1&adxnmlx=1240373947-/zMRwDJRPA+1OCXNya3n4Q](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/25/technology/internet/25youtube.html?_r=1&adxnml=1&adxnmlx=1240373947-/zMRwDJRPA+1OCXNya3n4Q) (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> “CPJ Condemns China’s Detention of Tibetan Filmmakers,” *CPJ*, October 17, 2008, <http://cpj.org/2008/10/cpj-condemns-chinas-detention-of-tibetan-filmmaker.php> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Jacobs, “At Reading in Beijing, Noted Writer Is Stabbed,” *New York Times*, February 15, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/16/world/asia/16china.html> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

lookout for any foreign and domestic press that could tarnish the reputation of the authoritarian regime.

### **Democracy Redefined Chinese-Style**

Democracy has a different meaning to the Chinese than it does to Westerners. China experienced complex political changes during the twentieth century, and the concept of democracy came to be understood by the Chinese people as the term was manipulated by their authoritarian leaders. After 1949, Mao Zedong promoted "social democracy," but not Western-style democracy. Social democracy advocated by Mao featured mass revolutionary movements directed by mass mobilization.<sup>48</sup> Social democracy called for "social harmony," that was turned toward the building of powerful government rather than toward the promotion of individual rights and a limited government.<sup>49</sup> Mao's ideology was based on Marxist analysis of social classes and social democracy.<sup>50</sup> In direct contrast to Western-style democracy, Mao promoted class warfare and centralized leadership. After Mao's death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping initiated economic reform and an open-door policy which involved liberalization of government control over people's private lives, but he limited social and institutional pluralism in order to boost economic growth.<sup>51</sup> From social democracy and a command economy, China transitioned to a social market economy. In this new economic system, the peasants were to determine

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<sup>48</sup> Yi Jiang Ding, *Chinese Democracy after Tiananmen* (Vancouver, BC: University of British Columbia, 2001), 6.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Yun-han Chu, Larry Diamond, and Doh Chull Shin, eds., *How East Asians View Democracy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 210.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

how the land would be used.<sup>52</sup> This new policy encouraged people to establish their own private businesses and attracted foreign investments. After 1978, China opened its doors to foreign trade and its economy grew rapidly.

The open-door policy, along with the prospect for rapid economic growth, inspired Chinese students to engage in three pro-democracy movements in 1978-1979, 1986, and 1989. However, rather than having a clear understanding of and desire for democracy, the students were driven simply by outgrowths of the new reforms, and sought high-paying jobs after graduating from universities. Since Deng Xiaoping's suppression of the 1989 Tiananmen democracy movement and his death in 1997, the CCP has remained in tight political control of China. Party members are under the strict discipline of China's leadership in Beijing, and the CCP controls government agencies, as well as national, provincial, and local legislatures and the courts.<sup>53</sup> Party members also dominate life in the villages, and exercise influence in the military, industries, education, and journalism; moreover, they censor the Internet.<sup>54</sup>

The majority of people in China assume that their country possesses a democratic system. This is because the CCP created a Chinese political system using the term "democracy," based on its own interpretation of the term. Since effective participation in elections is a main element of democracy, election terminology is used in China as well. In China, many citizens vote periodically at a local level, and they might be even more involved politically than some Westerners, but they have no influence over the selection

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 211.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

of officials above the village level, work place, or school.<sup>55</sup> They cannot create or contribute money to pressure groups that could challenge the government, or elect a leader or change a policy above their given community, work, or educational unit. Although this sort of election allows citizens to frequently participate in a limited way in local governance, the system is blatantly biased toward continued control by the existing political establishment. Not only do the party officials keep a record of participants' political attitudes, but also the system allows the leaders in Beijing to maintain total political control over China's citizens. The CCP manipulates its people through steady propaganda, leading them to believe that China is moving toward democracy. In reality, "Chinese democracy involves participation without influence."<sup>56</sup> The concept of democracy in China is generally understood in Chinese terms, based on China's cultural heritage, and is not influenced by Western standards of democracy.<sup>57</sup>

### **Is Democracy Possible in China?**

There is no driving force for democracy in China. There has been much speculation that the rising middle class would one day become the major force for China's democratization. In truth, the middle class in China depends on the CCP for employment and resources, and therefore it is not in its interest to oppose the government. The CCP provides benefits to the majority of the members of the middle class. As long as economic stability is provided, the middle class sees no need to oppose the government. The middle-class citizens are, in many cases, entrepreneurs and successful business

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<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

people. In 2004, it was estimated that 20 to 30 percent of them were CCP members, and, therefore, they had an impact on matters such as property rights and reform of state-owned enterprises (SOEs).<sup>58</sup>

In contrast, the working class and the peasants suffer from excessive fees and taxes, unfair compensation resulting from confiscation of land on which they dwell by local officials, and the venality of law-enforcement officials.<sup>59</sup> Riots are often caused by peasants and members of the working class who are suppressed by local CCP members, as well as by high-level authority figures in Beijing. Most peasants benefit little from the market economy and endure many hardships trying to maintain a living. Since 1987, elections have been carried out in local villages and townships in an effort to quell social unrest. The CCP claims to be moving China toward democracy, but this is a bogus assertion, as the village and township elections are closely monitored by state officials. Although by means of polling techniques officials in the West are aware of public attitudes, surveys are conducted to ensure that candidates and officials are mindful of public views, not to root out dissent and punish challengers to the regime.

On March 2009, Wu Bangguo, the chairman of China's National People's Congress, underscored the rejection of Western-style democracy by China's fourth generation of communist leadership. He boldly asserted that, "China would never adopt a multiparty political system, separation of powers, a bicameral legislature or an

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<sup>58</sup>Elizabeth Economy, "Don't Break the Engagement," *Foreign Affairs* (May/ June 2004), <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20040501faessay83309-p10/elizabeth-economy/don-t-break-the-engagement.html> (accessed February 18, 2009).

<sup>59</sup>Ming Xia, "The Governance Crisis and Democratization in China," *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/ref/college/coll-china-politics-006.html> (accessed March 7, 2009).

independent judiciary.”<sup>60</sup> Wu’s remarks not only repudiated hope that China would liberalize along Western lines, but also claimed that the one-party authoritarian system was vastly superior to democracy.<sup>61</sup> Wu argued that, “without a single Communist Party in control China ‘would be torn by strife and incapable of accomplishing anything.’”<sup>62</sup> Wu declared that Western-style democracy is not suited to China, and that the Chinese people would not be able to handle a multiparty system. The Chinese understanding of democracy is based on “popular support for the powerful government rather than individual rights, diverse social interests and limited government.”<sup>63</sup> The CCP constantly reminds its citizens that Western democracy will not be adopted in China, so that the people will accept the one-party system as the only option for China’s political future.

### **Confucianism and Democracy**

The long history of Confucianism in China also is a big factor in Chinese misunderstandings of the basic fundamentals of democracy. Since Confucian ideology is based on authority, discipline, limited individual freedom, and the strength of the state, “authoritarian regimes restrictive of human rights are looking to an Asian model of development based on Confucianism rather than the West.”<sup>64</sup> In China, the government disregards the Western concept of human rights, which was adopted by the United Nations, and instead bases its values on Confucian sentiments. Confucian teachings are

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<sup>60</sup> Michael Wines, “In China, No Plans to Emulate the West’s Way,” *New York Times*, March 10, 2009, <http://nytimes.com/2009/03/10/world/asia/10beijing.html?ref=todayspaper> (accessed March 28, 2009).

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Yijiang Ding, *Chinese Democracy after Tiananmen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 8.

<sup>64</sup> Wm. Theodore de Bary and Tu Weiming, eds., *Confucianism and Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University, 1998), 1.

not founded on personal individuality or personal property,<sup>65</sup> but on the interdependency of fathers and elder brothers.<sup>66</sup> “The learning of Confucianism has tended to be oppressive and to promote male selfishness.”<sup>67</sup> Although Confucianism was vigorously attacked during the Mao period, Confucian behavior was characteristic of Mao himself.

It is fair to assume then, that the middle class in China has derived much of its moral outlook from enduring Confucian ethics, and thus depends on the government in many ways, including for the provision of jobs and insurance of social stability. The Chinese government bases its actions on Confucian hierarchical order as well, in part by not giving its people liberal freedoms or a sense of individual rights. On the contrary, it controls its citizens by restricting their liberties, and makes great effort to cause the people to be dependent on the government. For example, private entrepreneurs need to surrender a certain amount of income to local officials, otherwise they cannot obtain bank loans. Educated middle-class citizens who are graduating from universities often are not able to earn a decent income unless the government places them into jobs. The lack of personal property is also derived from Confucianism. People living in their homes, both in rural and urban areas, do not own the land. The land is owned by the government. There have been many instances when the government has taken away homes and land for new construction, and the affected people are given unfair compensation. Although the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by United Nations member

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.



countries all over the world, the enduring Confucian attitudes do not support the concepts of universal human rights and freedoms; rather, they lean toward authoritarianism.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Pro-Democracy Movements in China:**

#### **Call for Political Liberalization or for Fulfillment of Individual Needs?**

Along with Cuba, North Korea, and Vietnam, China continues to be ruled as a one-party state. Beginning in the late 1970s, student movements grew into the so called “pro-democracy” movement in China. In the 1980s, there were several student demonstrations, but none of them called for the Western-style concept of democracy. The Tiananmen Square protest movement of 1989 made headlines across the world when the Chinese government used military force to suppress this movement, killing hundreds, some say thousands, of demonstrators. Persons in the West believed that the students and the workers died in the name of democracy. The Western press and many Chinese citizens claimed that the events that took place in the spring of 1989 were a step toward democracy for China. In truth, the students demanded attention from the government to matters that would fulfill their individual needs.

#### **Why the Students Demonstrated**

Since 1978, China has experienced rapid economic growth. The open-door policy has been a route toward national modernization and has provided hope for a better future in China. During the forty years prior to 1989, communist rule frequently had condemned intellectuals, and now the educated, growing middle class had the opportunity to become

interested in moral absolutes and political rights.<sup>1</sup> The students involved in the 1989 demonstrations came from various walks of life. Some emerged from poverty-stricken areas, and some came from prestigious institutions of higher learning in China. All of the students had been trained in an educational system that required memorization rather than creative thinking and analysis of text material.<sup>2</sup> Most students, if not all, had very little experience with Western translations and political ideas. The only newspapers to which they had been exposed were those that were channels of government propaganda; works of Western-style democracies were strictly forbidden by the CCP.

In early 1989, the media began reporting that “doctors and university graduates earned less than cab drivers, and hairdressers, and that everyone earned less than private entrepreneurs.”<sup>3</sup> The students felt that they were entitled to a better life, and wanted the government to provide benefits to them such as good jobs, travel abroad, and all the other privileges that the CCP had to offer.<sup>4</sup> During the 1986-1987 demonstrations, students had held banners for freedom and democracy, but when asked to elaborate, they had complained about government corruption, uncomfortable dormitories, and poor food.<sup>5</sup> The slogans attacking high-level officials for corruption, calling for a free press and advocating democracy and freedom, symbolized an open political process for self-serving elite.<sup>6</sup> Students focused on their own individual needs rather than on the common good for the whole country. They challenged the government to compromise, to give them

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<sup>1</sup> Jane McCartney, “*The Students: Heroes, Pawns, or Power-Brokers?*” in *Broken Mirror*, ed. George Hicks (Harlow, UK: Longman Group UK Limited, 1990), 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 6

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph W. Esherick and Elizabeth J. Perry, “Acting out Democracy: Political Theater in Modern China,” in *Popular Protests and Political Culture in China*, ed., Joseph W. Esherick and Elizabeth J. Perry (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1994), 46.

what they wanted, so they could go back to the classroom and abandon their movement.<sup>7</sup> Although the demonstrators carried slogans that called for democracy and freedom of the press, in reality, they did not demand fundamental change within the government. Instead, students wanted change that addressed their personal needs. They were dissatisfied with living conditions on campus, and, what seemingly was most important, they wanted a guaranteed lifetime job that came with the benefits of being a CCP member. They were aware of the competition among the educated elite class, and were terrified of ending up with a job that did not live up to their expectations. As rewards for their academic work and achievements, the students expected guaranteed government jobs, good housing, and privileges that ordinary citizens of China do not have. They held aloft democratic slogans, but these terms were aimed at expanding their own rights and opportunities. They were not concerned with unfair treatment of peasants or workers, and they did not raise concerns about broad abuses by their government of human rights and religious and other freedoms. In fact, the students approached their movement in elitist and non-egalitarian terms.<sup>8</sup> During the protests of 1986-1987 and 1989, the students did not call for the rule of law. The ideology behind the protests was of the educated elite, of which the students were part. The main theme of the demonstrations and their posters “was not that the CCP should be more responsive to the ideas of China’s masses but rather that it should allow the intelligentsia a greater voice in national affairs.”<sup>9</sup> During the demonstrations, students in Fujian Province were shocked, even horrified, that true popular elections would have to include all classes in China, peasants and workers as well as the educated elite. At first,

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<sup>7</sup> McCartney, *Students: Heroes, Pawns, or Power-Brokers?* 7.

<sup>8</sup> Esherick and Perry, “Acting out Democracy,” 36.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

the students and intellectuals were ambivalent about the lower classes joining their movement.<sup>10</sup> The students wanted the government to meet their demands, not those of the workers.

As the movement gained popular support, however, the demonstrators began to consider the benefits of increasing the number of people in their movement.<sup>11</sup> They recruited members of the lower classes to join their demonstrations so that the mass movement would be larger, and, therefore, the media, the people, and, most of all, the government would take the protests seriously and perhaps negotiate with the students to give them what they wanted. However, the students pursued their own individual needs, ignoring the plight of the workers.

The workers could see that participation was being strictly restricted to students themselves, as if the workers were not qualified to participate. And from the news on television, accusing workers of spreading rumors etc., it seemed that workers were being specifically targeted by the authorities. They could see the sentences imposed against working-class people were particularly heavy. Moreover, in Beijing the issues that the students raised had nothing to do with the workers. For example, Wuer Kaixi in his speeches only talked about the students [Wuer Kaixi and other student representatives' dialogue with Li Peng was broadcast nationwide on television]. If he had mentioned the workers as well, appealed to them in a sincere manner, the workers might really have come out in a major way.<sup>12</sup>

Fuzhou students seemed concerned with their own economic situation. They feared a drop in their living standard. They also believed that American teachers were the

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<sup>10</sup> Anita Chan and Jonathan Unger, "Voices from the Protest Movement in Chongqing: Class Accents and Class Tensions," in *Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from Provinces*, ed., Jonathan Unger (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 119.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 120.

most highly paid, and that in China teachers made less than peasants.<sup>13</sup> These ideas about Western standards of living and their own relative positions in Chinese society prompted the students to protest against government officials. The students believed that they were being abused by the one-party state.<sup>14</sup> They wanted the government to recognize their movement and to understand their frustration. They believed that the government of China had let them down. “The solid political career that they believed entry to a university guaranteed them had been snatched away.”<sup>15</sup> Other people who had been affected by the corrupt government sided with the students by reading their banners and applauding them.<sup>16</sup>

The spring 1989 demonstrations by Beijing students encouraged economic reform and liberalization.<sup>17</sup> The hunger strike by some three thousand students soon gained the support of thousands of citizens in China, including workers, who demanded a response from the government. First, the government tried to wait out the hunger strike, hoping that the students would become bored and return to their classrooms. On May 18, Premier Li Peng engaged in limited communication with the students, as he believed that it was inappropriate to discuss the students’ demands. The following day, Zhao Ziyang, general secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, and Li Peng went to Tiananmen Square, where Zhao begged the students to end their demonstrations. Failing to get the demonstrators to end their protests, on May 20, Li Peng and President Yang Shangkun

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<sup>13</sup> Mary S. Erbaugh and Richard Curt Kraus, “The 1989 Democracy Movement in Fujian and Its Aftermath,” in *Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from Provinces*, ed., Jonathan Unger (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1991), 151.

<sup>14</sup> McCartney, “*Students: Heroes, Pawns, or Power-Brokers?*” 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Nathan, “Tiananmen Papers,” 2.

announced that martial law would be used to end what the China's leaders claimed was chaos in Tiananmen Square. What started as a peaceful demonstration by unarmed students ended in bloodshed on June 4, when the PLA opened fire on the protestors. The Chinese government received detailed documentation on an hourly basis from security ministries and foreign and counter intelligences, whose work included gathering additional information from the CCP's Propaganda and United Front Work departments, State Education Commission, and various cabinet-level ministries.<sup>18</sup> The party officials had information on the state of mind of the students, workers, farmers, and all others around the country.<sup>19</sup> These documents were strictly confidential, and the CCP gathered them together to make decisions on the situation in Tiananmen Square.

The use of martial law against the protestors showed to the people of China, as well as to foreigners, the ugly nature of the authoritarian regime. If the CCP had voted to pursue a dialogue with the students rather than to use military force, relations with the West would have been smoother, and there might have been hope for China to lean toward democracy at some point. Instead, the West and the people of China were quickly reminded of the brutal nature of the Chinese government, and any hope for political liberalization faded away quickly.

### **Response from the CCP**

The 1989 demonstrations were by students who were angry with their government because it did not provide guarantees to them for life. The economic reform in China that was proposed by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 had provided an opportunity for China and the

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

West to prosper economically. However, in the 1980s, journalists and economists reported many incidents of intellectuals' lacking jobs, and the job market was becoming competitive. This meant that the students were not assured positions. The students had wanted to discuss conditions with which they were not satisfied. They demanded dialogue to urge the government to recognize: "(1) the impact and nature of the student movement, (2) ways to strengthen reform, and (3) article 35 of the Constitution, which guaranteed freedom of expression, publication, association, and the right to demonstrate."<sup>20</sup> The students believed that, despite their effort to initiate talks with government officials, it would be unlikely that authorities would meet with them.<sup>21</sup> The decision of June 4, 1989, to clear the square and end the student movement, showed how the Chinese government is very willing to disregard the human and civil rights of its own people. Both the students and the CCP "pushed each other's buttons" until the end, so that compromise on either side became less and less an option.

On April 15, 1989, the former secretary general of the CCP, Hu Yaobang, had died. Most students had grieved his death in a peaceful manner, respecting and acknowledging his former leadership of the party.<sup>22</sup> On April 25, Deng Xiaoping had realized the possible consequences of the student demonstrations and concluded that the participants were seeking to create chaos within society through an attempt to overthrow the Chinese government.<sup>23</sup> Deng then stated, "We must not be afraid of people cursing at us, of a bad reputation, or of international reaction. Only if China develops, and

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<sup>20</sup> McCartney, "Students: Heroes, Pawns, or Power-Brokers?" 15.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Nathan, "Tiananmen Papers," 3.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, Marc Lambert, and Qiao Li, eds., "The Crisis Begins," in *Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict*, ed. Michael Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, Marc Lambert, and Qiao Li (New York: M.E. Sharpe Publishing, 1990), 189.



implements the four modernizations [of agriculture, industry, science and technology, and national defense], can we have a real reputation.”<sup>24</sup> The decision makers planned to use force against the protesters, if necessary; risk of a bad international image did not play a role. Loss of foreign investments was not as important, either, as the possibility of the overthrow of the CCP-led government. According to the “Tiananmen Papers,” presented by Andrew Nathan in *Foreign Affairs* in the winter of 2001, on April 26, 1989, Deng Xiaoping was furious with the uncontrollable students, and was ready to clear the mass movement from Tiananmen Square. He complained:

This is no ordinary student movement. The students have been raising a ruckus for ten days now, and we've been tolerant and restrained. But things haven't gone our way. A tiny minority is exploiting the students; they want to confuse the people and throw the country into chaos. This is a well-planned plot whose real aim is to reject the Chinese Communist Party and the socialist system at the most fundamental level. We must explain to the whole Party and nation that we are facing a most serious political struggle. We've got to be explicit and clear in opposing this turmoil.<sup>25</sup>

According to Deng Xiaoping, the students were rejecting the Chinese government, and were trying to disturb society by turning the people against their own government. He wanted to end what he considered to be public chaos, despite the consequences of a loss of foreign investment and Chinese authorities' bad international image owed to their abuse of human rights. However, Deng and the government officials who sided with him wanted to clear Tiananmen Square prior to the arrival of the Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev. Gorbachev's visit was intended to highlight Deng's achievements in

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<sup>24</sup> Melanie Manion, “Introduction: The Logic of the 1989 Protests and Massacre,” in *Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict*, ed, Michael Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, Marc Lambert, and Qiao Li (New York: M.E. Sharpe Publishing, 1990), xi.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

foreign policy.<sup>26</sup> Gorbachev and Deng were supposed to discuss the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, Soviet support for the Vietnamese occupation of Cambodia, and Sino-Soviet efforts to improve relations between mainland China and Taiwan.<sup>27</sup> In Deng's eyes, the students had badly disrupted China's meeting with the leader of the Soviet Union. Tiananmen Square was inaccessible, therefore, the usual welcoming ceremony could not take place in the Forbidden City.<sup>28</sup> Foreign media coverage focused on the student protesters rather than on the arrival of Gorbachev and China's improved relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup>

Following Gorbachev's visit, when further efforts failed to convince the students to leave Tiananmen Square, the government imposed martial law to suppress the demonstrations.<sup>30</sup> Martial law had never been imposed in Beijing before, but to the CCP, it seemed like the only solution to end the demonstrations. Two months before, martial law had been declared in the Tibetan city, Lhasa, to suppress ethnic riots, leading to bloodshed.<sup>31</sup> Yet, the protesters at Tiananmen Square underestimated the brutality of the CCP leaders and their military force. Prior to June 4, 1989, the students could only speculate about the potential costs of demonstrating against the government.<sup>32</sup> What the students did not realize, was that their authoritarian government would use military force against their mass movement, as its leaders viewed the demonstrations as a threat to the communist regime. On the morning of June 2, 1989, party elders Deng Xiaoping, Li

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<sup>26</sup> Oksenberg et al., "The Crisis Begins," 189.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Roger V. Des Forges, Ning Luo, and Yen-bo Wu, *Chinese Democracy and Crisis of 1989* (New York: SUNY Press, 1993), 195.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Xiannian, Peng Zhen, Yang Shangkun, Bo Yibo, and Wang Zhen met with the Standing Committee of the Politburo to discuss the final actions to be taken against the student protesters.<sup>33</sup> Some party elders were more passionate about using military force than others. During the meeting, Wang Zhen prodded his comrades as follows:

Those goddamn bastards! Who do they think they are, trampling on sacred ground like Tiananmen so long?! They're really asking for it! We should send the troops right now to grab those counterrevolutionaries, Comrade Xiaoping! What's the People's Liberation Army for, anyway? What are martial law troops for? They're not supposed to just sit around and eat! They're supposed to grab counterrevolutionaries! We've got to do it or we'll never forgive ourselves! We've got to do it or the common people will rebel! Anybody who tries to overthrow the Communist Party deserves death and no burial!<sup>34</sup>

### **The Tiananmen Square Crackdown of 1989**

On June 4, 1989, the troops began to move eastward toward Tiananmen Square. At 9:30 p.m., the People's Liberation Army began to fire tear gas and rubber bullets into the crowd.<sup>35</sup> The troops fired warning shots, but the crowd failed to respond, showing no signs of fear that the military would use live ammunition.<sup>36</sup> However, at approximately 10:30 p.m., the troops opened fire against the protestors.<sup>37</sup> Killings of both the students and soldiers continued throughout the night. By 5:40 a.m., Tiananmen Square had been cleared, leaving thousands killed or injured.<sup>38</sup>

The exact number of people killed and injured during the massacre is unknown, because foreign journalists were not allowed to take pictures or otherwise document

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<sup>33</sup> Nathan, "Tiananmen Papers," 31.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

events. However, observers said that Beijing looked as though it had been engaged in war, with plumes of smoke rising into the air and burned-out military vehicles and buses in view. The government took major action on June 4, as it feared that the large crowds of student, intellectuals, and workers in Beijing and in other cities might topple the regime.

“The events of 1989 left the regime positioned for its responses to later challenges, such as the Chinese Democratic Party in 1998-99 and the Falun Gong religious movement since 1999.”<sup>39</sup> Since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, the party has been harsh on independent groups that it has suspected of opposing the government. Also, any mass movement, whether of a religious, student, farmer, or worker group without party members as constituents, has been quickly crushed.

The Chinese government has feared being overthrown by a large mass movement because it was witness to what happened in Eastern European countries. In February 1989, a large mass movement in Poland, with the help of the Catholic Church and Pope John Paul II, overthrew the communist regime, and helped Poland to transition into democracy. On June 4, 1989, when Chinese authorities cracked down on citizens in Tiananmen Square, Poland was holding its first parliamentary elections since the end of the Second World War.<sup>40</sup> Chinese officials also witnessed General Wojciech Jaruzelski's use of martial law against the anti-communist mass movement in Poland.<sup>41</sup> The Chinese government thought that the protests in Beijing were growing beyond the party's control, and therefore used Jaruzelski's tactics to suppress the Tiananmen Square demonstrations

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>40</sup> James Miles, *The Legacy of Tiananmen: China in Disarray* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 42.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

before it was too late.<sup>42</sup> After the June 4 massacre in Beijing, the party-controlled newspaper observed, "The suppression of students, workers, and citizens, and the arbitrary apprehension of political offenders under the martial law would only end in acknowledging the people's strength, and conducting dialogues with the people."<sup>43</sup>

### **China after the Tiananmen Massacre**

After the events of the Tiananmen massacre, the Chinese leaders held no regrets. They were convinced that they had done what was necessary to end the demonstrations in Tiananmen Square that they were convinced threatened the regime. By imposing martial law on May 20 and opening fire against the demonstrators on June 4, the central government had given a stern warning to the students and their sympathizers not to repeat such protests, as the consequences would be severe. Among Chinese officials, there was a deep sense of "We told you so."<sup>44</sup> Chinese leaders justified their actions and placed the blame on the students, claiming that if the demonstrators had listened, the crackdown would not have taken place.

There was deep fear among the people of China. The government hunted the demonstrators. Many protesters were jailed, and even given death sentences. The people of China and around the globe were now keenly aware that the Chinese government was willing to suppress any mass movement that was critical of it. The events of June 4, 1989, showed the true colors of the Chinese central government. Neither foreign investments, nor the human rights of the Chinese people, nor a bad international image played a role

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Fewsmith, *China since Tiananmen: The Politics of Transition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 33.

when the eight CCP elders made the decision to use military force against the students. Following the crackdown, Deng Xiaoping's economic reform program was challenged by conservatives in China, who believed that China's opening to the West had led to challenges against the CCP and against the Chinese communist system, in general. However, Deng and many other leaders realized that the continued economic development of China was the best hope for the party's retention of control of power.

### **Economic Development and Political Liberalization in China**

The assumption among Westerners that economic reform in China would lead to political liberalization of its government, proved to be false. It also proved erroneous that the educated middle class would demand democracy as it accumulated more influence in society. Since the Tiananmen Square massacre, continued economic development has not led to political liberalization; rather, the CCP has suppressed any organization or movement that it deems capable of opposing the government. Moreover, the so-called democracy movement in China all but vanished after the massacre. The demonstrations had not been in support of Western-style democracy, but instead were an effort to convince the government that the individual needs of the protestors should be fulfilled. As previously noted, the students had a very poor understanding of democracy. Lack of jobs was a concern and the demand for secure positions following graduation was a significant motivation for the demonstrations. The students did not want to have to compete for jobs, nor did they want jobs that would not be commensurate with their educational backgrounds.

In a democratic country, people are allowed to protest if they are not satisfied with their government, because each citizen has the right to publicly express an opinion. A good government protects its citizens from harm, and does not use military force against its people, because it honors the rights and freedoms of individuals, which include the freedom and right to express one's views.

Although the student protesters were not calling for democracy and the end to the CCP-led government, the CCP nevertheless used martial law and military force to terminate the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square. Thus, regardless of the demands of the protesters, the Tiananmen massacre showed the absence of tolerance among top authorities in China for confrontation regarding their rule. Following June 4, 1989, the educated middle class has focused its attention on the accumulation of wealth and shown no inclination to be a catalyst to move China toward democracy. Not only do members of the middle class have a vague understanding of Western-style democracy, but also there is no apparent desire or solidarity among them that would erupt in a political challenge to the one-party state. Every group since 1989 that has engaged in protest has done so in concern for its own interests, and there has been no consolidation of their efforts for the purpose of establishing a democracy.

## Chapter 4

### The Rising Middle Class:

#### China's Hope for Democratization, or Agent for Preserving the Political Status Quo?

Since Deng Xiaoping's 1978 open-door reforms, new social groups have emerged in China to form an emerging middle class. This arising middle class includes people in occupations and professions resulting from the open-door policy and China's rapid economic growth. The middle class embraces contract-based managers of state enterprises, professors, senior scientists, stock brokers, real-estate agents, senior employees in major banks and other financial institutions, managers of private and foreign companies, lawyers, singers, athletes, fashion models, designers, and others.<sup>1</sup> It also includes scientific and technical development entrepreneurs, the Chinese management staff of foreign enterprises located in China, the middle and senior management staff of state-owned financial enterprises, and some owners of private enterprises.<sup>2</sup>

The past decade has seen the rise of something Mao sought to stamp out forever: a Chinese middle class now estimated to number between 100 million and 150 million people. Though definitions vary—household income of at least \$10,000 a year is one standard—middle-class families tend to own an apartment and a car, to eat out and take vacations, and to be familiar with foreign brands and ideas. They owe their well-being to the government's economic policies.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> David S.G. Goodman, ed., *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives* (New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2008), 1.

<sup>2</sup> "Five Kinds of People Seen as Middle Class of China," *China Business Daily News*, February 11, 2003, <http://proquest.umi.com.ezproxy.shu.edu/pqdweb?did=290437411&sid=2&Fmt=3&clientId=5171&RQT=309&VName=PQD> (accessed February 26, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Lisa T. Chang, "China's Middle Class," *National Geographic*, May 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/china/middle-class/leslie-chang-text.html> (accessed March 4, 2009).



## **The Middle Class and the CCP**

Life is good for an average middle-class family in China. Many own cars, housing, and have a decent income to maintain a high living standard. According to *Xinhua News*, in 2007, an estimated 6.15 percent of China's population, which is about 80 million, were making about 60,000 to 500,000 yuan as an annual income. In urban areas, an average person made 11,759 yuan, in contrast to rural citizens whose yearly average income was 3,587 yuan.<sup>4</sup> The wealthy in China are regarded as the middle class, which differentiates them from the middle class in the Western world. Today, China's wealthy middle class is estimated to be about 8 percent of the entire population.<sup>5</sup>

Since China is one of the largest economic powers in the world, there has been speculation that modernization in China and the rising middle class might follow Western footsteps toward forcing democratization, and that the wealth of the middle class might be the key to China's political stability. For decades, however, China has failed to liberalize politically and its modernization has weakened the Chinese people's desire to resist the authoritarian government. Presently, the Chinese government provides state employment for the state functionaries and professionals. According to David Goodman, a professor at the University of Sydney, the "Chinese middle class is largely the creature, though not wholly intentionally, of the ruling communist party rather than the fruit of an upwelling of economic autonomy or free thinking."<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Matt Wells, "Oil and China: Where Is the Middle Class?" *The Daily Banter*, February 26, 2009, <http://www.thedailybanter.com/tdb/2009/02/oil-and-china-where-is-the-middle-class.html> (accessed March 1, 2009).

<sup>6</sup> Goodman, *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives*, 16.

In Western countries, the middle class was created by the process of industrialization and derived its income from services and management that it provided.<sup>7</sup> The middle class produced managerial and professional occupations, which were not controlled by the state. As industrialization deepened, the state became more complex, creating more jobs and stabilizing society.<sup>8</sup> Unlike Western societies in which the middle class emerged, China's middle class keeps a close relationship with the Communist Party.<sup>9</sup> Goodman says, "Where new entrepreneurs did not already participate formally in the activities of the party-state, particularly at leadership levels, they have now found themselves fully incorporated; and many new entrepreneurs would appear to depend on family networks of influence grounded in the party-state."<sup>10</sup>

The middle class in China builds networks of family influence, so that when members retire, their children can take over the business, "building on the local relationships and networks of influence that their parents have developed."<sup>11</sup> The private entrepreneurs are associated with social, economic, and political influence in China. As their business grows and they wish to expand their production or take a bank loan, a private entrepreneur must give part of his equity to the local government, otherwise he will not be allowed to build his businesses or take a loan.<sup>12</sup> Without a close relationship to the government, private entrepreneurs would not be able to run or increase their businesses enterprises. They are dependent on the government to become wealthier, and

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<sup>7</sup> Rowan Callick, "Myth of China's New Middle Class." *The Australian*, January 18, 2008, <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23046185-21147,00.html> (accessed March 1, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Goodman, *The New Rich in China: Future Rulers, Present Lives*, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 30.

to build a network of influence that will help them to increase their income. The private entrepreneurs' initiative promotes individual economic growth as well as wealth for China.<sup>13</sup> Industrialization and economic development among the middle class has not ensured liberal democracy in China, however; rather, it has promoted government corruption and economic wealth within the self-serving middle class.

As private entrepreneurs are becoming wealthy with the help of the CCP-led government, the peasants in the countryside are faced with fees, taxes, and takeovers of land with unfair compensation.<sup>14</sup> These factors often cause the peasants and the urban workers to protest and riot. Although the peasants and workers are frustrated with unfair treatment by the Chinese government, often they feel powerless against the CCP.

Members of the middle class do not oppose the CCP, however, as long as they are guaranteed employment and the government satisfies their individual needs. The living standards of the middle class continue to improve, and its members usually can afford luxuries, including plasma TVs, washing machines, and other items that most Westerners can enjoy. Middle-class citizens usually hold steady jobs that have been guaranteed by the government. If they are CCP members, the government provides housing and other benefits to them.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Xia, "The Governance Crisis and Democratization in China."

## The Non-Privileged Class

In 2009, it is estimated that more than 80 million peasants live in poverty, and most of them earn less than \$100 per year.<sup>15</sup> As noted, conditions in China's rural areas are more harsh than in urban centers. Oppressive taxes cause disputes in local villages. From the 1980s through the present, the Chinese government has forced various taxes on villagers, such as education taxes, taxes for marriage and burial, and taxes for sterilization or having a baby.<sup>16</sup> At times, the taxes have been simply described as land fees or poll taxes.<sup>17</sup> Local officials also tax the peasants for delivering letters and for electricity and water conservancy.<sup>18</sup> If the peasants are unable to pay these taxes, their belongings are being taken away from them.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor increasingly has caused the peasants to rebel against the government's corruption. In 1998 and 1999, peasant riots occurred in Hunan Province. In Qiyang County, the police opened fire on 10,000 people who protested in front of the Chinese government's headquarters.<sup>19</sup> Another demonstration by local farmers in Daolin led police to use a tear gas canister, resulting in one death and the injury of about a hundred farmers.<sup>20</sup> The local group known as the Society for Reducing Taxes and Saving the Nation organized the protest in Daolin, and its leaders were arrested. In the same year, about a hundred farmers from Guoyuan

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<sup>15</sup> Rebecca McKinnon, "China's Reform Produces Winners but More Losers," *CNN Online*, <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/1999/china.50/asian.superpower/middle.class/> (accessed March 4, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Jasper Becker, *The Chinese* (London: Oxford University Press, 2000), 44.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Elisabeth Rosenthal, "Thousands of Farmers Protest in China; 1 Dies in Police Clash," *New York Times*, January 16, 1999, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html> (accessed February 8, 2009).

village in Jiangsu Province protested against high taxes.<sup>21</sup> Given the strong-willed nature of the CCP, the government used police force, and about thirty peasants were injured and ten were taken into custody. Riots also took place in Qidong, Wenfushi, Dazhongqiao, Luodi, Xingqi, Xupu, and Xizhang.<sup>22</sup>

In many cases, it is China's dysfunctional taxation system that has caused peasants to rebel. In Zizhou Province, 12,688 farmers filed a law suit against local officials for collecting 25 percent of their annual income and beating the farmers who were unable to pay the taxes due to drought or crop failure.<sup>23</sup> The court found the fees to be unfair, but no action was taken against the corrupt officials. Indeed, the taxes collected from the peasants frequently are used to pay government employees' salaries and bonuses.<sup>24</sup> In 2002, the annual fees collected from the peasants were estimated at 1.1 billion yuan, which averages to 100 yuan per peasant.<sup>25</sup> In 2004, it was estimated that in Liaoning Province, each peasant had to pay 43.5 percent of his annual income to the CCP government.<sup>26</sup> Yet, in China, the law states that each household should contribute no more than 5 percent of its income for taxes. Additional imposed fees include private political projects and other mandates for higher government officials.

The protests have been increasing in China since the 1990s. "The nation saw 87,000 'public disturbances' in 2005, a euphemism for riots and uprisings."<sup>27</sup> Since the

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<sup>21</sup> Peter Symonds, "Protests of Workers and Farmers: Social Tensions Rise in China," January 22, 1999, <http://www.wsws.org/articles/1999/jan1999/chin-j22.shtml> (accessed February 8, 2009).

<sup>22</sup> Becker, *The Chinese*, 46.

<sup>23</sup> Symonds, "Protests of Workers and Farmers: Social Tensions Rise in China."

<sup>24</sup> Becker, *The Chinese*, 44.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 148.

<sup>26</sup> Yang Zhong, *Local Government and Politics in China* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2004), 147.

<sup>27</sup> Mark Magnier, "Farmers in China Face Great Wall," *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2006, <http://articles.latimes.com/2006/apr/19/world/fg-rural19> (accessed March 28, 2009).

1998 and 1999 demonstrations in Hunan Province, where thousands of peasants demonstrated and left many injured, the CCP has not improved living standards or unfair taxation in the rural areas. In March 2007, twenty thousand farmers in Hunan Province clashed with one thousand police armed with guns, protesting against the government's corruption and unfair taxation that leaves them to struggle to provide basic needs for themselves and their families.<sup>28</sup>

The economic reform efforts begun by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 have improved the standard of living in China, in general, owed to a GDP growth rate of 10.1 percent between 1981 and 1990, and 11.6 percent from 1991 through 1995.<sup>29</sup> However, the reforms also changed China's industrial structure. State-owned enterprises have declined, and private, foreign, and collective investments have grown tremendously. In 2000, 70 million peasants moved from villages to the urban areas and found long-term jobs in state-owned enterprises.<sup>30</sup> In the same year, the estimated total number of workers in China was about 350 million.<sup>31</sup> Between 1998 and 2002, however, 27 million people were laid off from state-owned enterprises.<sup>32</sup> The situation was tense and created riots. There were many incidents such as the one April 1999, in the northeastern city of Fushun, when 4,000 unpaid workers blocked the railroad, disrupting the service.<sup>33</sup> It was

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<sup>28</sup> "20,000 Farmers Riot in China over Widening Gap between Rich and Poor," *Mail Online*, March 12, 2007, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-441748/20-000-farmers-riot-China-widening-gap-rich-poor.html> (accessed March 28, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Andrew James Nathan, Zhaohui Hong, and Steven Smith, *Dilemmas of Reform in Jiang Zemin's China* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), 127.

<sup>30</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 144.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Lionel M. Jensen, *China Beyond the Headlines* (Oxford, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), 97.

estimated that about 3 million workers were involved in protests that year.<sup>34</sup> Workers not only were losing jobs but also retirement pensions and medical benefits were being taken away. In Anhui Province, ten thousand workers protested due to the lack of medical insurance and injury compensation.<sup>35</sup> Due to the economic recession of 2008-2009, more workers in China have protested as a result of diminished compensation and layoffs. In December 2008, hundreds of workers gathered outside a Shanghai electrical components factory to demand reasonable pay and working conditions.<sup>36</sup> Of approximately 130 million migrant workers in China, the recent global economic turndown has led over 20 million migrant workers to lose their jobs.<sup>37</sup>

By the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, rural and urban lands were owned by the government, and private property rights were nonexistent.<sup>38</sup> **The Chinese government retains full ownership of the land, and people lease it from the government. Farmers cannot sell the land or use it as collateral for bank loans.**<sup>39</sup> Problems arise when the government sells the land to developers for new construction projects and forces villagers to evacuate. People then have to depend on the compensation that is given to them by the government. Compensation is usually unreasonably low, and people who have built these houses themselves through hard work, must leave. Forced takeovers of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> "China Factory Workers Protest," *Strait Times*, December 9, 2008, [http://straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Asia/Story/STIStory\\_312261.html](http://straitstimes.com/Breaking%2BNews/Asia/Story/STIStory_312261.html) (accessed March 24, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> Clifford Coonan, "China Prepares to Clamp Down on Workers' Protests," *The Independent*, February 22, 2009, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-prepares-to-clamp-down-on-workers8217-protests-1628960.html> (accessed March 28, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> "Land Use Rights in China: an Opportunity for Green Policy," *China Green Buildings*, February 2, 2009, <http://chinagreenbuilding.blogspot.com/2009/02/land-use-rights-in-china-opportunity.html> (accessed April 20, 2009).

<sup>39</sup> "Land Rights in China: Promised Land," *The Broker Online*, April 7, 2008, <http://www.thebrokeronline.eu/en/articles/Promised-land> (accessed February 19, 2009).

land by the government caused about 800,000 demonstrations across mainland China in 2005.<sup>40</sup> In that same year, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences reported that 40 million farmers had lost their land, and the number was increasing by 2 million annually.<sup>41</sup> The land where farmers once grew rice and vegetables is being converted into urban constructions sites. In 2001, in the Wuhu district on Chengdu's west side, the local government offered farmers compensation for their homes and fields.<sup>42</sup> They were offered \$2,200 for one-sixth of an acre, an amount equal to what people pay for fifty square feet in a new apartment. Many villagers refused to take the compensation, so the government cut off their water and electricity, and then damaged their property.<sup>43</sup> Many villagers refuse to leave their homes, and protested to the authorities in Beijing. On September 17, 2007, the villagers from the Wuhu district were imprisoned, beaten, and forced to admit that they had broken the law.<sup>44</sup>

Although villagers are victims of forced land takeovers, and workers are losing medical and retirement benefits, when workers and the farmers protest against unfair treatment, the protests are not to overthrow the CCP, or to demand democracy. Once again, protests lodged against China's officials are based on the government's not meeting individual needs.

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<sup>40</sup> Wu Zhong, "A Step toward the Rule of Law," *Asia Times*, April 18, 2007, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/ID18Ad01.html> (accessed February 19, 2009).

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> "Villagers Fight for Land in Rapidly Developing China," *NPR*, May 21, 2008, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=90679036> (accessed February 19, 2009).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



## **The Failure of the Middle Class to Prompt Political Liberalization**

Former President Bill Clinton believed in China's ability to politically liberalize and to create government stability through globalization. In his 2000 speech at Vietnam National University in Hanoi, he stated, "Globalization is not something we can hold off or turn off. It is the economic equivalent of a force of nature like wind or water."<sup>45</sup> Like many, Bill Clinton believed that positive aspects of globalization would lead the Chinese government toward political liberalization.

Since 1978, trade between the West and China has permitted China to grow militarily and economically, in part by allowing it to industrialize extensively. However, China's role in globalization has not promoted domestic political stability in the PRC, nor has the emerging middle class guaranteed steps toward Western-style democracy. In fact, through economic reform, the Chinese government has been able to exploit China's population, exposing laborers to harsh working conditions and paying them unfair wages.<sup>46</sup> Many observers of China have speculated that appreciation of human rights and political liberalization might arise in the PRC when the educated middle class became politically informed and put their high salaries to good use.<sup>47</sup> Optimists held that Chinese children would gain a good education and better jobs, become better citizens, and gain rights as well as the freedom to organize themselves to challenge the authoritarian government and turn China into a democracy.<sup>48</sup> According to statistics in 2009, however,

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<sup>45</sup> Wells, "Oil and China: Where Is the Middle Class?"

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

the growth of the middle class is not as rapid as predicted in the 1990s, when the growth rate of the economy in China was at its highest peak.

The 2008-2009 global economic crisis is having a profound effect in China. It is estimated in 2009 that about 20 million Chinese migrant workers are returning to their home villages, because millions of factory positions have been eliminated.<sup>49</sup> “The crisis puts in peril the government's efforts to lift hundreds of millions of peasants out of poverty and to close the staggering gap between the country's urban rich and rural poor.”<sup>50</sup> Since many workers are left jobless, and independent trade unions are banned in China, many workers have resorted to rioting. Uneducated workers have no skills and cannot explore other career options. They cannot turn to their government for help, and out of desperation they organize mass movements.<sup>51</sup> So far, these demonstrations have been quickly brought under the government's control, and have not exhibited the characteristics of a democracy movement.

### **Economic Crisis 2008-2009 and the Impact on China**

The current economic crisis has created serious financial concerns. “It is not long ago that China was introducing measures to cool down an economy that grew by 11.9% last year. But that figure fell to just 9% in the third quarter of this year [2008] due to a slowing of export and investment growth.”<sup>52</sup> The Chinese government has given companies a

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<sup>49</sup> Mark Mackinnon, “Jobless, Restless China: 20 Million and Growing,” February 20, 2009, <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20090220.wchina0220/BNSStory/Front> (accessed March 7, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Bistrow, “China Startled by Force Crisis,” *BBC News*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7727237.stm> (accessed March 4, 2009).

\$958bn stimulus package to avoid further economic slowdown.<sup>53</sup> Despite the bailout money, factories still are closing and workers have unified to demonstrate against the massive layoffs caused by the global crisis. As these workers are often uneducated and unskilled, many accept poor labor conditions, minimal rights, and unfair payroll compensation. All they want from the government is to get their jobs back, so that they can support their families.

Since the West has been hit with the economic crisis, its publics cannot afford to buy products from China at previous levels. Consequently, in November 2008 it was reported that, the wages of workers in Guangdong province have been cut by 75 percent.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, the Chinese government is not as worried about the massive layoffs of blue-collar workers as they are of the white-collar middle class. The middle class in China consists of some 100 to 150 million citizens who are accustomed to having more choices and a higher standard of living than the average Chinese:

For China's emerging middle class, this is an age of aspiration—but also a time of anxiety. Opportunities have multiplied, but each one brings pressure to take part and not lose out, and every acquisition seems to come ready-wrapped in disappointment that it isn't something newer and better. An apartment that was renovated a few years ago looks dated; a mobile phone without a video camera and color screen is an embarrassment. Classes in colloquial English are fashionable among Shanghai schoolchildren, but everything costs money.<sup>55</sup>

The Chinese government is aware that China's middle class wants to maintain a certain living standard, and the memory of the 1989 protests reminds it that its very

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<sup>53</sup>Christina Larson, "China's Mounting Pink Slips," *International Herald Tribune*, January 4, 2009, <http://www.iht.com/articles/2009/01/04/opinion/edlarson.php> (accessed March 4, 2009).

<sup>54</sup>James Reynolds, "Factories Shut as Crisis Hits China," *BBC News*, November 19, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7733499.stm>, (accessed April 23, 2009).

<sup>55</sup>Lisa T. Chang, "China's Middle Class," *National Geographic*, May 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/05/china/middle-class/leslie-chang-text.html> (accessed March 4, 2009).

survival may be based on keeping the middle class happy. China's officials fear that increasing unemployment might lead to another eruption of social instability, which could be hard to control.<sup>56</sup> To avoid social turmoil, the Chinese government now provides unemployment benefits and social security wages to the middle class.<sup>57</sup> If the Chinese economy starts to crumble, however, jobs would become more scarce and the standard of living among members of the middle class could decrease tremendously. Especially since the global economic downturn, there have been massive lay-offs from state-owned enterprises, compounding the previous hardships of the loss of medical health benefits and retirement pensions.<sup>58</sup>

There is little on which to base speculation that the emerging middle class will lead China toward political stability, and, eventually, democracy. Although the current economic crisis could lead to middle-class discontent, and once again, the middle class might unfurl slogans of democracy and freedom, its basic demands would likely be for financial stability and fulfillment of its consumer expectations. The middle class seeks money and government benefits rather than basic fundamental changes to the one-party system. Given the 100 to 150 million people who are in the middle class, their deep dissatisfaction could be problematic for the central government. Yet, there is no indication that this stratum of society wants to overturn the CCP-led authoritarian state. The middle class is in a far better position than the workers who have lost jobs and are forced to return to their rural areas. Indeed, the government is still most concerned with members of middle class, giving them unemployment and retirement benefits to avoid

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Xia, "The Governance Crisis and Democratization in China."

unrest. If the middle class were to organize demonstrations, it likely would be to demand that the government meet their own needs. They would seek freedom for themselves and protest against government corruption, as during the 1989 protests, while their understanding of Western-style democracy remained very vague. The citizens of China along with the Chinese government “define democracy in its own terms, drawing ideas of good government with deep roots in the nation’s historical culture and more recent roots in its ideology of socialism.”<sup>59</sup> It is not likely that the middle class would care that the workers are in a far worse situation due to the economic crisis, or about abuse of the human rights of other citizen of China practiced by the government. “The educated elite view the rest of the population as illiterate, backward, and superstitious.”<sup>60</sup>

As evidenced by the cruel nature of its actions in the 1989 crackdown, however, the central government fears that the emerging middle class will lodge protests against it if their expected living standards are not achieved. That is why state officials are doing whatever they can to keep the middle class happy, and trying to keep its members away from the political arena.

Reluctant to cut loose all state enterprises to market competition and create a huge new wave of unemployment, the government instead has set strict production and price controls. It is throwing money into new job-creating infrastructure projects and is taking measures—like lowering interest rates—to encourage people to spend their money.<sup>61</sup>

The government is looking out for members of the middle class during the global crisis, by providing unemployment benefits to them and by cutting interest rates so that

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<sup>59</sup> Chu, Diamond, Nathan, and Shin, *How East Asians View Democracy*, 236.

<sup>60</sup> Edward Friedman, “Jiang Zemin’s Successors and China’s Growing Rich-Poor Gap,” in *China under Hu Jintao: Opportunities, Dangers and Dilemmas*, ed. Tun-jen Cheng, Jacques de Lisle, and Deborah Brown (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2006), 132.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

they will spend more money and be able to maintain a high living standard. It is creating new jobs, in part by building new infrastructure projects which often take away land from the farmers. Premier Wen Jiabao said that he” hoped to create nine million new jobs in the cities and increase local government spending budgets by almost 25%.”<sup>62</sup> The government stimulus package to create new jobs is especially aimed at satisfying the middle class, for “when people cannot get jobs they may start to question why the Communist Party should stay in power.”<sup>63</sup>

### **Status and Power of the Middle Class**

The nature of the Chinese government is to do what it takes to maintain control of the state and to stay in power. The government’s focus, as noted, is on investment in new companies to create jobs for the middle class. Premier Wen and the Communist Party strongly believe that projects to build new infrastructure will help the economy, create political stability, and avoid social turmoil. “In China, a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion, maintaining a certain growth rate for the economy is essential for expanding employment for urban and rural residents, increasing people’s incomes and ensuring social stability.”<sup>64</sup> Only a portion of the stimulus bill will be used for construction of railways and roads, which might create temporary jobs for the lower class.

China’s middle class, or *zhong chan*, is a strong force that could have a significant impact on China’s politics, and society as a whole. It is not an ordinary middle class, however, as viewed in the West. China historically viewed itself very selfishly as the

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<sup>62</sup> “China Faces: ‘Most Difficult Year,’” *BBC News*, February 20, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7925193.stm> (accessed March 5, 2009).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

“middle kingdom,” ignoring other societies as grossly inferior. Similarly, today the middle class views itself as superior and more deserving than the lower classes of Chinese society. Edward Friedman asserts that the Chinese government “would reject democracy as an alien plot that would empower China’s lesser-quality people of the center, thereby splitting the nation and ending its rapid rise.”<sup>65</sup> Given the fact that the middle class views itself elite, the Chinese government cannot afford to lose its support, especially because, “based on an annual growth of one percentage point, the ‘middle class’ people in China are expected to make up 40 per cent of the total population in 2020.”<sup>66</sup> If the government were to fail to provide a high living standard to the middle class, the legitimacy of the CCP-led government would be badly eroded. This concern helps to explain why stores featuring luxury brands such as Gucci, Christian Dior, and Chanel have begun to appear in more and more Chinese cities. The average middle class in the West cannot afford to buy designer brands which cost thousands of dollars. In China, the middle class is well-off compared to most of China’s society, and until the global economic downturn, the number of its members kept growing. Focus on its own comforts, the middle class has no interest in demanding broad civil and political rights for all social classes, because it benefits from the existing political system. The government sides with the middle class, because it is the source of continued economic growth which is essential to the CCP’s ability to cling to power. Thus, the middle class and the CCP have common interests. The CCP provides the middle class with wealth and benefits, and the middle class in return, does not oppose the government.

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<sup>65</sup> Friedman, “Jiang Zemin’s Successors and China’s Growing Rich-Poor Gap,” 132.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

## Chapter5

### China's Lack of Religious Freedom: Reasons behind the Crackdowns

Religious freedom is an important dimension of Western-style democracy. The freedom to worship in one's religion became internationally accepted through the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948. Article 18 declares,

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

China, one of the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by agreeing to the final declaration of it at the World Conference of Human Rights in 1993.<sup>1</sup> Although China has nominally agreed to honor the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it brazenly violates the international Declaration on religious freedom.

The Chinese government suppresses and harasses any religious or belief group that could pose a threat to the ruling power. Places of worship must be registered, and the Chinese government controls religious practices, restricting the growth and activity of religious groups, and overseeing the appointment of clergy.<sup>2</sup> There are only five sanctioned religions in China: Buddhism, Taoism, Islam, Protestantism, and Catholicism.<sup>3</sup> For each faith, there is a government-controlled association to monitor its

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<sup>1</sup> Robert F. Drinian, *Can God and Caesar Coexist?: Balancing Religious Freedom and International Law* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 165.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Larkin, *International Religious Freedom (2000)* (Washington, DC: Diane Publishing, 2000), 98.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



religious activities.<sup>4</sup> These associations are overseen by State Administration of Religious Affairs.<sup>5</sup>

Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China promises "freedom of religious belief," but in reality, severely restricts religious freedom and denies protection of basic rights that are upheld in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Chinese Constitution leans toward Confucian practices that promote state interference. Based on article 36, the state can interfere in religious activities that it defines as abnormal, meaning that it can suppress any group or organization that it claims to be disruptive to the social order of the state. Article 36 states that,

Citizens of People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. The state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, owed to qualifying language, the citizens of China are not allowed to practice their religion freely. The Chinese government allows its citizens to practice their religious beliefs behind closed doors or in a state-approved venue. They are not permitted to freely proselytize their beliefs, however, and in many cases, the government spreads false propaganda against religious groups that it deems could threaten the authoritarian regime. Unlike in democratic societies, an atheistic state determines what are "normal" religious

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Madsen, "Saints and the State: Religious Evolution and Problems in Governance of China," in *China's Development Miracle*, ed. Alvin Y. So (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2003), 253.

<sup>6</sup> "The Constitution of the People's Republic of China," *U.S. Constitution Online*, <http://www.usconstitution.net/china.html> (accessed March 28, 2009).

activities and suppresses those that it declares to be “abnormal.” Thus the one-party system violates the basic fundamentals of article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which declares,

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.<sup>7</sup>

Article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, based on Western-style concepts of democracy, allows people to practice their religion or belief freely in both public and private places. Although the Chinese government assures its citizens that basic religious freedoms as well as human rights are protected in the Chinese Constitution, when comparing article 36 of the PRC Constitution to article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it is clear to see that the Chinese government distorts the intent of basic freedoms. In practice, China seeks consensus on human rights based on Chinese authoritarian perspectives.

The CCP historically has been on guard to prevent religious groups from rising outside the authority of the government and preaching against its ideology, policies, and practices. The demand for freedom to practice one’s beliefs often causes confrontation between spiritual believers and the authoritarian government. For example, the Falun Gong movement was banned in July 1999, and designated as an evil cult.<sup>8</sup> The state officials claimed that the Falun Gong (also known as the Falun Dafa) disturbed society, and that it was harmful to the physical and mental well-being of people.<sup>9</sup> Presumably in response to the rising influence of Falun Gong, on October 31, 1999, under article 300 of

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<sup>7</sup> Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

<sup>8</sup> Yiu Wong, *One Country, Two Systems in Crisis* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2004), 78.

<sup>9</sup> Maria Hsia Chang, *Falun Gong: The End of Days* (Orwigsburg, PA: Yale University Press, 2004), 99.

China's Criminal Law, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress banned all unregistered religions.<sup>10</sup>

### **Persecution of the Falun Gong**

Falun Gong is mainly an exercise group which involves breathing, and is believed to inherit the wisdom of Buddhism, Taoism, and traditional Chinese qigong.<sup>11</sup> In 2008, it was estimated that the number of Falun Gong practitioners in mainland China was about 70 million, which was about the same number of the CCP party members.<sup>12</sup> Since members do not consider Falun Gong a religion (knowing that there are only five religions that are sanctioned by the government) and it has no designated places of worship, it has been difficult for the government to supervise this group of believers.

The Falun Gong consists of members from various walks of life: peasants, middle class professionals, professors, and even government workers. Rich and poor have been members of the Falun Gong. The purpose of the movement was not to overthrow the government, but principally to teach breathing exercises to promote good health. Many people joined, however, not only to gain health benefits but also because they were intrigued by Falun Gong's mysterious cosmology. Falun Gong is based on three simple principles: truthfulness, benevolence, and tolerance.<sup>13</sup> These principles attracted many who, in groups, practiced their stylized exercises in public park-like places.

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<sup>10</sup> Barbara Larkin, *International Religious Freedom* (2000), 96.

<sup>11</sup> Yiu Chung Wong, *One Country, Two Systems in Crisis*, 79.

<sup>12</sup> Nishka Patel, "Ahead of Olympics, Beijing Crackdown Extends to Falun Gong Followers," *World Politics Review*, April 1, 2008, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/article.aspx?ID=1875> (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> Peter Hessler, *Oracle Bones: A Journey between China's Past and Present* (New York: Harper Collin Publishers 2006), 125.

In the past, Christianity, among religious groups, received the greatest restrictions by the CCP.<sup>14</sup> However, in 1999, the government became greatly concerned with non-Western belief groups, such as the Falun Gong, that were derived from Buddhism and Taoism. The members of these groups often face harassment, physical abuse, and frequently prison.<sup>15</sup> None of the arrests has been connected with violence or actual threats against society. Simply seeking legalization, the Falun Gong had demonstrated at Tiananmen Square and in other public places.<sup>16</sup> The only “crimes” that the Falun Gong had committed were that they practiced their beliefs outside government control, and sought legalization of their practices. Not only did the government accuse the Falun Gong of being an evil cult, however, but also it spread anti-Falun Gong propaganda throughout the Chinese media. China's newspaper, *People's Daily*, a mouthpiece for the government, and the Chinese Academy of Social Science accused Falun Gong's leader, Li Hongzhi, of accumulating wealth and brainwashing his followers. Since the CCP controls the media, police, security personnel, and the National People's Congress, it is easy for it to spread propaganda and to arrest groups that it perceives oppose the state government. The news media publishes false information about the Falun Gong, while the judicial system justifies or hides crimes that the CCP commits against the leaders and followers of the group.<sup>17</sup> Many of the arrested followers of the Falun Gong have been sent to prisons or labor camps without trial.<sup>18</sup> “At the same time, the diplomatic system has spread lies in the international community and enticed foreign governments, state officials and

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> David Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing 2003), 237.

<sup>17</sup> Epoch Times, *Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party* (Mountain View, CA: Epoch Times, 2004), 137.

<sup>18</sup> Jim Yardley, “Issue in China: Many in Jails without Trial,” *New York Times*, May 9, 2005, [http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/09/international/asia/09china.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/09/international/asia/09china.html?_r=1) (accessed February 15, 2009).

international media with political and economic incentives so that they will remain silent regarding the issue of the prosecution of the Falun Gong.”<sup>19</sup>

However, the foreign press has reported the persecution of the Falun Gong in China. Among these journalists, Ian Johnson of the *Wall Street Journal* won a Pulitzer Prize in 2001 for his extraordinary work on the Falun Gong. He is known for covering individual stories of Falun Gong members, reporting the torture and deaths, and describing the cruel crackdown of the CCP against this organization. Johnson compares the April 1999 crackdown on the Falun Gong to the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, stating that “it left countless scars below the surface of society, and has become another marker on China’s painful path to modernization.”<sup>20</sup> Besides torture and deaths, many Chinese citizens are forced to split from their families, and move away from their homes with the fear of arrest.<sup>21</sup> Johnson reveals to his readers the false propaganda spread by the Chinese media against the Falun Gong members, and the hidden reality behind the crackdowns. “In a country of 1.3 billion, most are ignorant and many accept the state-run media’s explanation that Falun Dafa is a dangerous cult, a mind-controlling organization that must be crushed at all costs to preserve stability.”<sup>22</sup>

By 2000, it was estimated that 5,000 members of the Falun Gong had been sent to the re-educated labor camps without trial.<sup>23</sup> To prove that the Falun Gong was unhealthy to the mental stability of its members, the CCP sent many practitioners to psychiatric

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ian Johnson, “The Death Trap: How One Chinese City Resorted to Atrocities to Control Falun Dafa,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 26, 2000, A21.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Larkin, *International Religious Freedom (2000)*, 97.

hospitals, making their families responsible for all living and medical expenses.<sup>24</sup>

Amnesty International reported that lawyers were prevented from entering pleas of not guilty, and, according to the International Human Rights Organization, they had to obtain permission from the CCP to represent Falun Gong prisoners.<sup>25</sup>

In 2002, the Department of State's report on religious freedom stated that several hundred practitioners of the Falun Gong had died while in prison and in labor camps since 1999.<sup>26</sup> "In early March [2008], the U.S.-based Falun Dafa Information Center announced that 1,878 practitioners from 29 provinces had been arrested since January 2008 and that cash rewards of up to \$360 were being offered by the government to identify members."<sup>27</sup> Although the Chinese government claims that China is governed by the rule of law, the unjust treatment of Falun Gong believers is clear evidence to the contrary.

Although the Falun Gong demanded to be recognized as a legal entity, which led to the April 1999 crackdown, there have been no demonstrations by members of Falun Gong or their supporters to overthrow the government. The April 1999 demonstration demanded freedom and civil rights for Falun Gong members. Although religious freedom is essential to democracy, the demonstrations held by the Falun Gong were not a call for broad-based religious freedom in China, however. The main reason for the 1999 demonstration was for tolerance of the group: the leaders and their followers wanted nothing else but the freedom to practice their own beliefs in public places. What

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Aikman, *Jesus in Beijing*, 237.

<sup>27</sup> Patel, "Ahead of Olympics, Beijing Crackdown Extends to Falun Gong Followers."

provoked the Falun Gong to demonstrate was the anti-Falun Gong propaganda that the Chinese government spread, in part by planting defamatory articles in Chinese newspapers. The members of the group responded by organizing sit-in demonstrations in front of government buildings. Intense demonstrations by the Falun Gong began when the CCP banned the group, and sent followers to prison and labor camps. Westerners, such as scholars at the Brookings Institution, inclined to explain the demonstrations of China's dissidents in democratic terms, interpreted the protests as being "on behalf of tens and thousands of innocent people who suffer imprisonment, torture or even death at the hands of their own government in China."<sup>28</sup>

### **Victimization of Sanctioned Religions**

Falun Gong is not the only faith-based group that the Chinese government controls and persecutes. Many religious groups in China resist the government's control and operate outside the official boundaries.<sup>29</sup> The response of the Chinese government to religious groups has been mixed. House churches that operate in small villages and are not spreading into other regions are not usually targeted by state officials.<sup>30</sup> Repression is used by the Chinese government when it lacks the ability to control religious groups that spread rapidly and are also linked with other movements.<sup>31</sup> Religious freedom is frequently abused in the ethnic minority regions of Tibet and Xinjiang. Resistance to the government's control erupted again in March 2008 among Tibetan Buddhists who follow

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<sup>28</sup> Erik Eckholm, "China Breaks up a Protest by Falun Gong Foreigners," *New York Times*, November 21, 2001, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9806E3DA1F3BF932A15752C1A9679C8B63&scp=3&sq=falun%20gong%20demonstrations&st=cse> (accessed February 15, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> Jason Kindopp and Carol Lee Hamrin, *God and Caesar in China* (Arlington, VA: Brookings Institution Press, 1992), 5.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

the Dalai Lama, and martial law was unofficially imposed in the region in March 2009. Muslims in Xinjiang, too, are prosecuted and refuse to practice their beliefs in registered places of worship. Still, Henan, Anhui, and Shandong provinces have faced the broadest religious persecution. Religionists in major urban centers are not excluded from persecution, however, as arrests of leaders and members of unauthorized religious groups are common in big cities such as Beijing, to prevent belief systems from spreading rapidly. Christian underground churches, whether in urban or rural settings, are an especially significant challenge to Chinese government officials, because authorities cannot easily control them. They are constantly subject to government crackdown. As religionists of any persuasion cannot publicly proclaim and spread their faiths, religious persecution of Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and Muslims, in particular, is one of the most troublesome abuses of human rights in China.

### *Victimization of Church Leaders*

Since the early 1990s, Amnesty International has reported that many church leaders, including in Zhejiang, Jiangsu, and Hebei provinces, have been detained.<sup>32</sup> In 2001, Gong Shengliang, a head of the South China Church, was sentenced to death, and severely tortured and beaten in prison.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese government accused Gong of “establishing a cult organization in the South China Christianity, raping women and violating social order.”<sup>34</sup> As with Falun Gong, the Chinese government spread accusations and condemning information through the media, and called the South China Church an evil

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the United States of America, " Chinese Embassy Spokesman: Gong Shengliang Is Guilty of Establishing Cult Organization and Raping Women," January 9, 2002, <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/zt/zgrq/t36642.ht> (accessed February 17, 2009).



cult. The harsh treatment of Gong was part of a crackdown on the South China Church. Gong was accused of raping six females, but the alleged victims released letters on January 29, 2002, stating that they had been tortured by the state police and coerced into providing false testimony against Gong.<sup>35</sup> The women had been beaten severely with electric cords, until they implicated the church leader.<sup>36</sup> According to *China Daily* in February 2003, Ye Xiaowen, director of the State Administration of Religious Affairs, stated that “no one in the country is allowed to use religious affairs as an excuse to undermine public order or damage the physical or mental health of other citizens.”<sup>37</sup> There was no indication whether there was an investigation or a court appeal for Gong.<sup>38</sup> However, there was intimation that the police received extra bonuses from the government for the number of arrests and convictions of the South China Church members.<sup>39</sup>

### *Tibetan Buddhists*

Since 1951, when the Chinese exercised full control of Tibet, the region has been a source of tension.<sup>40</sup> After the 1959 Tibetan uprising against China’s authoritarian regime, the spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, fled to India in exile. During the late 1980s, China declared martial law and violently suppressed Tibetans, killing hundreds of protestors. The clashes in Lhasa during the 1980s were by far the largest. In the light of the March

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<sup>35</sup> Alex Buchan, “Gong ‘Accusers’ Claim Torture Induced False Confessions,” *Christianity Today*, January 1, 2002, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2002/januaryweb-only/1-28-53.0.html> (accessed February 18, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> “Religious Official Clarifies Report,” *China Daily*, February 27, 2003, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/doc/2003-02/27/content\\_156134.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/en/doc/2003-02/27/content_156134.htm) (accessed February 17, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Buchan, “Gong ‘Accusers’ Claim Torture Induced False Confessions.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Michael Wines, “China’s Leaders See a Calendar Full of Trouble,” *New York Times*, March 9, 2009, <http://nytimes.com/2009/03/10/world/asia/10china.html?fta=y> (accessed April 4, 2009).

2008 and March 2009 crackdowns, the Dalai Lama fears that the CCP-led government will continue to violently persecute the Tibetans.<sup>41</sup>

In 1995, government officials in Tibetan began campaigns to "reeducate" all monks and nuns to be patriotic and to adopt socialist ideologies.<sup>42</sup> According to the United Nations High Commissioner of Refugees, three thousand Tibetans entered Nepal to escape the reeducation campaigns. "In February 1996, Chinese leaders ordered the closure of politically active monasteries and required the replacement of all monastic leaders."<sup>43</sup> The reeducation campaigns started in three major monasteries, Sera, Drepung, and Ganden, and reached fifty other monasteries and nunneries by June 1997.<sup>44</sup> "By September 1997 more than 900 of 1,700 monasteries had been reached with 30,000 of 46,000 monks and nuns affected."<sup>45</sup> Those who resisted the reeducation campaigns and did not denounce the Dalai Lama were imprisoned, tortured, and accused of political activism.<sup>46</sup> The patriotic or reeducation campaigns were aimed at gaining control over the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and establishment. The one-party state does not take into consideration international reaction from Western countries. The main objective of the CCP is to suppress any mass movement that might advocate a high degree of regional autonomy or separation from China, or act as a counter-witness to the government.

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<sup>41</sup> Somni Sengupta, "Curbs on Protest in Tibet Lashed by Dalai Lama," *New York Times*, March 17, 2009, [http://nytimes.com/2008/03/17/world/asia/17tibet.html?pagewanted=1&\\_r=1&fta=y](http://nytimes.com/2008/03/17/world/asia/17tibet.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1&fta=y) (accessed April 4, 2009).

<sup>42</sup> Mickey Spiegel, Jeri Laber, and Sidney Jones, *China: State Control of Religion* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1997), 45.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Edward P. Lipton, *Religious Freedom in Asia* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2002), 89.

Although the Chinese government asserts that the people of mainland China have religious freedom, no religious group is exempt from government repression. In early 2009, it was estimated that there were approximately 6 million Tibetan Buddhists in China.<sup>47</sup> However, the exact number cannot be known, because many Tibetan Buddhists refuse to practice their religion under the control of the Chinese government. In February 2009, against government directives, they refused to participate in public ceremonies celebrating Losar, the Tibetan New Year, and customarily avoid registering with the one-party state.

State officials claim that Tibetan Buddhists have a right to freedom of religious expression. However, they are not allowed to post pictures of the Dalai Lama in public places, or anything that would advocate Tibetan independence or any form of separatism.<sup>48</sup> The Chinese government maintains that the Dalai Lama is the leader of an “exile government,” and a “criminal” who is on a mission to separate China.<sup>49</sup> In a recent article in *China Daily*, the government accused the Dalai Lama of trying to restore a theocracy in Tibet, and by doing so, of violating the Chinese Constitution and misleading the public. The Memorandum on Genuine Anatomy of the Tibetan People was presented by the Envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Chinese officials on November 4, 2008, in Beijing, in an effort to find common ground between the Tibetans and the Chinese people.<sup>50</sup> The Memorandum did not seek Tibet’s separation or independence, but

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<sup>47</sup> Jaideep Sarin, “Chinese Leaders Feel Threatened by Tibetan Buddhism: Dalai Lama,” *Thaindian News*, March 8, 2009, [http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/chinese-leaders-feel-threatened-by-tibetan-buddhism-dalai-lama\\_100164121.html](http://www.thaindian.com/newsportal/uncategorized/chinese-leaders-feel-threatened-by-tibetan-buddhism-dalai-lama_100164121.html) (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> Lipton, *Religious Freedom in Asia*, 89.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Central Tibetan Administration, November 16, 2008, <http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=83&articletype=press> (accessed March 29, 2009).

instead called for respect of the integrity of the Tibetan people, which is compatible with the principles of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. Tibetan Buddhists want Chinese officials to allow them to practice their religion freely. A section of the Memorandum states the following:

Religion is fundamental to Tibetans and Buddhism is closely linked to their identity. We recognize the importance of separation of church and state, but this should not affect the freedom and practice of believers. It is impossible for Tibetans to imagine personal or community freedom without the freedom of belief, conscience and religion. The Constitution recognizes the importance of religion and protects the right to profess it. Article 36 guarantees all citizens the right to the freedom of religious belief. No one can compel another to believe in or not to believe in any religion. Discrimination on the basis of religion is forbidden.<sup>51</sup>

However Chinese officials firmly believe that "religious activities, which might affect other people, must be bound by law."<sup>52</sup> Tibetan Buddhists are suppressed despite their peaceful attempts to seek common ground with the Chinese government. Since the Tibetan Buddhists riots of March 2008, Tibetans have been targets of harsh treatment by the Chinese government. In January 2009, the government enforced strict security in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet, fearing demonstrations on the fiftieth anniversary of the Tibet Uprising of March 10, 1959.<sup>53</sup> The police raided thousands of homes and businesses, ran checks on 5,766 people, and arrested eighty-one as possible suspects.<sup>54</sup> The government claimed that strict police enforcement was used to target "criminal activity such as burglary, prostitution and theft and is needed to uphold the city's social order."<sup>55</sup> In truth, the motive behind this campaign was to target suspected supporters of Tibetan

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Maureen Fan, "Chinese Launch Raids, Detention in Tibet: Activists See Goal as Punishing Last Spring's Rioters and Quelling New Protests," *Washington Post*, January 29, 2009, [washingtonpost.com/content/article/2009/01/28/AR2009012801176.html?hpid=moreheadlines](http://www.washingtonpost.com/content/article/2009/01/28/AR2009012801176.html?hpid=moreheadlines) (accessed March 28, 2009).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

independence, and to warn other Tibetans of the possible consequences. On March 10, 2009, the Dalai Lama said that, "Chinese rule in Tibet has created a 'hell on earth' that has caused the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Tibetans."<sup>56</sup> Local officials forbade foreign press from entering many areas of Tibet, and some foreign journalists were detained; also, Internet services, along with text messages, were unplugged to prevent people from organizing demonstrations.<sup>57</sup>

Before the Summer Olympics in 2008 in Beijing, the Chinese government played a major role in the crackdown on the protestors in Tibet. On March 14, 2008, Chinese forces surrounded three monasteries outside Lhasa, after hundreds of Tibetan Buddhist protestors took to the streets against the rule of the communist regime.<sup>58</sup> Tibetan protesters raised their human rights complaints and their desire for an independent Tibet, to test the government officials to see if military force would be used against them.<sup>59</sup> The Chinese government ordered tight security, and made the protestors aware of the harsh punishments for demonstrating against party officials in Beijing. Reports of the protests in Tibet were censored in the Chinese news media, and it was only after international pressure that foreign reporters were allowed to enter Tibet shortly after the demonstrations. Therefore, it is difficult to determine the number of protestors who were arrested, injured, or killed. However, it is estimated that five to six hundred Tibetan Buddhist monks were arrested and tortured in prison. Before the Summer Olympics,

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<sup>56</sup> Gavin Rabinowitz, "Dalai Lama Basts 'Brutal Crackdown' in Tibet," *Jakarta Post*, March 10, 2009, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2009/03/10/dalai-lama-blasts-039brutal-crackdown039-tibet.html> (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Jim Yardley, "Monk Protests in Tibet Draw Chinese Security," *New York Times*, March 18, 2008, [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/14/world/asia/14china.html?\\_r=1&scp=2&sq=tibet%20march%202008%20protests&st=cse](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/14/world/asia/14china.html?_r=1&scp=2&sq=tibet%20march%202008%20protests&st=cse) (accessed February 26, 2008).

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

China faced heightened criticism from the international arena about abuse of the human rights of Tibetan Buddhists and religionists of other areas in China. However, the government claims that it acts constitutionally according to article 36 of China's Constitution, which states that, "No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt the public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state."<sup>60</sup> Thus, when the state forces monks and nuns to be reeducated in patriotic campaigns, or incarcerates them, it can claim that these religionists have violated public order by means of their demonstrations, and, consequently, are deserving of punishment.

#### *The Uighur Minority in Xinjiang*

In the case of Xinjiang, many Muslims are persecuted and often accused of terrorist acts. The CCP uses the September 11 terrorist attacks as a rationale to crackdown on Muslims. The Uighurs enjoyed brief independence in the 1940s, in what was known as Republic of East Turkistan. Since then, there have been numerous protests by the people of Xinjiang to urge separation from the People's Republic of China.<sup>61</sup> "People from the Uighur community are very much at risk of being arrested, detained, tortured or sentenced to labour camps for anything the government equates to separatist feelings, or for holding religious activities."<sup>62</sup> Despite China's Constitution that promises "freedom of religious belief," state officials organize campaigns to marginalize Muslims in their own society.

Muslim minorities protested in significant number in Tiananmen Square in 1989.

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<sup>60</sup> "The Constitution of the People's Republic of China," *US Constitution Online*.

<sup>61</sup> Kate McGoewn, "Fighting the Cause of China's Uighurs," *BBC News*, June 24, 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/4618995.stm> (accessed February 17, 2009).

<sup>62</sup> Quentin Sommerville, "China's Grip on Xinjiang Muslims," *BBC News*, November 29, 2003, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/4482048.stm> (accessed February 19, 2009).

Rather than carrying signs of democracy and freedom, the religious demonstrators, in general, held up banners reading, “Respect China's Freedom and Religion,” and “Uphold the Constitution.”<sup>63</sup> Muslim protestors reached about three thousand, including Muslim students.<sup>64</sup> Unlike the Muslim students, older Muslim males wore white hats, and the women wore head coverings to identify themselves as a Muslim minority. Most Muslim demonstrators were students, however, who were offended by a book that was published by the Chinese government, entitled *Sexual Custome*.<sup>65</sup> The book denigrated the Muslim religion because it implied that Muslims practiced homosexuality and sodomy.<sup>66</sup> The Muslims’ response to the book in 1989 led to many demonstrations, including by the three thousand protestors in Beijing on May 12, some twenty thousand already having marched in the capital of Gansu at the end of April.<sup>67</sup> Approximately ten thousand also demonstrated in the capital of Qinghai and in numerous other smaller protests in Urumqi, Shanghai, Inner Mongolia, Wuhan, and Yunnan.<sup>68</sup>

### **Democratization in Protestant and Catholic Countries**

Protestant countries developed rapidly in terms of their economies during the period of Western industrialization. The Protestant work ethic is thought to have contributed to the general well-being and economic advancement of these countries.<sup>69</sup> The Protestant countries were also the first to democratize. The founding fathers of the United States

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<sup>63</sup> Dru C. Gladney, *Muslim Chinese: Ethnic Nationalism in the People's Republic* (New York: Harvard University for Asia Center, 1996), 2.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> John Anderson, ed., *Religion, Democracy and Democratization* (New York: Routledge Press, 2006), 198.

promoted liberal democracy based on freedom of choice, temperance, and democratic accountability, all rooted in their Protestant beliefs.<sup>70</sup> In the case of New England, Protestant domination resulted in parliamentary democracy. The United States, United Kingdom, Holland, and Switzerland were Reformed Protestant countries that avoided authoritarian leaders and adopted democracy.<sup>71</sup> Protestant characteristics are solidly rooted in the promotion of individual rights and self-reliance.

Catholic countries also became democracies, but not until the 1970s, as they had a history of authoritarian leadership that was supported by the indigenous hierarchical Roman Catholic Church. The Second Vatican Ecumenical Council opened under Pope John XXIII in 1962 and ended under Pope Paul VI in 1965. (The First Vatican Council was adjourned in 1870, and never met again; five popes reigned before the Second Vatican Council was proclaimed by Pope John XXIII.) Pope John XXIII aimed to reform the Church from within. Following the Council in the 1970s, Pope John Paul II and the Holy See became more concerned with the struggle against authoritarianism and with the promotion of human rights.<sup>72</sup> John Paul II identified the Roman Catholic Church as the “guardian to freedom which is the condition and basis for the human person's true dignity.”<sup>73</sup> Major processes of democratization began in Catholic countries such as Poland, Brazil, the Philippines, Argentina, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Haiti, Chile, and Paraguay.<sup>74</sup> Poland, a dominantly Catholic country, overcame communism with the help of Pope John Paul II. With the assistance of Poland's Catholic Church, he

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 83.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.



organized opposition to the communist regime through the support of the Solidarnosc (Solidarity) movement.<sup>75</sup>

### **Lack of Unity and Determination**

But unlike Poland, or any other small country that became a democracy through the help of its Christian churches, China is a large nation consisting of many different religions and sects. Although there are large numbers of Protestants, Catholics, Muslims, Tibetan Buddhists, and other believers, there is no mass organization, such as Solidarity, to challenge the government, or to promote elections of new leaders. It seems that each individual religious group demonstrates for its own cause rather than for the common good of everyone. The Tibetan Buddhists protest for their own human and religious rights, the Falun Gong demonstrated for its official sanction and against false propaganda in the media, and the Muslims in Xinjiang are resentful of being portrayed as terrorists by government officials, while seeking greater autonomy. There is no mass organization in China, however, that aims to challenge the government's control of power. If a religious group develops rapidly and is well organized, the government quickly suppresses its members and imprisons its leaders.

If the people of China want to pursue freedom practices, they must do so under the government's rule, and there can be no political agenda. Because of the variety of people in China and the massive number of problems that face the country, there is a constant threat of social instability. This is so especially in regions with ethnic minorities, but also in rural areas where there is widespread poverty, as well as widespread

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<sup>75</sup>David Marquand and Ronald L. Nettle, *Religion and Democracy* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 2000), 90.

underground religious practice. The CCP controls religious movements, however, and even if Protestants or Catholics organized a demonstration to demand religious freedom, other citizens of China likely would not join it. Because China is not unified religiously and there are many religious groups pressing for their own separate causes, to date, religious organizations do not appear to be incubators of democracy. Moreover, many Chinese do not practice any religion, and are seemingly satisfied with the government.

Since the government distorts the concept of democracy, many citizens believe that, indeed, democracy exists in China. Many rights exist on paper, as shown in article 36 of the Constitution. But if the CCP believes that religionists are disruptive to society, and in many cases this is the government's claim, it simply jails them without a trial. In the eyes of most middle-class citizens who have jobs and apartments owed to China's economic growth, however, they see nothing wrong with the government of China. On the contrary, they are very satisfied with it because the CCP has provided an environment in which they can fulfill their personal wants and needs. Thus, there is no outrage expressed by China's influential middle class over religious persecution.

Although there have been international pressures on China to play a positive role in protecting human rights, the economic crisis of 2008-2009 has prioritized the agenda. During her March 2009 trip to China, Hillary Clinton announced that human rights matters would not be at the top of her planned discussions with Chinese officials.<sup>76</sup> As the United States is in the vanguard of promoting Western-style democracy, the Secretary of State should indeed retain human rights at the top of the American foreign policy agenda.

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<sup>76</sup> Matthew Lee, "Clinton in China Pushes Environment, Finance," *Yahoo News*, February 21, 2009, [http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090221/ap\\_on\\_re\\_as/as\\_clinton\\_china](http://news.yahoo.com/s/ap/20090221/ap_on_re_as/as_clinton_china) (accessed February 22, 2009).

However, as shown by administration policies since Richard Nixon and Mao Zedong's Shanghai Communiqué of 1972, Washington's policies toward China have never changed human rights practices in the PRC. Fixing the economic crisis will not help protect human rights, nor will it increase freedoms in the PRC. Instead, economy recovery will help China's central government officials to recruit more CCP members, expand China's military, and gain more control over religious and other groups that are perceived to pose a threat to the government.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Abusive Activities of the Chinese Government Abroad: How China's Foreign Relations Promote Dictatorship and Terrorism**

The Chinese government not only abuses human rights domestically, but also internationally. China has allied itself with third-world regimes, and does business with a number of them that are notorious for abuse of human rights. Its leaders claim that their activities in Africa and Latin America are purely economic and have no political dimension. In truth, China's interest in gaining access to oil reserves plays an important political role in countries such as Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela. As Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela are its main oil partners, China not only makes investments in these countries that abet dictatorship and terrorism, but also its foreign policy practices in these countries exacerbate violations of universal human and civil rights norms, to the vigorous objection of democratic developed nations. Groups in Darfur continue to suffer grave abuses of their human rights, and the evolved dictatorship in Venezuela has effectively abolished democracy. Thus, China confronted an awkward public-relations dilemma in the run-up to the August 2008 Olympics in Beijing, labeled the "Genocide Olympics" by some critics of China's leadership. China's refusal, in collaboration with Russia, to support United Nations Security Council sanctions against the military junta in Myanmar that cracked down on pro-democracy demonstrations in September 2007, further dulled its already tarnished international image, stemming from its activities in Sudan and Venezuela.

that the Sudanese government will be able to collect as much as \$30 billion in 2012, and much more if countries such as China continue to invest in the country's oil production.<sup>4</sup>

Since 2003, over two million people have died or become refugees in Darfur, and the killing still continues.<sup>5</sup>

In the case of Darfur, (PHR) Physicians for Human Rights Record has concluded that there is ample indication that an organized campaign on the part of the Government of Sudan is underway, targeting several million non-Arab Darfurian inhabitants for removal from this region of the country, either by death (most common through immediate violence or slow starvation) or forced migration. GoS forces allied with the Janjaweed militia, have caused intense disruption and destruction for non-Arab Darfurian holdings, communities, families, and all means of livelihood and necessities. By destroying, stealing or preventing the access to food, water and medicine, the GoS and the Janjaweed are creating conditions destined to destroy the non-Arab Darfurians.<sup>6</sup>

China's oil investment in Sudan is funding terrorism, and Chinese officials do not take into consideration human rights violated in Darfur. In the run-up to the 2008 Olympics, the Chinese government suggested that it would pressure the Sudanese government to moderate its actions, as international condemnation of Chinese policies in Sudan mounted. However, little progress has been noted in the region.

### *China's Thirst for Oil in Sudan*

China's rapid global development depends on greater access to more resources than it has domestically; with its large population and rapid economic expansion, China is in need of natural gas and oil. In the early 1990s, it was predicted that, by 2000, China might

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<sup>4</sup> Students Taking Action Now, "Genocide in Darfur: Actions on Companies Doing Business in Sudan."

<sup>5</sup> Goodman, "China and Sudan: Partners in Oil—and Warfare?"

<sup>6</sup> Leonard S. Rubenstein, "PHR Calls for Intervention to Save Lives in Sudan: Field Team Compiles Indicators of Genocide," *Physicians for Human Rights Record* 17, no. 1 (Summer 2004), [http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/about/record/pdf/summer04\\_record.pdf](http://physiciansforhumanrights.org/about/record/pdf/summer04_record.pdf) (accessed October 28, 2007).

experience a shortfall of about fifty million tons of crude oil, or about one-third of its oil needs.<sup>7</sup> On December 6, 1996, China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) gained the largest share, 40 percent, of Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company (GNPOC), which is the largest oil operation in Sudan.<sup>8</sup> In 1998, China Petroleum Engineering & Construction Cooperation (CPECC) participated in the construction of a pipeline, which was the largest Chinese project abroad.<sup>9</sup> “CNPC had received revenue of more than U.S. \$600 million from the GNPOC concession since exports began in September 1999, and Sudan accounted for two-thirds of CNPC’s overseas production in 2000. CNPC’s dependence on Sudanese crude oil continued to expand, importing 2.69 million tons from Sudan in January to June 2001, up 38 percent from the year before.”<sup>10</sup> According to the *Washington Post*, in 2004, Sudan’s oil reserves were 563 million barrels, double what they had been in 2001.<sup>11</sup> In 2007, it was estimated that China was buying two-thirds of Sudan’s oil.<sup>12</sup> Despite the genocide in Darfur, energy-hungry China continues to invest in Sudan’s oil, blatantly ignoring human rights abuses by the Sudanese government.

### **China’s Activities in Venezuela**

China also invests in Venezuela, which has a very poor record on human rights. Agreements between Venezuela and China involve construction of railroads and the improvement of communications in Venezuela through the purchase of satellite

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<sup>7</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China’s Involvement in Sudan: Arms and Oil,” <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sudan1103/26.htm> (accessed October 25, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Ashlid Kolas, “China in African Oil: Guilty as Charged?” *Economists for Peace and Security*, <http://www.epsusa.org/publications/newsletter/june2007/kolas.htm> (accessed October 13, 2007).

<sup>9</sup> Human Rights Watch, “China’s Involvement in Sudan: Arms and Oil.”

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Peter S. Goodman, “China Invests Heavily in Sudan’s Oil Industry: Beijing Supplies Arms Used on Villagers,” *Washington Post*, December 2004, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21143-2004Dec22\\_2.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A21143-2004Dec22_2.html) (accessed October 11, 2007).

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

capability from China. In 2005, Chinese Vice President Zeng Qinghong visited Venezuela. Both countries signed a long-term agreement, securing China's stake in Venezuela's oil and gas fields. The Chinese invested U.S. \$350 billion in fifteen oil fields in Eastern Venezuela.<sup>13</sup> In March 2007, Venezuela and China signed an agreement permitting China to export from Venezuela 500,000 barrels of oil per day. In September 2007, the Petroleos de Venezuela (PDVSA) and CNPC signed a petition to form a joint venture company. Venezuela will own 60 percent of the oil, and China will control 40 percent.<sup>14</sup> During the economic downturn of 2008-2009, China has been cutting deals around the globe for gas and oil. In January 2009, China sold Venezuela a \$400 million satellite, eighteen military jet aircraft, and a radar defense system.<sup>15</sup> In return, China buys a per-diem average of 338,000 barrels of oil from Venezuela, and it is speculated that it will import 1 million barrels a day by 2010.<sup>16</sup> In February 2009, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping signed an agreement increasing the fund from \$ 4 billion to \$12 billion for oil development.<sup>17</sup>

#### *Friendly Relations between China and Venezuela*

Venezuela's and China's support for each other also became visible when Venezuela "voted for China's no action motion against the anti-China proposals put forward by the

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<sup>13</sup> Daniel Erikson, "Cuba, China, Venezuela: New Developments," *Latin American Network*, <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/asce/pdfs/volumel5/pdfs/erikson.pdf> (accessed October 29, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> "Venezuelan PDVSA, Chinese CPNC Sign \$10 Bln Petroleum Deal," *Latin America News Digest*, <http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/chinainstitute/nav03.cfm?nav03=65303&nav02=58460&nav01=57272> (accessed October 24, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> Chris Kraul, "Venezuela Deepens Trade, Military Ties with China," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 2009, <http://articles.latimes.com/2009/jan/12/world/fg-venezuela-china12> (accessed March 31, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Eric Watkins, "China, Venezuela Bolster 'Strategic Funds' for Development," *Oil & Gas Journal*, February 20, 2009, [http://www.ogj.com/display\\_article/353984/120/ARTCL/none/ExplD/1/China,-Venezuela-bolster-\(accessed March 31, 2009\)](http://www.ogj.com/display_article/353984/120/ARTCL/none/ExplD/1/China,-Venezuela-bolster-(accessed March 31, 2009)).

United States, at the 55<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, and 57<sup>th</sup> sessions of the UN Human Rights Committee (HRC).”<sup>18</sup> Russia, along with Sudan and other underdeveloped countries characterized by extensive human rights violations, faithfully voted in favor of China. The United States, Canada, Japan, and almost all European countries voted against China. The proposal by the United States at the UN General Assembly against China’s Human Rights violations failed. China’s foreign investments in, and strong ties to, Venezuela and the China-influenced African bloc has helped Venezuela to prevail in its human rights violations. During the 55<sup>th</sup>, 56<sup>th</sup>, and the 57<sup>th</sup> Human Rights sessions, Venezuela strongly supported China’s entrance into the World Trade Organization in 2001.<sup>19</sup> Since China’s economy had been rapidly growing, it was in President Chavez’s interest to support his ally.

### *Military Supply*

In 2006, President Bush banned sales of weapons to Venezuela. Hugo Chavez responded by saying, “It doesn’t matter to us. It doesn’t matter at all.”<sup>20</sup> It really does not matter, because China has been selling weapons to Venezuela. In 2005, China signed a contract with the Venezuelan government to supply three JVL-1-type radar systems.<sup>21</sup> The contract also included the provision of a complete command and control system, spare parts, training, technical assistance, and the lease of a communication satellite, all for the

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<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, “Venezuela,” <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wj/zjg/lmzs/gjlb/3538/default.htm> (accessed October 15, 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> “US Bans Weapons Sales to Venezuela,” *MSNBC*, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12801930/> (accessed October 13, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Loro Horta, “China on the March in Latin America,” *Asian Times Online*, <http://www.atimes.com/atimes/China/IF28Ad01.html> (accessed October 28, 2007).



modest price of U.S. \$150 million.<sup>22</sup> On February 17, 2009, Hugo Chavez was “re-elected” as the President of Venezuela. “The victory came about because of Chavez’s gross misuse of government funds, government workers and federal facilities for the campaign, and neighborhood enforcers to ‘persuade’ voters to support him.”<sup>23</sup> Chavez imposed a referendum, in which he eliminated term limits for the president’s term, and he plans to stay in power until 2049.<sup>24</sup> Since Chavez controls Venezuela’s Congress, the Supreme Court, and the National Electoral Council, which supervises elections, he was able to manipulate the elections so that the people voted in his favor.<sup>25</sup>

### **China and Iran**

China’s relationship with Iran also poses a threat to democratic free nations. The strong partnership in crude oil between China and Iran threatens the ability of the United States and its allies to pressure Iran on its nuclear program. China imported more than 40 percent of Iran’s crude oil in 2004. With China’s growing population and economic development, it is aggressively trying to secure its future oil supply. Consistent with its claims in Sudan, China maintains that its ties with Iran are purely economic, and have no political implications. In 2004, Chinese officials began their effort to build oil fields in Iran, which would allow them to export oil directly to China.<sup>26</sup> Also, they signed a

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Hugo Chavez’s Staying in Power,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 2009, <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/editorials/la-ed-venezuelal7-2009feb17,07705825.story> (accessed March 31, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Peter S. Goodman, “China Rushes Toward Oil Pact with Iran,” *Washington Post*, February 18, 2006, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/17/AR2006021702146.html> (accessed February 7, 2009).

contract with Iran to buy 250 million tons of natural gas over the next thirty years.<sup>27</sup> By signing this contract, Iran became obligated to export 150,000 barrels of crude oil per day over the term of the contract.<sup>28</sup> Records show that China imported 225 million barrels of crude oil in 2003, 13 percent of it from Iran alone.<sup>29</sup> From 2006 to 2007, China's imports of Iranian crude oil rose by 14 percent.<sup>30</sup> In March 2009, China invested U.S.\$ 3.2 billion in Iran's two gas production lines, which will produce about U.S. \$10.5 million annually in natural gas.<sup>31</sup> The close relationship between China and Iran worries the United States and other democratic countries in the United Nations Security Council. China's oil relationship with Iran led to the Chinese delegation's veto of UN Security Council Resolution 1737 to impose sanctions on Iran to pressure it to end its nuclear program.<sup>32</sup> Resolution 1737 was proposed on July 31, 2006, and called for Iranian "suspension of suspect activities."<sup>33</sup>

China's supply of advanced military capability to Iran concerns Western nations. After the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, the United States government took action to fight the Taliban in Afghanistan and other radical Islamists in the Middle-East region. Since Iran borders Iraq and Afghanistan, Sino-Iranian relations are relevant to the outcome of the wars in the region. China's cooperation is needed to fight terrorism. By

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<sup>27</sup> "China to Develop Iran Oil Field," *BBC News*, November 1, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3970855.stm> (accessed February 15, 2009).

<sup>28</sup> "China, Iran Sign Biggest Oil & Gas Deal," *China Daily*, October 31, 2004, [http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-10/31/content\\_387140.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2004-10/31/content_387140.htm) (accessed March 30, 2009).

<sup>29</sup> "China to Develop Iran Oil Field," *BBC News*, November 1, 2004, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/3970855.stm> (accessed February 15, 2009).

<sup>30</sup> Martin Walker, "Iran's Oil Weapon," *Space Daily*, June 13, 2007, [http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Iran\\_Oil\\_Weapon\\_999.html](http://www.spacedaily.com/reports/Iran_Oil_Weapon_999.html) (accessed February 17, 2009).

<sup>31</sup> Lionel Laurent, "Sanctions Keep Lid on Iran-China Deal," *Forbes*, March 16, 2009, <http://www.forbes.com/2009/03/16/iran-china-gazprom-markets-equity-gas.html> (accessed April 2, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> United Nations, "Security Council," <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2006/sc8928.doc.htm> (accessed April 4, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

supplying Iran with military material, China is supporting the Taliban, as these weapons are turning up in the hands of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup>

Despite numerous appeals, the United States charges that China continues to supply weaponry to Iran. Weapons of mass destruction, including missile programs from China, end up in Pakistan and Afghanistan, now the world's chief area of terrorist activity. After the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, the United States government imposed sixty sanctions on China for its proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and missile sales to Iran. In 2004, China pledged that it would not export any weapons to a country that did not honor the safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.<sup>35</sup> In September 2007, ten tons of Chinese weaponry were discovered in Herat, one of the Afghanistan's provinces.<sup>36</sup> The United States continues to be concerned about China's supplying Iran with lethal military capability, despite many sanctions, bans, and warnings.

### **Sponsoring Dictatorship and Terrorism**

The genocide in Darfur continues, meanwhile, the Chinese government writes off Sudan's debt and gives more aid to the country, which is not used to promote peace but to supply the government in Khartoum with more military capability. China plays no positive role in Darfur. It does not want to acknowledge responsibility for sponsoring acts of dictatorship and terrorism, whether in Sudan or Venezuela. There is a very close correlation among China's support for the governments of Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela.

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<sup>34</sup> Ron Synovitz, "Afghanistan: U.S. Worried Iran Sending Chinese Weapons to Taliban," *Radio Free Europe*, September 14, 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2007/09/817530bc-0297-4034-8826-ac7fff6331bf.html> (accessed February 28, 2009).

<sup>35</sup>"U.S. Catches China Transferring WMD Tech to Iran," *World Tribune*, March 15, 2005, <http://www.worldtribune.com/worldtribune/05/breaking2453445.0395833333.html> (accessed February 5, 2009).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

The governments are China's leading partners in oil investment. The Bush Administration banned oil investments in Sudan, stopped military sales to Venezuela, and placed sanctions on Iran for its development of nuclear warfare capability. These governments engage in torture and disregard the value of human life. China sides with Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela, ignoring any negative image this partiality creates among democratic nations. The disapproval of the United States and other Western countries does not effectively influence China's foreign policy. Events such as the Tiananmen massacre and the crackdown in Tibet in 2008 and in 2009 remind us that the Chinese government does not have high regard for human and civil rights within its own country, so, therefore, there is little reason to expect that it will care about abuse of them elsewhere.

## Conclusion

There have been many theories about whether China will democratize or remain an authoritarian regime. The most popular speculation as to why China might modernize concerns the pressures on the government for political liberalization brought to bear by a rising educated middle class. Because large numbers of Chinese students since the 1980s have traveled to the United States and other Western democracies, many scholars and politicians have speculated that these students would return to China with Western ideas, and create a mass movement to somehow rid the nation of its authoritarian government. In this thesis, however, such expectation has been shown to lack merit. The educated middle class in China has little understanding of Western-style democracy, and it has not been broadly exposed to Western literature and philosophical thought. Under communist leadership, students have not been taught the fundamental abstract concepts of Western-style democracy. The student protests in the 1980s used slogans of democracy and freedom, but the demonstrators' true focus was fulfillment of their individual needs, including jobs, housing, and other benefits from the CCP-led government. They did not promote human rights in Tibet or elsewhere in China, nor did they mention unfair taxation of China's peasants. They did complain about government corruption, interpreted in part as the officials' not planning to place students in positions that they thought they deserved. The students were terrified and outraged that the government did not respond to their needs. In their demonstrations, they did not cry out for democracy; rather, they demanded better lives for themselves. In fact, at the beginning of the 1989 protests, the students did not want the workers to join their demonstrations because they felt that the elite class (of which they considered themselves a part) should demand their

own individual rights. Not until later, did the students invite the workers' support in order to create a bigger mass to pressure the government to respond. The Chinese government viewed the demonstrators as undermining its power, and the students did not anticipate the severe consequences.

Since the Tiananmen Square crackdown, the government has continued to suppress peasant, worker, religious, and other demonstrations. The CCP keeps tight control of religious groups, monitoring places of worship and the growing memberships of religious organizations. Any religious group that attempts to worship freely beyond government control is quickly suppressed by party officials. The Chinese government has been particularly harsh on Tibetan Buddhists, Muslim minorities, underground Christians, and Falun Gong.

The Tiananmen Square crackdown and constant persecution of religious groups have created an unfavorable international image for China. But despite pressures from Western democratic countries on the Chinese government to embrace political liberalization, it continues to violate the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which it is suppose to honor.

Throughout its history, China has remained a repressive and undemocratic country. Owed to its building economic and military power, China now poses a potential threat to democratic countries around the world. Its political repression, religious persecution, proliferation of nuclear technology and weapons of mass destruction, and unfair trade practices make it difficult for the Chinese government to legitimately defend its actions and persuade other countries that it is moving toward democracy. Despite the rise of

China's educated middle class, there has been no fundamental change within the CCP government to take steps toward power sharing. The Chinese government continues to resist political liberalization, and its top priority is to prevent any weakening of the party. It could "continue cautious political reforms that will enhance the state's ability to manage the challenges created by China's rapid economic development,"<sup>1</sup> but such political reforms are apt to be cosmetic and unlikely to lead to power sharing or to a Western notion of democracy.

Since the 1978 reform efforts of Deng Xiaoping, China has developed economically and militarily, but has remained a Leninist state politically. The Chinese government ignores international pressures for political reform, and despite many scholars having speculated that the rising educated middle class—exposed to Western ideas—would prompt liberal political changes and perhaps even a desire among influential people to challenge the government, the middle class still lacks a fundamental appreciation of Western-style democracy. Ongoing demonstrations and riots reveal that there is tenuous political stability in the country, which political liberalization could help to abate. China's approach to human and civil rights goes back to Confucian ethical norms, in which individualism and self-fulfillment were discouraged. On the contrary, Confucianism promoted dependence, preservation of the status quo, and state control, which fostered authoritarianism, and, thus, common ground with China's four generations of communist leadership.

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<sup>1</sup> Pei, "Is China Democratizing?: Ignorance and Reality."

China consistently violates many provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. For years, the Chinese government has claimed that, under the Chinese Constitution, every citizen has freedom of religious belief, and thus the ability to worship in one's own religion. In truth, China has repressed any religious that group has appeared organized outside government control or that has been perceived to have the potential to be a counter-witness against the government. The loopholes deliberately embedded in China's Constitution, such as those in article 36 on freedom of religious belief, tell us that state officials distort Western democratic understandings and the norms embraced by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in order to secure the option to suppress China's citizens.

The Chinese government represents to its citizens that China is sharing in the democratic experience. Yet, village elections that are supposed to be a manifestation of China's movement toward political liberalization are controlled by the government, and voters' political attitudes are not permitted to counter the policies and practices of state officials. The government controls the media, and the foreign press is not permitted to report about major protests and government crackdowns, such as those in Tiananmen Square in 1989, and in Tibet in March 2008 and March 2009. In 1989, the government cut satellite links to prevent events from being covered internationally, and in March 2009, foreign reporters were banned from much of Tibet so that the realities about the undeclared martial law that had been imposed would not be revealed.

In light of continued state repression, the critical question to answer is whether the middle class will demand democracy in China in the near future. The likelihood is that it will not. There is no sense of unity between the middle classes and lower classes of



China, and the middle class is concerned with its own priorities rather than with the needs of the whole country. The Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 support this hypothesis. In the eyes of people in the international arena, the educated middle-class students who protested in Beijing in 1989, had open minds to Western ideas and protested for democracy. In reality, these students, not exposed to Western philosophical works, had little understanding of what democracy really is. They used slogans of democracy and freedom, but did the students really want democracy, or were they worried foremost about their personal needs?

The 1978 reforms of Deng Xiaoping's second generation of CCP leadership led to rapid economic growth and job competition among the educated middle class. Uncertain about their futures, the students came from their Lawn Salons into the streets. Yet, they had little inclination to draw workers into their movement because they wanted the government's attention to be centered on their particular needs and demands. Only when the government did not respond to the students, did they encourage the workers to support them. The educated middle class benefits from decent jobs, satisfactory income, and the benefits of being a CCP member, advantages that are absent among China's lower classes. Consequently, members of the middle class are unlikely to oppose the government as long as they are satisfied with their standard of living.

Due to the economic crisis of 2008-2009, many middle-class employees have lost their jobs, and some twenty million migrant workers have become unemployed owed to factory closings, forcing many to return to their rural villages. The government fears that there might be a large demonstration, such as the one in Tiananmen Square in 1989, this time organized by laborers and members of the middle class, protesting against

government corruption and demanding protection of their wages. Just like other demonstrations, new protests owed to the economic decline most likely would not call for fundamental changes within the Chinese government, however. Once again, protesters would be apt to call for the fulfillment of their individual needs, and not for the realization of abstract principles of democracy.

The demonstrations of the 1980s did not reflect unity among the Chinese people in a call for radical political change. The protests of 1985 and 1986 were raised in response to the uncertainties of changing times, more than they were an expression of anti-government sentiments. The dismantling of communes, the neglect of millions of students sent to countryside and left there, the tensions between the one-child policy and the household responsibility system which placed an emphasis on family-based power, the looming end to the “iron rice bowl,” spreading corruption, criticism of the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), and reduction in the size of the CCP and China’s military contributed to the unrest among people who did not view Deng’s modernizations favorably. The doubt and insecurities of the protesters in the 1980s led them to seek assurances from their government. Likewise, the demonstrations of 1989 were an outgrowth of great social strains. Inflation had reached some 26 percent by the end of 1988, leading to panic buying and hoarding, as people confronted a decline in their living standards. Peasants who were forced to sell their grain quota to the government at low procurement prices became embittered as the government paid them in promissory notes that could not be used to purchase food or fuel. Strikes erupted as workers were laid off or their wage payments fell behind. And, educated youth came to realize that they had no lucrative jobs on the horizon and that they lacked the contacts, or *guanxi*, that customarily

provided them. Frustrated and displeased with their circumstances, students took to the streets. When top-level government officials did not respond to their appeals, the students felt abandoned. They saw themselves as an elite group entitled to a better life, and as having gained little from Deng's reforms. Cab drivers and uneducated entrepreneurs, they bitterly noted, were earning more than university graduates. The students raised symbols and used slogans of democracy at Tiananmen Square, but in truth wanted financial security and the prestige to which they thought they were entitled.

The middle class might protest again if the government is perceived as not providing a secure economic future. However, the lesson that the students learned during the Tiananmen crackdown was not to underestimate the brutal determination of their government. Chinese authorities will do whatever they believe is necessary to protect their regime, including making key decisions, as occurred in 1989, that contravene even the CCP's constitution. They are fearful of yielding to any demand, as this might weaken their monopoly on power. Concern for human rights, either domestically or abroad, does not play a role in shaping policy, and international image is not a factor when it comes to protecting existing central authority.

Although China is marked by many injustices, the middle class is unlikely to seek a new political system, because its members are comfortable with what the government presently offers. It is not disposed to have interest in replacing the existing leadership, unless, perhaps, its needs are not met. Furthermore, the brutality of the Tiananmen Square crackdown and the March 2008 and March 2009 crackdowns in Tibet reminds the citizens of China that it is extremely difficult to oppose the Chinese government. Lessons learned by citizens in the past created public awareness that the government will quickly

suppress movements that could threaten it, leaving China hopeless regarding fundamental change in the regime.

It has been twenty years since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, and to continue their justification of suppression, officials claim that crackdowns and other elements of state control are essential to preserving social stability, which, in turn, is essential to economic growth. This logic permits suppression of labor rights activists, religious protestors, and demonstrations among peasants.

Not much has changed in China's political system since the 1989 massacre. The CCP still represses individuals who call for fulfillment of their human rights and civil liberties, and the Chinese government continues to disregard human rights abroad, by supporting repressive dictatorships in countries including Myanmar, Sudan, Iran, and Venezuela. Having the third largest economy in the world, and a rapidly building military, an increasing number of observers are concerned that China will pose a threat to other countries, especially in East Asia, as it reaches superpower status under a Leninist-style authoritarian regime. Siding with the dictatorial regimes in Sudan, Iran, Venezuela, and elsewhere, China supplies these ally countries with military weapons, technology, and resources that harm innocent civilians, such as those who have died in Darfur. In many ways, China's relationships with unsavory regimes erode peace efforts in war-torn regions, including, among other places, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.

There is no evidence that China's integration into globalization will lead to China's democratization. It has been over ten years since the last country in East Asia, Indonesia, transitioned into democracy. Authoritarianism in East Asia runs deeply. It is

estimated that China's middle class will reach 40 percent of China's population by 2020, meaning that the Chinese government must be on guard to keep this elite class prosperous and satisfied. Yet, the unwritten bargain that the government made with urban elite in 1989 is not likely to change: the educated class of China can pursue accumulation of wealth, as long as it remains remote from politics. Meanwhile, poor labor conditions, very low wages, and unfavorable conditions for human rights are likely to continue, as they contribute to China's global economic competitiveness. Without the unity of the Chinese people or their desire to demonstrate and demand fundamental change within the government, there will be no movement toward democracy. And, without democracy, there will be serious limitations to human rights and civil liberties in China for the long-term future. Chinese citizens would have to gain an appreciation for abstract principles of democracy, before China could move toward democratization. But to realize what a true Western-style democracy is, would not be sufficient; the Chinese also would have to desire it. To date, there is no significant aspiration or momentum for democratic political change in China among its vast Han majority.

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