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Democracy in China Since Tiananmen: Elite Choice in Historical Context

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DEMOCRACY IN CHINA SINCE TIANANMEN: ELITE CHOICE IN HISTORICAL
CONTEXT

A Thesis

by

AGUSTIN CLAYTON MIRANDA

Submitted to Texas A&M International University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

August 2021

Major Subjects: History and Political Science

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Approved as to style and content by:

Co-Chairs of Committee,	Jack C. Byham
	Abigail Meert
Committee Members,	Andrew J. Hazelton
	Nilda Garcia
Head of Department,	Jonathan W. Murphy

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ABSTRACT

Democracy in China Since Tiananmen: Elite Choice in Historical Context (August 2021)

Agustin Clayton Miranda, B.A., University of Texas at Austin;

Co-Chairs of Committee: Dr. Jack C. Byham
Dr. Abigail Meert

Why has the modern Peoples Republic of China not democratized? Since the late 20th century, scholarly consensus has acknowledged a process of waves of democratization occurring globally since the early 19th century, and yet the People's Republic of China (PRC) has remained mostly unmoved and aloof to these changes. This work seeks to understand why the PRC has not democratized since the opening-up of the nation and its markets under Deng Xiaoping after Mao.

To answer these questions on democratic resistance the work highlights the evolving logic of the PRC's system and its leadership since the 1980s. As I argue, the central focus on stability within the PRC provides insight into Chinese resistance to democracy. To do this the work applies theories of democratization to three important historical moments related to Beijing's treatment of Hong Kong, a once democratic enclave within the nation and its relationship to the driving leadership of each era. What is shown is that the modern PRC's refusal of democratization revolves around two central factors: the decisions of Chinese elites, who have increasingly sought authoritative control in the name of stability, and the popular indifference of ordinary Chinese citizens, for whom access to political discourse is severely limited and recent economic prosperity has by and large quieted the demand and discussion of Western politics.

The findings suggest that the PRC is now less likely than it has been in decades to democratize, and that the nation has seen the rise of authoritarian and centralized control steadily increasing under Xi Jinping to levels that have not been seen since the Maoist era.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Why has the modern Peoples Republic of China not democratized? Since the late 20th century scholarly consensus describes a process of democratization that has occurred globally in three waves. The first wave lasted from 1826 to 1926 within Europe and the United states with the “expansion of suffrage.” The second, from 1943 to 1962, after “allied occupation in World War II, British colonial independence, and within Latin America.” And the third, from 1974 to 1999, with worldwide democratization that caused “the number of electoral democracies to grow from roughly one-fourth to nearly two-thirds of all countries.” Yet, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) remains mostly unmoved and aloof to these changes.¹

How are we to interpret this resistance? Have the Chinese discovered shortcomings of democratic systems, or is there something “wrong” with China? Francis Fukuyama elegantly argued in 1992 that the world wars and subsequent Cold War forced Europeans to “question the universality of their own ideals,” and that “clearest manifestations of this pessimism was the almost universal belief in the permanence of a vigorous, communist-totalitarian alternative to Western liberal democracy.” While the idea on the permanence of communism eroded after the Soviet Collapse the questioning of the universality of European ideal of liberal democracy has remained. Though Fukuyama did briefly acknowledge the argument that “where communist totalitarianism fails to survive, it will simply be replaced by nationalist authoritarianism.” He specifically argued within the case of China, that the country “lacks internal legitimacy for a broad sector of its own elite...is not guided by a coherent ideology,” and that it “will no longer serve as a model for revolutionaries around the world, as it once did under Mao, all the more so

¹ Kauffman, Craig M. “Democratization,” 2018. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/democratization>, 1-2.

when it is compared to the fast-growing capitalist states of the region.” Further, he argued that “China has become just another Asian authoritarian state,” and alluded that it will likely follow in suit of the other authoritarian states of the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe as “eventually having to confront the fact that they have no long-term source of legitimacy, and no good formula for solving the long-term economic and political problems they will face.” Yet, even with Fukuyama’s deep understanding of China’s history, transitions in political ideology, and unique aspects of the country’s authoritative nature within 1992, the nation’s future so far has eluded this prediction. This is because three decades later and not only has China continued to refuse to democratize, but it has become an economic global driving force with the second highest GDP of any country, falling behind only the United States.

What happened in these three decades, and what can they tell us about democracy and the modern Chinese system?² While as a Western myself I am naturally inclined to a bias in favor of democracy, I argue that in our repulsion and blatant dismissal of that which is not democratic we have failed to ask the larger question. What are we truly asking of China when we ask why they have not democratized? Where it is easy to simply assume China is not democratic because the current powers at be refuse democracy, I argue that is form of dismissal. It is dismissal because it silently reinstates the supposed supremacy of democracy without even the acknowledgement of the diverse situations or systems outside its own, chalking up the entire argument to “it’s because the other system is corrupt or inept.” As I alluded prior, I am an advocate of democracy, but I believe this form of dismissive thinking does far more harm than good.

² Fukuyama, Francis. *The End of History and the Last Man*. (London: Penguin, 1992), 7-8,34,36-37.

The intent of this work is neither to demonize political systems nor advocate anti-democratic regimes and rhetoric, but to reveal why the PRC has not democratized. I believe this can be explained using theories of democratization drawn from the field of political science; these theories shed light on CCP's evolving goal-oriented emphasis on stability of the nation and the party since the 1980s. To illustrate and explain China's resistance to democracy I focus on three historical moments related to the treatment of Hong Kong, a once democratic enclave within the nation, and its relationship to the driving leadership of each era. Hong Kong, a region of stark political dispute long prior to its hand over in 1997, showcases the shift in strategic Chinese political actions. I specifically denote "actions" for two primary reasons. First, I argue that rhetoric, especially within the case of governing political bodies, is not as direct or foretelling of the reality of the situation. Hence, for the sake of this work what matters more is not what a government or institutional body says, but rather what it does.³ Second, by looking at the actions taken across three central historical moments since the 1980s this work will show the reality of the CCP's decision making process and, in particular, that of elites within the party on not only the democratization within the PRC but their process when given control over an already democratic enclave. Thus, in order to identify the democratic trends within these historical moments this work will turn to democratization theory in search of a general framework. The intent of this work is to highlight the evolving logic of the PRC's system and its leadership over the decades through its central focus on stability; as I argue that this evolving understanding of stability within the PRC will provide insight into their resistance of democracy.

³ This can be commonly understood as the De Facto and De Jure conceptions in law; there is a difference between what happens in reality versus and what is recognized in law irrespective of reality. As it is with law, so it is with rhetoric.

CHAPTER II: THEORIES OF DEMOCRATIZATION

First and foremost, before this work is to address democratization theory, I believe it is important to define what I mean by democracy. Though contrived within many forms, for the sake of this work democracy will be consigned to Joseph A. Schumpeter's definition as an "institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions which realizes the common good by making the people itself decide issues through the elections of individual who are to assemble in order to carry out its will."⁴ The intent of this definition is to establish it as a "safe" middle-ground amongst the endless discourse of the subject, as it is not the objective of this work to add to that intricate discussion.⁵

Theories of democratization fall into a wide range of broad categories. These theories seek to cover aspects like "modes of democratic transitions," "defining democratic consolidation," explain means of the democratization process itself, and more.⁶ One category for example, as mentioned prior, is that it is commonly understood within the research that democratization and its reverse has occurred globally and in waves. These waves, beginning with the first wave from 1826 to 1926 until the most recent beginning in 1974, have commonly been through parts of countries or regions either becoming democratic, authoritarian, or most recently a hybrid of the two. Additionally, research has been apt to acknowledge there is "no consensus on where to mark the beginning and end points of the democratization process," or that it is to be expected that regimes on an individual level are in themselves unique, in that internal

⁴ Schumpeter, Joseph A. *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy*. (London and New York, Routledge, 2003), 250.

⁵ Additionally, I believe it is apt to readily acknowledge early on that this work will not, nor does it have the intent to, attempt settle or dispute the broad debate between the legitimacy of democracy over any other forms of government; particularly within this case socialism with Chinese characteristics. As I have already established, though I am an advocate of democracy.

⁶ (Kauffman, 2018, 2-6.)

relationships of structures, cultures, people, etc. will differently influence every regime. Thus, as each regime and their influences are unique there is a myriad of literature on regional, cultural, and structural explanations when it comes to the democratization process.⁷

There are however, select trends within these regimes that democratization theory has acknowledged that have helped to guide the scholarship. For example, there are two main approaches of the democratization process itself, “one that emphasizes favorable structural conditions and another that stresses elite choice.” While these two approaches do not necessarily neatly categorize the regime structures themselves, rather instead helping to highlight the most significant influencers over democratization within, they are still important. For example elite choice, which is the more direct process of the two, emphasizes the importance of political elites of regimes and the central influence within their decisions for democratization; in general, research shows that elite choose democratization when it best suits them. Structural conditions on the other hand are more nuanced. This explanatory framework is nuanced because it emphasizes the importance of internal and external aspects of regimes, like economic development, political culture, civil society, institutions, and more. The differences of these two processes – elite choice and structural conditions - does not mean that they are mutually exclusive; elites and economic development can play significant parts within the same regime. Further, though these processes are used as general guidance to focus on the most important influencers within regimes, it is also important to acknowledge that the regimes themselves, like all organizations, are not static. They are not static in that they are also influenced and changed by the stimulus around them, and thus it is not impossible but rather more likely that central

⁷ (Kauffman, 2018, 1-2.)

influencers within a regime, be they elite based, institution based, or any other, shift throughout time.⁸

Elite choice and structural conditions however are not the only means of categorization within democratization theory. As while they are both important tools within the scholarship they will not be the only democratic trends used within this work. For example, within a separate branch of the scholarship, it is general accepted means of categorization to label authoritarian regimes as “military regime,” “hegemonic party or single-party regime,” and “personalistic regime.”⁹ Each of these categorizations are fairly straight forward, military regime headed by a professional military, single party being led by an unopposed central state party, and personalistic lead by a central key leader. While each of these categorizations similar in being authoritative regimes, each are in fact unique in the democratization trends. For example, while military regimes might be considered fragile within the realm of resisting “poor economic performance,” that is not the case for single party regimes who are argued to be much more “robust.”¹⁰ Quite important however, is the acknowledgement that even within these straightforward categorizations scholarship acknowledges that there can be “amalgams of the pure types.”¹¹ Hence, just like elite choice and structural conditions, there can mixed and matched combinations of even the three primary types, - military, hegemonic, and single party- as well as mixed and matched types that shift over time throughout the life of the regime.

For the sake of this work, as democratization theory offers a broad range of explanatory framework when viewing these regimes, I intend to attribute elements within the theory that I

⁸ (Kauffman, 2018, 6-7, 8-13.)

⁹ Geddes, Barbara. “What Do We Know About Democratization After Twenty Years?” *Annual Review of Political Science* 2, no. 1 (1999), 121.

¹⁰ (Ibid, 135.)

¹¹ (Ibid, 121.)

argue are best fit to understanding the unique makeup and historical shifts of the PRC since the 1980s. As I argue that applying these selective elements within democratization theory three key points revolving around the populace, economy, and regime type will show themselves to be the significant reasons why the PRC has not democratized.

Before this work can cover democratic trends at play within the PRC however, it is important to understand that nominally China does have democratic institutions and a democratic populace. They are however severely limited as the Chinese populace's roles and the actual impact of the institutions can often be misleading. More specifically, any democratic institution within the PRC, beyond the lower provincial levels, is merely rhetoric and has no substantial impact to the actions taken by the party. For example, since the electoral changes established in the late 1970s democratic processes have been nominally established within the PRC system. I state nominally as the democratic processes are comprised of direct elections only within smaller provinces, however even these are limited as though they are open elections local party influence and election committees often gate keep the process. Though this has been a target of anti-corruption legislation by Beijing, as they intend for these elections to lesson corruption and state interference on provincial lower levels, interference remains.

At a higher, state level, however, the closest system to democracy within the PRC would be that of the National People's Congress or (NPC). This body could most closely be understood as akin to that of a "representative democracy" as its membership is comprised of officials and part-time legislators from all over the PRC; each member representing for the nation's different political bodies.¹² It is important to note, however, the stark distinctions between this

¹² Pu, Xingzu. 2005. "Democratization of the National People's Congress as the focal point for the continued advancement of China democratic development." In *Democracy and the Rule of Law in China*, edited by Yu Keping. (Leiden: Brill Press, 2010), 135.

arrangement and what we would call Western representative democracy. First, its membership is more than 2/3 comprised directly of the Communist Party with the other political bodies swearing subservience under their leadership, hence voting dispute in legislation is generally unheard-of. Second, membership is based on an internal tier-based election system decided by electorates from their regions, with each region varying widely on its means of electorate voting. Third, though the committee is further subdivided into the top membership under National People's Congress Standing Committee (NPCSC) and has the constitutional backing to act over the government in all forms of policy or ruling, the de-facto reality is that it is often equated to that of a "rubber stamp" committee.¹³ It is equated as a rubber stamp committee in the sense that it functions as the de-jure means through which top officials and leadership of the Chinese Communist Party or CCP to pass their larger legislation.¹⁴ Further, this fact is compounded by the committee's size of 2,270 members who only converge once every five years, hence "rarely, if at all, is anything of consequence seriously debated."¹⁵ As a result, though the NPC has the legal authority to pass laws and make constitutional amendments, in fact it could never do so without direct authorization or approval from CCP leadership.

Though that is not to say the NPC should be ignored, as scholarship readily acknowledges that it severs a "symbolic function" of providing "a display of power and unity," both internally and externally, as well as "milestones in the party's history."¹⁶ This is in combination with the fact that the NPC constitutionally serves as the closest basis for the representation of the general Chinese populace within Beijing, hence an avenue some scholars

¹³ White, Lynn. "Chinese Constitutional Currents." *Modern China* 36, no. 1 (2010), 103.

¹⁴ Occasionally also referred to as the Communist Party of China or CPC interchangeably outside of this work.

¹⁵ Saich, Anthony. *The Governance and Politics of China*, Fourth Edition. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 90.

¹⁶ (Ibid.)

point to being the PRC's largest possibility of democratization.¹⁷ Beyond the NPC's future possibilities however, within modernity it is safe to say it is a façade of broad public representation within the government. It is important therefore to acknowledge that the average Chinese individual does not have means of institutional representation within the PRC.

Outside of further discussion of the institutions themselves, it is also imperative to turn to the perceptions of the nominally democratic Chinese populace on politics. Rather, due to the minimal representation of the Chinese populace these institutions constitute the average Chinese person generally understands that the power is within the party and simply chose to stay apolitical. Unlike Western democracies public discussion on politics within the PRC, with the exception of nationalist rhetoric, is heavily censored and quite taboo; as all know it can lead to trouble if it is not behind closed doors.¹⁸ Additionally, since the Deng's reforms in the 1980s the Maoist expectation of universal "participation" of political campaigns for those outside the CCP has been generally removed.¹⁹ Thus, not only is the general populace weakly incentivized to be informed of politics, as unless the open discussion on central policy is on the general agreement of its implementation it is normally not discussed, but rather instead a "rational ignorance" is pushed.²⁰ Coined by Anthony Downs in 1957 to explain voter ignorance, "rational ignorance" refers to purposefully remaining ignorant on a topic because the cost of being informed is higher than its possible benefits.²¹ As it is the general perspective taken by the Chinese populace it is important to understand this broad acceptance of rational ignorance throughout the PRC; as

¹⁷ (Pu, 2005, 123.)

¹⁸ On nationalism, that aspect of politics is in fact quite invigorated by the party and is often used as a tool of patriotism and misdirection. This invigoration however sometimes backfires as patriotic protests or discussion around the party topic swell too large for the party's liking and effect regional stability.

¹⁹ (Saich, 2015, 28.)

²⁰ To not be informed on politics outside of nationalist rhetoric or state mouthpieces.

²¹ Downs, Anthony. *An Economic Theory of Democracy*. (New York: Harper, 1957.) 244-46, 266-71.

without this understanding it is easy to mistakenly impart a Western stance on individualistic representation on political ideology. Or rather, if not careful, it could be easy to wrongly assume there is broader or more open political discussions and debates within the PRC than there are in reality.

It is therefore imperative to understand that this rational ignorance is commonly accepted within the general populace simply as the party knowing what is best for the people, as the central government are the experts. While perhaps the notion of general apolitical populace in broad agreement with the central party is odd for some, the reality for most citizens of the PRC is that the CCP has provided large scale stable growth since Deng Xiaoping's economic reforms in the late 1970s. Hence, vast number citizens, most especially within the larger cities, have witnessed their lives and social mobility dramatically improve over a single generation. This improvement has left a large majority to simply stay out of politics and let the party continue to guide the nation, with democracy or its broader implementation within the PRC not being of central concern.

For sake of this work, it only makes further sense to focus not on the generally apolitical masses of the PRC, who often have little care or actual sway in the decision making of the top leadership, but instead the leadership itself. Or rather it could more accurately be described within democratization theory as choosing to focus and emphasis on elite choice over structural explanations like political culture and civil society of the Chinese populace. As what will come to be shown is that lacking explanations like political culture and civil society are in fact highly important but are directly influenced by elite choice within the PRC. Therefore, I argue the best way to understand this elite choice is to follow their actions over the passing decades, with central focus on large scale influential historical shifts.

Turning back to democratization theory, the work now looks at the three most relevant democratic trends within the PRC. These trends look at: political culture, economic development, and regime type of the nation. Each of these trends will be used to help recognize and understand China's resistance to democracy since the 1980s. The first relevant democratic trend, and what has been partially touched on prior, revolves around the general apolitical nature of the nation's populace. Or rather, what could more accurately be defined within democratization theory as a general lack of "democratic political culture or civic culture" within the PRC.²² Though scholarship acknowledges there is no true consensus on what exact values define these terms of "civic culture" there is general agreement that they "acknowledge the importance of tolerance of diversity, the belief that other citizens are basically trustworthy, a belief in reciprocity, a willingness to cooperate and compromise, a respect for freedom and equality, and a belief that all members of society have both the right to be included in the political system and the capacity to participate effectively."²³ While perhaps some may hear these values and simply take them for granted, as this work has already addressed, some of these values are quite conflicting with common expectations for the general Chinese populace. Thus, where many democratization trends are built on the assumption that the masses in themselves are in want of democracy and have the underpinnings of democratic political culture, it is significant factor, that for the most part, the PRC does not.²⁴

The second democratization trend is that it is generally accepted with the theory that there is a strong link to economic developments correlation to democracy. This correlation is important as this is quite contradictory within the PRC; this due to the PRC's ability at creating

²² (Ibid, 10.)

²³ (Ibid.)

²⁴ Perhaps other than the limited forms of democratic systems that hold no political power, yet even hear membership is heavily comprised of the CCP...

economic freedoms and thriving business class while simultaneously restricting political freedoms. This is because the rise of the economy is associated with the rise of middle class which serve to stabilize “extremist positions because of their interest in the economic security and stability” of the current regime. Similarly, the rise of economies associated with capitalism has strong correlations with democratization as “economic freedom creates pressures for political freedom” because private business class generate their own separate economic interest from the state. Overall however, it must be noted, that while there is debate within the scholarship that questions whether the correlation between economic growth and democratization is always positive, there is a general agreement that “although a country’s level of economic development may not explain the timing of a democratic transition, it does determine the prospects for consolidation once democracy is established.” Rather, democracy is more likely within a well economically developed country; something yet to be fully seen in the PRC’s economic rise since the late 1970s.²⁵

The third and last democratic trend, and one that can only be fully explained after understanding the historical points within the work, is the unique makeup of the authoritarian state of the PRC. As the work will show that since the shift away from the Maoist era the PRC has been shifting to a hybrid of single party and personalistic regime due to the significant amount of control central leadership has within the nation. That because of this hybrid and shifting nature the trends in the systems strengths, weaknesses, and prospects of democratization change along with it. Hence, just like how it was discussed prior that military regime is considered fragile within the realm of resisting “poor economic performance” this would change as the nature of the regime changes along with it; with the most accurate trends leaning towards

²⁵ (Kauffman, 2018, 8-10.)

what the regime at the time best represents.²⁶ I therefore argue that by better understanding the PRC under each of these democratization trends throughout central historical periods since the 1980s, this work will show why the nation has yet to democratize within the 21st century.

The Data: History in Context

To ascertain the PRC's stance on democracy however, viewing modern Hong Kong in isolation is not enough. Though one could argue that the political tensions within modern Hong Kong go back to the 19th century Opium Wars, with the British Empire and Qing dynasty fighting over the region's jurisdiction, that is not the intent of the work. Instead, I will be focusing on the within relative modernity to periods after the creation of the modern Peoples Republic of China and the Chinese Communist Party.

More specifically I focus on three historic points within the PRC, divided across three sections, that highlight dramatic shifts for the Hong Kong region and CCP as a whole. Each section is organized in a way for the reader to, if need be, first be aware of the background of the historical event, then coverage of the event itself, followed by significant actions taken by the party elite within the era, and finally a synopsis of what the era represents. This is done in order to provide a clear understanding of the historical events themselves and the place they share within the broader coverage of the shifting eras of the PRC.

The first historical point and the only one physically outside of the Hong Kong region, is the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. This historical point was chosen because it represents a dramatic shift on the perspective of Hong Kong and party dynamics from opening of both

²⁶ (Geddes, 1999, 135.)

economic and political policy to more hardline conservatism with centered interest in the economy. Summarized briefly, the PRC was opening up to limited extent yet hardliners in CCP still resisted as many party members argued against what they saw as Western non-Chinese influences that could come to undermine the party and country's stability. Directly tied to this was the notion that Hong Kong could serve as democratic enclave that threatened stability of party, inevitably the massive student protests in 1989 proved hardliners right and shifted the CCP's rhetoric for the decade to come.

Second, is 1997 Sino-British Joint declaration handing over of Hong Kong. As the official passing of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom to the People's Republic of China (PRC), the PRC's actions around the event reflected its intent to secure the region and gain access to international agencies. The era reflects the backlash from the 1989 and the CCPs shift of emphasis on the stability through economy. This is especially emphasized by the PRC's acceptance of the "one country, two systems" motto that sought to outline the same protections and freedoms Hongkongers had priorly under British rule, with the acknowledgment that they would now be an official province of the PRC.

Third and last is the modern Hong Kong protests of 2019-2020. This historical point has come to represent that the hardliner faction, under Xi Jinping, has since risen to full power. Here the perspective of Hong Kong as a threat to faction and CCP stability over its usefulness as an economic enclave has fully spread through those within power. Recent protests, push of more authoritative policy, and push of rhetoric on Xi Jinping Thought highlight the current CCP's stance on original doctrine of "one country, two systems" motto and new emphasis of stability through control.

By focusing my lens on Hong Kong, a once democratic enclave, under these three vital moments in its history this work will show the gradual transition PRC policy and action that reflect the reality of the CCP's stance on democracy. More specifically, the actions over mere rhetoric taken by the elites within nation. As what these actions will show throughout the passing decades of PRC's leadership is the repeated focus on the party goal of stability. This evolving understanding of stability by the party from fear of instability, to stability through economy, and finally stability through control will show to be the principle drivers of the nation's top elite.

Why specifically Hong Kong as point of interest? Hong Kong provides a unique perspective of viewing the PRC's actions when given control over a democratic enclave. In order to fully understand this however, it is first important to recognize that the Hong Kong region was a democratic enclave, even under the PRC for its first decades, because of the original agreement made in the Sino-British Joint Declaration. Within this transfer of sovereignty of the region the agreement allowed the "former British colony to keep its governmental structure, capitalist system, and legal regime after 1997 for 50 years without converging" with the PRC.²⁷ This agreement was consigned as the "One Country, Two System" formula, in that it was one country of the PRC with two governmental systems, Beijing's and Hong Kong's.²⁸ What this meant for the average citizens of Hong Kong was that they were able to enjoy the democratic freedoms that they had prior, much akin to those we share in Western democracies, but freely be a part of PRC.

In practice however, much like under British rule, most Hongkongers chose to stay within the region and form a unique way of life exclusive from the mainland. Hence, not only

²⁷ Yuen, Samson, and Edmund W. Cheng. "Between High Autonomy and Sovereign Control in a Subnational Island Jurisdiction: The Paradox of Hong Kong Under 'One Country, Two Systems.'" *Island Studies Journal* 15, no. 1 (2020), 131.

²⁸ (Ibid.)

was the Hong Kong region a democratic enclave, in that it shared the same general democratic principles of law as we do within the West, but that its populace is in itself unique. The populace is unique because though it holds an ethnically majority Chinese populace, who share a direct border with the mainland, their world values and perspectives could be described as almost identical to those we share within the West and not like their apolitical mainland counterparts. Hence, within democratization theory one could argue the region harbors a “democratic political or civic culture” in which “citizens recognize and obey the authority of government elites while also pressuring them to be responsive and accountable.”²⁹ Further, not only does this Chinese populace share similar Western perspectives, as a former British colony and international economic hub, the English literacy rate is over 60% for the entire population.³⁰ Even with these unique distinctions what will come to show within the analysis of the historical moments however, are that these freedoms under the one country, two systems motto were eventually eroded and striped from the region. It is important to highlight these facts to help the reader to understand the similarities that this district shares with the West. That because Hong Kong was not simply “another Chinese region” it holds the unique ability that no other region at the time of writing can show us. The ability, by simply observing their actions, to directly demonstrate the current PRC’s capacity and intent when given authority over democracy. Hence, by looking at the Hong Kong under these different administrations throughout the decades one can witness first-hand the general shifts within CCP ideology on democracy.

²⁹ (Kauffman, 2018, 11.)

³⁰ Shone, John B, Kingsley Bolton, K.K Luke. “Language Use, Proficiency and Attitudes in Hong Kong” (The University of Hong Kong, Social Sciences Research Center, 2015), 34. - Additionally, not only is the majority multilingual, with English often as a second language to Cantonese, the youth of the region with ages 12 to 39 have an English literacy rate over 80%, with 12 to 29 being over 90%. - Important to note that Cantonese, the official language of the region, is in itself somewhat unique as Hong Kong is one of the principal places it is spoken as compared to the mainland’s use of Mandarin.

Caveats and Clarifications

I believe it is important to acknowledge the primary limitations to this work, which are three in number: the language barrier, the culture, and the nuanced history. For example, the first limitation is my reliance on translated work from Chinese scholars, rather than originals, due to my inability to read Mandarin. I believe however that even if I were able to read the works in their initial form, unless highly proficient in the language the end result for this work, while perhaps more original, would not be more accurate to official translators. Thus, though I am admitting of possible bias coming from translated sources and have sought multiple sources on the same topics for the very reason, I understand some readers may still take issue.

The second limitation of the work is that because it is focusing directly on the PRC's observable actions and rhetoric over the decades through these historical moments, it lacks the coverage of the more nuanced topics of Chinese cultural differences when compared with the West. While difficult to determine definitively scholarship acknowledges the influential roles like that of Chinese tradition on cultural and moral values even within 21st century PRC. For example, within the case of the CCP and leadership is its links to Confucianism and legitimacy. Under this morality the relationship of state to populace is that of filial link that maintains legitimacy as long as authority maintains stability and prosperity. This morality in turn is also a reinforcement of the ideology that allows and legitimizes means of strict hierarchical control by the authoritative party (parent) to manage the populace (child.) While by no means does this morality directly dictate the modern PRC it is important to acknowledge its inescapable

influences within the culture and institutions like that of Christianity's cultural influences within the West.³¹

Another example could be the influence of what is defined as "Guanxi" within Chinese culture, Guanxi is best defined as a "sophisticated and economic tradition" of dynamic "networking of outstanding personal favors and obligations stemming from town or regional ties, school ties, and family ties." It is influential because though this obligation is generally "ephemeral and unpredictable" within the West, it is a more formalized aspect of Chinese culture. It could be seen as a cultural sociological construct that plays significant role within the inner works of the PRC as its control, even by the CCP, is "particularly tricky obstacle to reform" and often an avid avenue for corruption.³²

Within both these cases I agree they are no doubt influential to Chinese society, however, as is the case with many nuance cultural influences on politics, they are extremely difficult to accurately quantify over any length of time. Hence, I argue that for sake of this work, cultural influences ephemeral nature, while important, tell us less than the observable actions that one can witness across the passing decades within the PRC. Thus, while I understand some may question why I do not further address the influence of cultural differences, know it is a deliberate decision in the name of observable clarity. Further, because this work is seeking a clear understanding of democratization and its prospects within the PRC I would argue that culture, for a populace of 1.4 billion people across the area the size of the United States arching over three decades, as

³¹ Aufrecht, Steven E, and Li Siu Bun. "Reform with Chinese Characteristics: The Context of Chinese Civil Service Reform." *Public Administration Review* 55, no. 2 (1995), 175-181.- Confucianism is "akin" to the extent that aspects of Christianity's influences can be found ingrained within vast aspects of our culture, morality, and law.

³² (Aufrecht and Bun, 1995, 177-8.)

compared to understanding the Party's leadership would only serve to muddy the waters and be unable to explain nuances due to overgeneralizations.

Third, though this work is written under the assumption that the reader has a nominal understanding of the Chinese governmental system and policy, it will clarify specifics or nuances that are perhaps lesser known outside the topics when addressed. As it would be irresponsible to not acknowledge certain critically influential aspects that make up the modern PRC and occurred outside the historical coverage of this work. I am specifically referring to what is commonly referred to within PRC history and policy as the "century of humiliation." While I will not go into depth on the topic within the work, briefly summarized, China prior to the revolution in 1949 had suffered seemingly ceaseless defeat to foreign forces. This began as far back as the first Opium wars in the 19th century with the British Empire until occupational demands from the Japanese Empire in WWII. What this has come to represent is China's fall from grace as the middle kingdom, or center of the world. For the CCP however, this has come to represent more. Specifically for the CCP, the century of humiliation has come to be stringently tied to the rhetoric of nationalism and pride, as Mao declared the century over with the creation of the Party in 1949. Hence, even today, the rhetoric of the century of humiliation is strongly associated with the growth of the PRC, leadership of the CCP, and the retaking of its place as the middle kingdom(state). Additionally, and just as imperative, is the understanding of century of humiliation as a perspective within the PRC and its populace as a hyperawareness or suspicion of dominating or meddling foreign influences, most especially Western, with the intent to stop the PRC from reaching the aforementioned goal.

So much for the caveats. As for the clarifications, there is essentially one, which has to do with how we are to understand the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) role within the country.

Though constitutionally the nation is uniquely faceted as a one-party state that operates a multiparty system of cooperation, with eight other Political parties representing different ideologies, the De-Facto reality is that for those other parties to exist they must swear subservience under the CCP. Thus, for all intents and purposes the PRC is a single party state under the CCP.³³

Similarly, this notion of one-party state is also the same when discussing the government of the PRC. Though nominally separate in law, requirement for allegiance to the party for governmental positions, and social mobility associated with it, has led to the party and government becoming nearly indivisible. Scholarship on the subject is apt to note the government “as tool of the party to implement policy,” and that its means as a tool of social mobility is also tied to the party’s emphasis on loyalty to party ideology over expertise for governmental positions.³⁴ Hence, by tying allegiance to the party one can gain access to resources, both fiscal and social, that would not otherwise be possible. It is apt to note that though originally this priority of loyalty over expertise stemmed from fear of Kuomintang or Chinese Nationalist Party (CNP) uprising after the Civil War in combination with the association of “expert” with unwanted Western influences, emphasis on loyalty has not disappeared.³⁵ Rather, within modern PRC this emphasis on loyalty to party while no longer necessarily associated directly with CNP uprising or Western expertise is still just as relevant as it is still

³³ (Saich, 2015, 205.) - On this note, it is important to clarify some of these points. First, this work will always address “China” as the Peoples Republic of China or (PRC) rather the former to differentiate it from the Taiwan’s the Republic of China or (ROC). I mention this because there is much political tension in this distinction, as many know, and how addressing it as I have done has already positioned this work, to some, within an “anti-Chinese” light. Nevertheless, it is not the intention of this work to debate this point and thus I do not intend to address it any further within this work. Additionally, for clarification purposes, within this work just like it will always address the People’s Republic of China as the PRC; the Chinese Communist Party will always be addressed CCP or simply “the party.”

³⁴ (Aufrecht and Bun, 1995, 178.)

³⁵ (Aufrecht and Bun, 1995, 178.)

linked to stability.³⁶ Thus, as these institutional bodies and those within are nearly indivisible, when this work mentions the PRC government or Beijing, unless noted otherwise, it is to be understood that they are branches of the CCP.

To begin to witness these historical shifts, and their relationship to democratization, it is critical to begin the historical coverage not right on the hand-over of the Hong Kong region in 1997, but rather in 1989 under one of the PRC's most controversial events, the Tiananmen Square Incident. For what this work will show is that this incident played a critical role in shaping the party and the nation for the decades to come.

³⁶ (Ibid.)

CHAPTER III: HISTORICAL POINTS IN FOCUS

Historical Point 1: Tiananmen Square, 1989

To understand the impact of the first historical point, the Tiananmen Square Incident, it is important to first encapsulate the political tension of 1980s PRC. I specifically speaking of the dramatic tension that was split amongst the Chinese Communist Party. Though a relative simplification, the party tensions were divided amounts those under the Deng Xiaoping faction and hardliner faction. Deng Xiaoping was the prominent political leader who guided the nation after the death of Mao and who looked to the opening and reform of the PRC predominantly through economic means and easing of centralized planning; against opponents who saw the unraveling of the central planning apparatus and liberalization of the markets as foreign influences that threatened Maoist ideals and the very social fabric of the PRC.³⁷

Party tensions became palpable to even some of those outside CCP a few years prior to the Tiananmen Square incident. For example, political demonstrations in 1986 pushing for reforms caused the removal of Hu Yaobang, the then current General Secretary of the Communist Party, from his position due to party disapproval of his sympathetic attitude on the issue. Under compromise the party then introduced Zhao Ziyang to the position of General Secretary. Zhao's goals had been to "remove ideology from thwarting reform and to concentrate on improving material standards" as he had hoped to remove the party from the constraints of "Maoist dogma" that many had come to believe held the nation back. As such Zhao targeted what he saw as two of the greatest obstacles of their state socialism, "central planning and state ownership." Problems mounted however when industrial reform sought by Zhao effected

³⁷ (Saich 2015, 51.)

stability of the markets due to the necessity to reform the “pricing and subsidy systems” as well. While Zhao’s intention was the gradual reform of both economic and political spheres, as he also called for a relative “redistribution of power” for both state and party organs, his backing began to falter along with the economy in 1988. Due to disgruntlement from both sides, anti-reformist angered at the faltering economy and pro-reformist angered at lack of large-scale change, the “façade of unity” of the party began to crack.³⁸

It was however not until 1989 Tiananmen protests did this division fully reveal itself to the world. State response on the issue at the time were released backing hardliner stances, declaring the Protests as “planned conspiracy against the party,” however Zhao “opposed a tough response” and instead favored “limited dialogue.”³⁹ This caused the protest to continue for over a month after official state response. By mid-May Zhao had been secretly dismissed from his position and crack down on the protests had begun by declaration of Martial Law. These events inevitably leading up to June 4th incident in Tiananmen square that saw the mass death of over 10,000 of the student protestors.⁴⁰

Soon after the removal of Zhao and his supporter Hu Qili from the Politburo Standing Committee, the highest political body of the CCP, Jiang Zemin was appointed as the new General Secretary of the Party due to his “effective” response to the protests.⁴¹ The party however was unable to escape the reality of why the Zhao’s reforms were being demanded, in fact, “many initiatives associated with the disgraced General Secretary again became key

³⁸ (Saich 2015, 50-52.)

³⁹ (Ibid, 53.)

⁴⁰ “Tiananmen Square Protest Death Toll ‘Was 10,000’.” BBC News. BBC, December 23, 2017. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-42465516>

⁴¹ (Saich 2015, 53.)

elements of policy.”⁴² Most significant of these elements was the undeniability of economic impediment PRC had seen with half-measure reforms, as when it came to political reform the party, especially for the elite, were more adamant on their stance.

This attitude by the party was simultaneously adopted when viewing regions like Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Specifically within Hong Kong’s case, the involvement of Hong Kong pro-democracy activists in the Tiananmen Incident served to “reinforce Beijing’s long-standing suspicions that the Special Administrative Region-to-be might become a sanctuary for the Party’s enemies.” This perspective was not unique to the Jiang’s administration however, rather even since the Mao era scholarship has acknowledged that “China’s toleration of the British presence rested on one condition: that “dependency must not be used as a base to subvert the Chinese Communist Party.” This dependence refers to the fact that many years the Hong Kong served as a central hub for the closed off nation’s interaction with international bodies; for even during the Civil war in 1949 Mao understood that the region was “useful in developing its international relations.”⁴³

Hong Kong

From this history of the era alone, I argue there are two main points on the significant importance of the Hong Kong region. First, even from the beginning of the PRC, the CCP has always been on the defense when it comes to Hong Kong due to the fear that its presence could serve as “launch off” point for Western soft power to the nation. This is especially so as the

⁴² (Ibid, 54.)

⁴³ Ip, Eric C. “Constitutional Conflict in Hong Kong Under Chinese Sovereignty.” *Hague Journal on the Rule of Law* 8, no. 1 (2016), 78-79.

PRC's rise to economic dominance within the region after Deng has left the only other significant "Western" soft-power influences coming from India, South Korea, Japan, and nominally Taiwan.⁴⁴ Even this is limited however, as even for India, the only nation to share a land-border with the PRC of these mention, the vast majority of highly populated regions are separated by Nepal as a buffer state; as for the few high populated regions that do share a border the influence is at best only minimal further inland. Hence, except nominally for India, Hong Kong was the only significant democratic enclave within the region to share a land border with the PRC.⁴⁵

Second, is the CCP's constant balancing of the risks versus merits of further democratization, and its influences, over political and economic incentive in Hong Kong. As noted prior, even before PRC's control of Hong Kong the regions merits as an international hub outweighed its risks for the developing nation. What will come to pass over the coming decades however, is the gradual shift in this decision on Hong Kong due to changing priorities of the CCP's administrations. For example, the shift that will come to take center stage under Jiang, due to Deng's influence, is the rising interest in economic merits that Hong Kong can offer. It is only after Deng's death however do we slowly begin to see the rise of the authoritative state with Jiang's political oppression of factions like Falun Gong.

The party's perspective was not the only one to have been significantly influenced by Tiananmen however, in fact, Hong Kong under British rule was to be substantially reshaped

⁴⁴ This is a relative simplification, as though each region is influential, individually their influence over time has dramatically shifted. This influence, though once again individualistic and different for each, has been especially affected by the PRC's dramatic economic growth and the CCP's closing off of foreign culture through media censorship and stringent push of "domestically approved culture." – Approved culture in the sense that it is accepted by the party due to not breaking the currently pushed narrative.

⁴⁵ This goes even for Macau as though once Portuguese territory; it arguably never shared the similar modern Western influence or activism. Though admittedly its status at one time being center for gambling in Asia does highlight the CCP's emphasis on economics over ideology.

before the handover. There was indeed support of pro-democracy activists revolving around Tiananmen, but after the subsequent crack-down by Beijing support rapidly expanded and “brought millions on to the streets to protest against the Chinese government.”⁴⁶ Fears of witnessing the crackdown by the PRC reinvigorated the populace to push the British administrative government to implement more policy to secure and establish Hongkongers and the regions democratic rights, that until prior had been carefully teetering the line to please Beijing. Combined with fear of the rise of “capital and brain drain” that had already been plaguing the British Hong Kong government, policy began to be written. These early policies however, though more “confrontational” than the prior “consensual” approach of the government, still teetered “to accommodate China” with scholarship noting it as a “sort of limited damage repair.”⁴⁷ Hence, it was not until Governor Christ Pattens took office in 1992, the last British administration, did substantial changes in policy occur that came to best reflect Hong Kong as the full fledged democracy that we had seen until 2019.

Overall, the Tiananmen square protests established a new era for the entire region. This historical moment encapsulates fear of loss of stability, after having central key figures within removed and large-scale infighting that threatened the party’s role. It was with this fear that the party acknowledged that the growth of the economy is vital to stability; a perspective that we see not only until Deng’s last days but still ingrained under the Jiang administration. Further, on Hong Kong, the historical moment shows the crackdown and the student support from within Hong Kong not only reignited Hongkonger’s desire for political freedoms and their future

⁴⁶ Horlemann, Ralf, *Hong Kong's Transition to Chinese Rule*. English-Language Series of the Institute of Asian Affairs, Hamburg. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, 19.

⁴⁷ (Ibid, 20.)

security under the British rule, but caused further uneasiness from party as it proved the region harbored a launch off point for Western soft-power. This uneasiness on Hong Kong by the party however would come to take a backseat to the party's growing priority of economic growth under Deng and Jiang.

Historical Point 2: Hong Kong Handover, 1997

Before covering the handover of Hong Kong itself it is important to briefly encapsulate the significance for the PRC on one of the most substantial historical moments of the decade; the fall of the Soviet Union. First, though not a major discussion within this work it would be irresponsible to not at least address the importance of the impact that the fall of the Soviet Union had on the developing nation of the PRC. Though not confuse the late Soviet Union as close allies to the PRC, as the relationship between the nations was never concrete, the socialist country stood as strategic monolith throughout the entirety of the PRC's life. The country's mere presence helped to shield the PRC from much of the Western world's scrutiny during the Cold War. In fact, scholarship acknowledges that prior to this China's entire foreign policy was "based on the notion that international politics would be dominated by the existence of a bipolar relationship between the two superpowers," a relationship that allowed the PRC to "play off one against the other to create more space for itself in international affairs."⁴⁸

It should therefore be noted that the political uncertainty that revolved around the fall of the Soviet Union, both before and after the event in 1991, was of significant influence on PRC. Within the years prior, growing Western influences, loosening of centralized state control, and

⁴⁸ (Saich, 2015, 329.)

eventually the failed August Coup under Gorbachev administration within the Soviet Union led many to believe worldwide that democratization was winning over Soviet Communism. Though the actual collapse came as a shock to many, as many assume the nation would slowly reshape itself to a democratic image, democratization took center stage of world media and academia. For many to see the Soviet Union collapse it only seemed natural for the PRC to do so unless they changed democratically, hence we come to see both academic literature and state policy that further reflect this mindset.

This perspective was not unanimous within the CCP, however, as for some the fall of Soviet Union and dissolution of Communism from the Soviet bloc “proved that over-hasty, over-ambitious political reform could lead to domestic political instability,” thus further engraining anti-reformist attitudes; this was especially so within the case of policies that could be interpreted as Western values.⁴⁹ Moreover, for those wary of Western values, the fall of the Soviet monolith not only ingrained their perspective but opened a new pathway. Because the Soviet state failed and collapsed the PRC was now free to “unashamedly pursue its own national interests without reference to ideological considerations.”⁵⁰ Or rather, state rhetoric and CCP policy was no longer bound to Soviet and Marxist ideals, and that it “no longer became necessary to dress up policies in socialist rhetoric” as “national interest became first and foremost.”⁵¹ Since this shift however, though the political rhetoric may “move away from Marxism, the ideology itself remains a crucial component of the CCP’s self-legitimation” as it grounds the party as rightful leadership of the people.⁵² Thus, the fall of the Soviet Union represented the competing notions

⁴⁹ (Horlemann 2003, 19.)

⁵⁰ (Saich, 2015, 329.)

⁵¹ (Ibid.)

⁵² (Ibid, 27.)

of global democratization, foundational ideology, and national interests in stability that will continue to be ever present within the coming decades of the PRC.

PRC Reform

While one might assume that the events of 1989 and the Soviet's collapse automatically shifted the Beijing administration to a radical conservative path, economic reforms had begun to taken center stage. Under the Jiang Zemin administration the party attempted to distance itself from the Tiananmen incident due to international backlash and the fears of its impediment on strategic Western diplomacy. More specifically, the PRC worried that agitating the West could impede acceptance into global organizations, like the World Trade Organization (WTO), that had direct benefits to the economy as well as the clean transition of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom. This is not to assume that CCP kowtowed to the West, far from it, but rather that many within the party, principally the Deng faction, had understood that consistent economic growth was their root to stability and further legitimacy; thus, many accepted what some within the party might have feared to be dominating Western influences.

Even with the hesitancy of competing influences within the party rather than to simply refrain from doing anything that could cause ire from the West the PRC dramatically shifted their tone, at least superficially, on the prospects for dramatic political reform. In fact, there is much Chinese scholarship from the era of the late 1980s to early 2000s that adamantly push the notion of the PRC's democratization. These works range from the argument that the PRC has the possibility of becoming democratic, to its nominal systems in place already showing its transformation. For example, scholarship argued that from the late 1970s opening up under Deng

until the 1982 with the Constitutional Revision, the nation made a dramatic shift in moving away from cultural revolution of the Maoist era; the party even “officially denouncing the unremitting class struggle, and the catastrophic consequences thereof among which were specifically identified the decimation of the legal system, the degradation of democracy, the overall tramping of human rights, absolute social chaos, and the overwhelming poverty of the masses.” Even further, under the new constitution and “supplementary legislation” the new system was “designed to restore social order, safeguard human rights, and institutionalize and legalize democracy.” Though scholarship at the time acknowledged that “these stipulations are incomplete, unspecific, and excessively restrictive,” they argued that the changes “constituted a courageous theoretical breakthrough by the Chinese leadership of the time, and these remarkable political transformations heralded the dawning of a new era of the rule of law.”⁵³

A consistent train of thought that was shared through many of the works was that opening of the market economy led to division of interests, which lead to individual demands, which would then lead to political participation, and naturally democratic development.⁵⁴ This conception was portrayed as a natural “sociological chain that logically proceeds from the link between economics and politics,” yet with modern hindsight we can see that events did not unfold as predicted.⁵⁵ Instead, both influential internal and external forces interested in the PRC’s market economy, like the U.S President Bill Clintons’ administration’s push for the PRC’s entry into World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001 or Jiang’s allowance of private entrepreneurs to become party members also in 2001, will eventual come to be the true

⁵³ Yu, Keping. *Democracy and the Rule of Law in China*. Issues in Contemporary Chinese Thought, V. 2. Leiden: Brill, 2010, 285-286.

⁵⁴ (Pu 2005, 125.)

⁵⁵ (Ibid.)

significant factors.⁵⁶ It could be understood that the allowance of Western democratic and capitalistic rhetoric within the PRC was allowed as long as the end result improved the economy and did not undermine the party, as stability was priority. Hence, the consistent theme of party stability takes center stage, with the economy taking precedence early within Jiang's administration due to significant party pressures from Deng.

Hong Kong

During the years prior to the Hong Kong hand-over scholarship acknowledges the significant influence of Deng Xiaoping's perspective of the region. Specifically, Deng saw "the separation of Hong Kong's and mainland China's systems as essential to the stability and prosperity of both sides." We can see this most especially in his later successor Jiang Zemin's acceptance of Hong Kong under the "One Country, Two Systems" motto, which as prior noted, allowed for Hongkongers to keep British rule of law for 50 years after the 1997 handover. Following under Deng, the Jiang administration accepted that "economically conducive unification of the two under one sovereign state cannot take place unless the existing setup of Hong Kong is conserved."⁵⁷

What is important to highlight however is the significant influence that hand-over of Hong Kong had to the PRC's developing economy; as though the country had been rapidly industrializing and becoming wealthy, coastal cities like Hong Kong were the true centers of commerce. To give a perspective, in 1999 alone Hong Kong made nearly 85 billion U.S dollars

⁵⁶ (Saich 2015, 58.)

⁵⁷ (Ip 2016, 78-79.)

while the entirety of the PRC made 991 billion. Hence in that year alone Hong Kong made the equivalent of almost 12% of the entire PRC economy.⁵⁸ While perhaps a tenth of the economy does not sound grandiose to some, it is valuable to note Hong Kong only had around 7 million occupants compared to the PRC's 1.25 billion at the time. Thus, at an increase of around 1.9% of the PRC population in the hand over, the PRC was to add to 12% to the nation's economy.

In addition to the role of economics played by Hong Kong is the further influence of the prior noted "century of humiliation." For the PRC, the acquisition of Hong Kong would serve as a large symbolic step of advancement for the CCP, as it would be under their reign that the former Chinese region was given back to their rightful non-Western rulers. Scholarship acknowledges that especially for Hong Kong, it was the fact that it was the first region to be given back and hence would serve to be a "model for Macao and, even more important, for Taiwan." Hence, for the PRC, any means of preventing this process of acquisition were seen "as foreign attempts to contain China and prevent it from assuming its dutiful position" as center of the world stage.⁵⁹

With this knowledge however, to what extent we can assume this acceptance of Hong Kong under the motto of "One Country, Two Systems" was from the growth of Western democratic influences, symbolic advancement of the party, or solely from PRC's intent to grow economically is not of central importance. What matters is the fact that PRC wholly accepted these terms under the Sino-British's agreement and continued to honor the core of the agreement, with respects to individual rights, for near a decade.⁶⁰ While I am apt to acknowledge that

⁵⁸ Ash, Robert F. *Hong Kong in Transition: One Country, Two Systems*. Routledge Curzon Studies in the Modern History of Asia, 11. London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, 14.

⁵⁹ (Horlemann 2003, 19.)

⁶⁰ A simplification as there was stringent turbulence on the limits/extent of jurisdiction. For example, especially within judicial process that challenged the Hong Kong court systems when brought into direct conflict with the

perhaps some would disagree with the statement that the mainland honored the agreement for the decade proceeding after the handover, as there is indeed scholarship that recognizes the gradual diminishment of exercising regional autonomy through means like “economic integration, connective infrastructure, and legal harmonization,” one would only have to look to the mainland to witness the drastic difference in general political freedoms.⁶¹

A prime example of this difference of autonomy can be witnessed in the Jiang’s administration rampant crackdown of Falun Gong in 1999; a religious but politically involved sect that had become too large and active for the party’s liking.⁶² Where members of the sect, even for those within the CCP, were being detained and sent to labor camps within the mainland, those within Hong Kong were free to practice their beliefs. Even further, not only were those within Hong Kong able to practice their beliefs, but they were even allowed to protest and publicize the treatment of their fellow members just across the border. Hence, within this example alone one can see that Jiang’s administration were adamant and relatively faithful to their pledge of “One country, two systems” within a least the general principles of liberal democratic freedoms. I argue this distinction is important because it once again reinforces the notion that the party prioritizes stability more than political ideology or mere economic incentive. Rather, as prior established, the party understood that the most rational course of action, at least for the moment, was the stable economic growth for both regions no matter any differences in political or ideological discourse.

mainland systems. Within the aspect of free speech, press, religion, etc. however, (what is often understood to be the foundation of democratic freedoms) these freedoms were wholly honored until the most recent changes under Xi.

⁶¹ (Yuen and Cheng, 2020, 146.)

⁶² (Saich 2015, 58.)

Therefore, the CCP's capacity to accept limited democracy and its influences within the Hong Kong handover, academic scholarship, and shifting policy represent the emphasis of the era's stability through the economy. As what will come to pass is the dramatic shift in authoritative policy and ideology under its newest administration that put the economy to the backseat in favor of control.

Historical Point 3: Hong Kong Protests, 2019-2020

Just like the prior historical points, what matters more within this work is not the historical points in isolation but the culmination of events, like changes in policy, ideology, or leadership, which come to define the era. On that note, the Hong Kong 2019-2020 Protests will serve as the most current and relevant discussion within this work. Though Hong Kong has a long history of protest culture even before its handover in 1997 and has such developed its own unique cultural values separate from the mainland; I argue that it was this most recent protest, and the policies that were enacted despite them, that best envision the modern state of the PRC under Xi Jinping.

These Protests began early 2019 with the intent to stop the passing of the *Fugitive Offenders and Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matter Legislation Bill 2019* or more commonly known as the Hong Kong Security Bill. This Bill, backed by Beijing, was viewed by many within Hong Kong as a shallow veneer to allow the arrest and deportation to the mainland of whoever the Beijing government deemed to be criminal. Thus, by deportation to the mainland the criminal would then be further subjected directly to the Chinese court systems instead of Hong Kong's, thereby undermining the original intent of the "one country, two systems" motto.

Though initially revoked by Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam, a position that many would also refer to being a shallow veneer for Beijing authority as the position is selected by the mainland, demands by protestors escalated. Tensions between both Hong Kong police backed by Beijing and protesters would further grow over the next year. Within that time the largest of these tensions arguably grew from mass allegations of police brutality and the storming of the Hong Kong Legislative Council by protestors. At its peak, though official numbers are debated, Hong Kong protestors marching in the streets numbered "nearly 2 million", a quarter of the city's entire population!⁶³

This mass popular protest, or its national coverage, was not to continue in its prior vigor however, as the beginning of Covid-19 epidemic took center stage in early 2020. With this lessening traction Beijing quickly took action and enacted the *Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*, which allowed the establishment of a Beijing backed security branch directly within Hong Kong. This security branch bypassed the need for deportation all together and spelled an end for the original intent of the "one country, two systems" motto. This has led to the current, as of 2021, silence of Hong Kong as Beijing security branch has quickly worked to arrest any activists who had involvement within the protests, most especially for those who took leadership positions for the event. This silencing has gone on further to arrest those who were indirectly involved like Hong Kong journalists and alleged "pro-democratic" (anti-Chinese) publications.

With an awareness of the general events revolving around the protests themselves it is important to now turn to the broader questions; why did this happen and why did it happen now?

⁶³ Regan, Helen, Ben Westcott, Steve George, and James Griffiths. "Hong Kong Protest Sees Hundreds of Thousands Call for City's Leader to Step Down." CNN. Cable News Network, June 16, 2019, 1.

As this work has attempted to make evident the most foretelling answer to these questions can be found within the PRC's leadership. I specifically referring to that of Xi Jinping and his predominate rise to power since his inauguration in 2012 after the step down of his predecessor Hu Jintao. This rise to power, though gradual, was most foretelling 2017 with the incorporation of his "Xi Jinping Thought" into the constitution of the CCP and its eventual incorporation into the PRC constitution a year later.⁶⁴ Xi's adamant push of his "Xi Jinping Thought" which dictate his "Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy" outlined his future strategy for the nation.⁶⁵ As noted within the beginning of this work however, what is important is not the rhetoric of CCP but its actions. Hence, within this case in particular, I argue that Xi's push of his ideological thought makes further sense when viewed within the lens of how it has come to further shape the CCP and PRC stability within the modern era. I argue that this "shaping" is most prominent, for this work, within three roles. These roles are the removal of his presidential term limit, the reforming of the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA), and the further push of PRC's Military Civil Fusion Strategy (MCF).

Constitutional Changes

Before I move on to the define the importance of the shaping of the PLA or term limit however, it is important to first understand the significant impact of instating constitutional changes. Since the current Constitutions creation by Deng Xiaoping administration in 1982 there have only been sparse moments within its history in which it has been edited; with only ever

⁶⁴ Garrick, John, and Yan Chang Bennett. "'Xi Jinping Thought' Realisation of the Chinese Dream of National Rejuvenation?" *China Perspectives* 1-2 (113), no. 1-2 (113) (2018), 99.

⁶⁵ (Ibid.)

being changed in three other National Congress meetings held once every five years.⁶⁶

Scholarship acknowledges that this incorporation of “Xi Jinping Thought” within the constitution and throughout CCP rhetoric is a significant departure from Xi’s predecessors, as it moves away from Deng Xiaoping’s “normative framework of power succession “ that had been established since his departure from office.⁶⁷ It is significant because it is understood that it was Deng’s intent to not recreate the “centralization of political power” and “cult of personality” of the Mao era.⁶⁸ Hence, Xi’s departure from this rhetoric shows the dissolving of Deng’s gradual shift to “collective leadership system based on consensus building, power-sharing and a mechanism for orderly succession” that he had hoped to permanently establish within the party after his death.⁶⁹

Additionally, and unlike his predecessors as well, is the inclusion of his own name into the rhetoric and now constitution. By doing this Xi has “further exalted his status to that of Mao and Deng, as they were the only exception to” this unspoken rule.⁷⁰ What will be found to be the repeating theme around Xi is his shift of PRC and CCP rhetoric that coincide with consolidation of power and departure from his predecessors; it is a theme that can be interpreted within democratization theory as shift from a single party regime into a personalistic regime.

⁶⁶ (Constitution of the people's republic of china. (n.d.). Retrieved April 04, 2021, from <http://en.people.cn/constitution/constitution.html>)

⁶⁷ Jash, Amrita. “Xi Jinping’s Control of the Chinese Army.” *Strategic Analysis* 42, no. 6 (2018), 641.

⁶⁸ (Ibid.) – Additionally, I understand there is debate on that premise as Deng’s control of the administration after his retirement did not bode well for notion of clean transitions of leadership...however one could argue that his establishment of the constitutional foundations and fear of the party moving away from this premise were his central reasonings...

⁶⁹ (Ibid.)

⁷⁰ (Ibid.)

Xi's Reforms

The first point of Xi's shaping of the CCP and PRC has been through the removal of the presidential term limit. This removal was done by a unanimous push through the National People's Congress (NPC) in 2018 and forwent the traditional root of the office's predecessors since Deng Xiaoping. Hence, rather than forgoing official power and dealing with the traditional power dynamics struggle of the inner CCP, like instating a direct subordinate or heir, Xi has removed it all together. This action by Xi is representative of three distinct points. First, Xi is reinstating his supremacy within the party and quelling any doubts about his factions power. Second, by doing this Xi is simultaneously helping to secure his own position as his removal is now only possible from nothing less than a coup or complete elimination of his power, leaving him only as figurehead. Lastly, instating himself as President for life is a display of intent and power not only internally but externally. It can be understood that by Xi's choice to officially indefinite his term limit he is stating to the West that he no longer intends to display a veneer of democratic institutions, or rather that he no longer must as his administrations priority is centered on control instead of the economy. While no doubt there are further extrapolations that can be taken from his decision, these three points are the most precedent, as these points insure internal security and display external intent; principle foundations to his party's stability through control.

On the point of security and the prospect of removal however, since the Mao era there has always been an acknowledgment from within the CCP that the "Party must command the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the Party."⁷¹ This perspective encapsulated in Mao's notion that "Political power grows out of the barrel of a gun"⁷² and has since been

⁷¹ (Jash 2018, 640.)

⁷² (Ibid.)

generally followed within the CCP but has significantly lapsed since Mao. This belief is reflected in the fact that constitutionally the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) swears allegiance to the CCP and not the PRC. Or rather more plainly, constitutionally within the nation the military swears loyalty to the Communist Party not the people. In Xi's plight to secure power however, he has gone beyond his predecessors and moved even further than this, hence the second point.

This point is encapsulated in Xi's 2016 issued guideline within the Central Military Commission for "Deeping Military Reform of National Defense and the Armed Forces" which sought to more closely tie CCP loyalty and ideology to the PLA. Xi did this for three primary reasons. First, as addressed prior, Xi understood that control of the PLA was central in security of the party both internally and externally. Second, there was gradual growing of "lack of ideological commitment to the CCP and rampant corruption from within the PLA" that Xi saw as detrimental to the future of the CCP. Third, and most important, unlike his predecessors "while Xi has further strengthened the power and authority of the CCP, he also made the party subservient to his leadership by taking charge of the top offices of both the party and the military." Historically however top official offices within the CCP do not necessarily constitute dominate power within the CCP, and thus Xi's decision to place himself as head of the PLA alongside his top position within the CCP is a double "check" that helps to keep both party and military in line while under supervision.⁷³

This new invigoration of control of the PLA under Xi has also been in combination with the last role, the renewed emphasis on Civil Military Fusion within the PRC. Though the term is relegated as a broader coverage of multiple policies and reforms it has been defined as a goal to

⁷³ (Jash 2018, 640-641.)

“promote deeper integration of China’s civilian and defense economies,” with the “intent to create and leverage synergies between economic development and military modernization.”⁷⁴

Hence, its objective, like the prior roles discussed, is the strengthening of CCP through increased control. While research on the subject notes that Xi is not the first to implement such policies, as “pursuing MCF in some form has been around since at least the early 1980s,” it is under Xi that the most recent and significant of these policies was pushed.⁷⁵ This policy, while in combination of other Xi policies like his Xi Jinping Thought discussed prior, was incorporated into CCP’s constitution during the 19th CCP National Congress in 2017.⁷⁶

Though research is hesitant to delegate this push of MCF in 2017 as having already been fully integrated within 2020, as there is in fact research that suggests “(civilian) companies can and do resist requests, or, at the very least, drag their feet when complying with (Governmental) orders they see as contrary to their commercial interests,” it is apt to note that “Xi’s high-level attention and the PLA’s genuine demand for emerging technologies from the commercial enterprises may lead to noteworthy breakthroughs” against Western interests.⁷⁷ Therefore, the mere fact that Xi has recently further pushed this strategy outline within the CCP Constitution again highlights his administrations central focus on control; this is most especially through the direct revisioning and modernizing of the PLA’s ideological loyalties and technological capacity.

The historical moment of 2019-2020 Hong Kong protests, and Xi’s push of authoritative legislation throughout the PRC, serve as symbolic representation to not only Xi’s forward approach to political control but his leaderships position on democracy. Instead of adhering to

⁷⁴ Kania, Elsa B, Lorand Laskai, and Center for a New American Security. *Myths and Realities of China's Military-Civil Fusion Strategy*. Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, 2021, 1.

⁷⁵ (Ibid, 2.)

⁷⁶ (Ibid, 5.)

⁷⁷ (Ibid, 7.)

the original Hong Kong motto or his predecessor's stances on centralization of power, Xi directly chose to instate his vision of the PRC that is centered to the party. Hence, unlike his predecessors Xi has forgone trying to appease Western powers or focus stability solely through the economy and has instead chosen to favor national interests. It could thus be understood that Xi saw the central focus on the stability through the economy as a detriment to the party. It was a detriment because relying solely on the continued growth and stability of the PRC was a risk, for if the nation were to falter the party and its very basis for legitimacy would be put into question. Therefore, Xi's answer was control. By placing the nation under the further jurisdiction and surveillance of the party, even if the nation's economy were to falter the authoritative state would be able to weather the storm if need be. It should then be understood that within this era whether the storm be a riled populace or Western democratic influences, by means of stability through control, Xi sees his decisions in both Hong Kong and throughout the PRC as beneficial to the goals of securing the future of the party, and guiding the nation to its historical place as the global hegemon.

Under the historical eras represented by the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, Hong Kong transfer of 1997, and Hong Kong Protests of 2019-2020 the theme of party decisions on stability, or rather more accurately elite choices, takes center stage. Within 1989 the stability of the party was faltering as an internal factional split, divided on the future of the nation, threatened the party's role. The Tiananmen Protests then served as a catalyst for this division with the outcome shaping the nation for the decades to come. Within 1997 the party understood that they could not escape change but knew that they would not allow dramatic political reform as they did not intend to relinquish significant power or repeat what had happened to their Soviet counterparts. Realizing that much of the turmoil of the prior era's reform rested on the failure of

the severely limited economic restructuring and the legitimacy that economic growth represents, dramatic change within this era comes to be represented by the party's focus on stability through the economy. The most recent Hong Kong Protests of 2019-2020 and the era it represents highlights the steady rise of elite choice within the nation and shift away from central focus of the economy. Rather, within this era dramatic centralized control as the key to stability of the nation has taken hold. Within each of these eras however, though stability of party and nation is center stage, it is plain to see the drastic difference in its interpretation. Therefore, it is important to understand within modernity that, unlike the prior eras, due to the current interpretation of stability on emphasis of control the likelihood we are to see any reverse by allowing aspects of democratization is far grimmer than it has been in decades.

CHAPTER IV: DEMOCRATIZATION AND ITS PROSPECTS IN CHINA

Now with a solid understanding of the broad history of the PRC since the 1980s and its general shifts that make up party ideology and factionalism, the work now returns to the topic of democratization. The following work looks at key components within the PRC that effect the process of democratization, limitations within the system, and finally the future prospects of democracy in the PRC.

As noted prior, within the 1980s to early 2000s the notion of the democratizing PRC was an avid discussion within Chinese scholarship. Though scholars did not predict the rise of Xi and his advance to a more authoritative PRC their work still has merit. In fact, the mere reality that the literature was being created and published as compared to its stringent restrictions in modernity is quite informative. This is because as of 2013 the PRC's "Office of the Central Committee" issued a direct outline of seven topics in which the intellectual community was not to discuss. The first topic, and one especially relevant to this very work, Chinese intellectuals were not to discuss the "promotion of Western constitutional democracy, as it negates the features of the Chinese socialist system." Second, they should not discuss "universal values, as it shakes the party's ideological and theoretical foundations." Third, they should not discuss "civil society, as it undermines the social basis of the ruling party." Fourth, discussion of "neoliberalism" is forbade because it "attempts to change China's economic system." Fifth, discussion on "promotion of press freedom" was barred as it "challenged the principles of party control over press and publications." Sixth, discussion on "historical nihilism" and "party errors" was forbade as well as it was deemed that it "sought to distort the historical role of the CCP." Seventh and last, it prohibited the "questioning of reform and opening up and the socialist nature

of the system with Chinese characteristics” as they were deemed to be “denying the party’s line and principles.”⁷⁸

In keeping with the view that actions speak louder than words, in politics no less than in international relations, I argue by the fact that this 2013 outline by the PRC vehemently silenced Chinese scholarship on the aforementioned subjects it would fall into the former and not be merely rhetoric of the party. Further, I argue an important highlight that can be read from these seven barred topics is that one can come to understand not only the discourse the CCP intended to smother, but the general direction they intended to steer the nation’s scholarship as well. Hence, since this proclamation under the Xi administration, Chinese political scholarship from within PRC advocating even the notion of democratization or Western values has become highly stigmatized.

It is not only scholarship that shares in these restrictions. It also extends to the internet. As during Hu Jintao’s and Xi’s administrations the internet came to further highlight the CCP’s dramatic fear of dissemination of unregulated knowledge and influence. This fear stemmed from the fact that the internet had the ability to break the “long tradition of managing information flows to ensure that the party is the primary, if not sole, provider of information.” Additionally, this fear was significantly unique as it was a new frontier of censorship as a whole, in that the party could not simply look to Soviet methods and revision it for the PRC as the nation never had to deal with internet media, thus the CCP was forced to navigate uncharted waters. Therefore, since the early 2000s the PRC has pushed out different legislation, like its Great Firewall of China or prison sentences for those who post “slanderous” content, with the intent to reign in on

⁷⁸ (Saich, 2015, 79.)

and monitor information and representation outside of the party's influence. This reigning in on however has only been expanded since its earliest, now considered lax, legislation as the new media has come under further control. For example, Xi was quoted in an interview in 2013 as stating that the internet is "now the major battlefield of public opinion" and that "it is important to construct a powerful Internet army to gain control of it." Since then, what this come to represent is that total control and repression on open media and internet access for the vast majority of the Chinese populace; this is most especially apparent within the realm of access to Western soft power influences like democratization.⁷⁹

Through these new forms of censorship and control what has come to further flourishing within CCP Xi rhetoric is the association of democratization as a Western ideal that undermines not only the CCP but the PRC. This is because under the CCP ideology there is no country without the party, and thus to associate a China with democracy is in itself anti-Chinese. While not a creation of Xi himself, as the notion of the party being inseparable from the country has long been a dictum of party rhetoric, it is particularly more important under Xi. Through the combination of the historical blurring of lines between country and party now mixed with Xi's new creation of blurring the party and himself, he has further cemented the inseparability of Xi from the PRC. Therefore, Xi, much by his own creation has made himself the face of the nation.

Limitations and Resistances of Current PRC to Democratic Change

Now with a more thorough understanding of the PRC system as a whole, I believe it is important to briefly address limitations of democratization within the nation's current structure, in an effort to both quell expectations and be aware of barriers within.

⁷⁹ (Saich, 2015, 366-367.)

First, is the nominal understanding on the different role and influence that leadership has within the PRC as compared to the West. For example, the important distinction and understanding of the top institutional governmental apparatus as well as the term Paramount Leader. First, though constitutionally the largest power is centralized within the National People's Congress (NPC) and their national meetings held once every five years, the de facto reality is that "power lies within the Political Bureau or Politburo."⁸⁰

Since the Politburo's early creation in the Maoist era, it has been the centralization of the nation's top power, and unlike the 2,270 delegates of the NPC the Politburo has historically never been comprised of more than 25 members. Even within this membership however it is the Politburo Standing Committee, the Politburo's "inner cabinet," where the true heads of PRC direct the nation. Within the standing committee membership is comprised of the General Secretary, Premier, heads of state Commissions, and similar top leadership. Though beyond the general makeup of its leadership even scholarship on the subject notes that "little about the actual workings of the committee are known except for the fact that meetings are frequent, and that discussion is said to be unrestrained." This unknown stretches even to the jurisdiction of the politburo authority as the constitutional statues "give no idea about the extent of the powers." The only 'knows' being that they are elected by the Commission underneath, they "convene the sessions of said committee," and that they exercise "function and power" when is not in session.

⁸⁰ (Saich, 2015, 90.)

Thus, for all intents and purposes it should be understood that for those within the Politburo, especially the Standing committee, their power within the PRC is absolute.⁸¹

Second, the term paramount leader is one specifically used within the case of the PRC that describes the “true” leader of the party despite official position. While originally first used within the case of Deng Xiaoping, as he directly influenced the nations course after his retirement in 1989, the term has since then also been associated with others like Jiang Zemin and currently Xi Jinping. Within the case of Xi however, he has forgone the indirect power dynamic struggle and chosen to extend his position indefinitely. This power struggle within the CCP is often seen in means like lobbying to putting ones proteges within the Politburo, or within the case of Jiang Zemin, putting loyal members of his factions high within the leadership of the Peoples Liberation Army.⁸² For Xi however, while he has more fully consolidated official power he has made a significant departure from his predecessors and put the PRC as a whole under further authoritative control.⁸³ In short it is important to understand that though a figure may be seated on the highest positions within the CCP, General Secretary or Chairman of Military, they are not necessarily the leader. This distinction is important to note because it helps to highlight the general levels of opaqueness and centralized control when it comes to the party’s faculties or rhetoric, and further extrapolates the difficulties of democratic transition. Additionally, principally within the case of Xi, his official placement in multiple top positions serves to further highlight the current administrations emphasis on centralized control and break from prior norms.

⁸¹ (Saich, 2015, 90, 94-95.)

⁸² (Saich, 2015, 95.)

⁸³ (Jash 2018, 641.)

Third, Xi's securing of his own political position has also been directly backed up by his official "anti-corruption" campaign that has been ongoing since late 2012.⁸⁴ While within this work I do not intend to go into depth further on party factionalism the campaign official numbers as of only 2018 were already "sweeping up some 2 million" CCP officials by Xi's administration of "both high and low rank."⁸⁵ To Xi, internal corruption within the PRC is an internal blight that, unless taken control of, threatens not only the party's power but his own. This is because through means of corruption, like bribery or amassing wealth, it "allows for the creation of alternative centers of power within the state."⁸⁶ Therefore, it should be understood that vast majority of the anti-corruption is removal of "political foes" not only to consolidate power but to defend it. This goes for both the military and party as these campaigns are combined with Xi's stringent policy push for "the Party's absolute leadership over the PLA".⁸⁷ Hence, it should be acknowledged that Xi is keenly aware of internal factionalism within the party, and actively ready to remove those who pose a threat to his rule.

Fourth, and quite similar to prior's enforcement of internal policy through anti-corruption campaigns, is the central importance of internal legitimacy. While it is common to assume state legitimacy of a regime is centered on its perspective to the populace, in how its populace views the legitimacy of its leaders, scholarship is apt to acknowledge the importance it has to its internal elites. Rather, that "legitimacy is crucial to even the most unjust and bloody-minded dictatorships...as a lack of legitimacy among the population as a whole does not spell a crisis of

⁸⁴ (Garrick and Bennett, 2018, 103.)

⁸⁵ "Visualizing China's Anti-Corruption Campaign," December 30, 2020.
<https://www.chinafile.com/infographics/visualizing-chinas-anti-corruption-campaign>.

⁸⁶ Khan, Sulmaan Wasif. *Haunted by Chaos: China's Grand Strategy from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2018, 213.

⁸⁷ (Garrick and Bennett 2018, 104.)

legitimacy for the regime unless it begins to infect the elites tied to the regime itself.”⁸⁸ In particular the scholarship acknowledges that it is the “those that hold the monopoly of coercive power” within the state “such as the ruling party, the armed forces, and the police.”⁸⁹ Hence, by looking at Xi’s corruption campaigns and centralizing of control of both party and military as means of continuously reinforcing his own administration’s legitimacy, it can be understood just how significantly Xi fears internal party instability.

Fifth, and something often less addressed, is the general principle of the infallibility of the party and its decisions. Because of this infallibility, to double back on the changes within the Xi administration, even for top officials from within the party, is relatively unthinkable. This is because it is not only possible but common to lay blame on “tigers and flies,” or rather both upper and lower-level officials within CCP for scandals or corruption. To lay blame on Xi’s direct faction however, who no less have been leading the “anti-corruption” campaigns, would be admitting to powerful faults at the party’s core.⁹⁰

This is in combination with the fact that there is a general “vulnerability” within the party when there are large scale disputes due to “overdependence on personal relationships” as it has “ramifications throughout the system.”⁹¹ These ramifications materialize themselves in the form of “large scale purges” like what is witnessed under Xi. These purges split lines and create a “wrong party” who are deemed to have “deceived other party members and the masses and led the party away from its correct line.”⁹² Even further, there are party fears that continued rampant

⁸⁸ (Fukuyama, 1992, 16.)

⁸⁹ (Ibid.)

⁹⁰ (Saich, 2015, 77.) - For example, case of Bo Xilai, a former top level official once part of politburo, was convicted and removed from the party. With his ally Zhou Yongkang following soon after with his removal from the standing committee.

⁹¹ (Ibid, 89.)

⁹² (Ibid.)

crackdown can have the counter effect of undermining the legitimacy of party; as they “increase sentiment of many that the party has become intolerably corrupt and cannot reform itself,” thus undermining the entire stability of the system. Hence, this why there are never admitted mistakes by the central administration in charge, as when things go wrong it was not the fault of the current administration but that of “wrong party” and their influence.⁹³

Sixth, mentioned briefly prior, since the late 1970s the PRCs opening up policies, along with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the nation has moved away from much its original Soviet, Marxist, and Maoist rhetoric. In moving away from this rhetoric the party hoped to free itself from the original socialist dogma that many had perspective to bind the nation away from the focus of national interest. Ironically however, in this party rhetoric to free itself from its foundational binds they stepped right into some of the original criticisms of Marxist thought.

More specifically, the original contradiction that the foundational Communist state is merely a “transitional device for achieving total liberation of the people,” and that once it does so the current “pseudo-popular state,” the one that is deemed “nothing but a highly despotic government of the masses by a new and very small aristocracy of real or pretended scholars,” will come abolish itself.⁹⁴ When in fact, scholarship has argued a state such as this “can have no other objective than to perpetuate itself, and that it can engender and nurture only slavery in the people who endure it.”⁹⁵ Thus, I would argue in PRC’s attempt to separate itself from its Marxist origins it managed to further ingrain itself within some of its most foundational criticisms.

⁹³ (Ibid, 78.)

⁹⁴ Bakunin, Mikhail Aleksandrovich, Marshall Shatz, and Paul Avrich Collection (Library of Congress). *Statism and Anarchy*. Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, 204-205.

⁹⁵ (Ibid.)

Yet, simultaneously and seemingly conversely, while the CCP does fall into some of the foundational criticisms of Marxism, it is necessary within discourse to acknowledge that the modern PRC is principally communist in name only. Rather, when viewing prospects for democratization it is important to not fall into the trap of believing that the political ideology would be shifting from communism to democracy. For example, within the modern PRC Marxist communism has become so much of a shallow veneer that in August of 2018 over 50 University students in Beijing were arrested after members of Marxist student groups were trying to “help organize workers” at a blue-collar welding equipment factory in the city of Shenzhen. While this was not an isolated occurrence, as parallel cases have popped up since, this incident occurred just few months after bicentennial of Marx’s birth, in which Xi stated that “As Communists, we should incorporate Marxist classics and principles into our lifestyle and treat Marxism as a spiritual pursuit.” Hence, it is important to understand that Marxist communism is merely one of the CCP’s means of legitimacy and social order by portraying the party as representative of the people; as whenever this portrayal is questioned or Marxism is actually acted upon the rhetoric is silenced.⁹⁶

Consequently, while the nation no doubt shares in similar characteristics with communist states, such as centralized state ownership, it is important to readily acknowledge the ideological shifts the nation has seen since the original Maoist era when attempting to view it under democratization theory. As under Deng’s reforms of late 1970s and Xi’s reforms since 2012 the

⁹⁶ Schmitz, Rob. “In China, The Communist Party’s Latest, Unlikely Target: Young Marxists.” NPR. NPR, November 21, 2018, 1-2.

nation has significantly shifted to a hybridist regime of relatively open capitalist economy and increasingly restrictive political ideology all under an authoritative surveillance state.⁹⁷

Therefore, through these six examples alone, it already begins to become blatantly apparent just what is truly asked when the notion of a democratizing PRC comes up. With the current ideologically authoritative make-up of the PRC and the level of control of its leadership being its foremost influential negators of the democratization process.

On Reality of Democratization in the PRC

Now with an understanding of the PRC's history, makeup of the CCP, and internal limitations over these last decades it is now time to turn back to the foundational theory and fundamental question of the work; why hasn't the PRC democratized? As addressed within the beginning of this work, the primary trends that I look at under democratization theory for the PRC are the apolitical Chinese populace who break from the democratic norms of civic culture, the lack of political freedoms despite the significant economic opening up and formation of middle class, and the hybrid nature of the PRC that has shifted back and forth from emphasis of single party state to personalistic regime. Each of these points represent three central concerns to positive correlations at democratization of the PRC.

⁹⁷ Relatively open capitalist economy as the state still plays an active hand in domestic control, like ownership of deemed critical sectors, direct control of currency market value, and interference when business elites anger the Party; like the case of Jack Ma's disappearance and transfer of Ant Group in 2020. Restrictive political ideology in Xi's push back to cult of personality and totalitarian nature of the Maoist era like what has been discussed prior within this work, as well as the Orwellian implementation of social credit system, censoring of total media, and crack-down of dissenting groups.

The first concern is the apolitical Chinese populace who break from the democratic norms of civic culture. As it is civic culture which is needed to “maintain the delicate balance required by a democratic system in which citizens recognize and obey the authority of governing elites while also pressuring them to be responsive and accountable.”⁹⁸ Therefore, because the Chinese populace is apolitical, due to the narrative of rational ignorance that is pushed, they only follow the first aspect of the democratization trend. Rather, Chinese citizens “recognize and obey the authority of governing elites,” but they in large do not “pressure them to be responsive and accountable” as the average citizen alone stays apolitical.⁹⁹ Even if they were to break from this norm and chose to be political however, the average citizen holds no political power and would be punished if they made too much confrontation. Thus, not only has CCP control of the rule of law and information made it difficult to be political outside of state nationalism, but you are punished if you do so anyway.

The second concern, a quite similar to the first, lack of political freedoms despite open economy and growth of the middle class, is due to three primary reasons. First, since the late 1970s, and the introduction of Deng Xiaoping’s economic opening up of the nation, the Chinese people have been steadily moving away from the economic hardships they suffered under the cultural revolution of Maoist era. Second, what this has in turn allowed is the rapid growth of the nation and the creation of a new middle class, with access to luxuries and accommodations that were unthinkable few decades prior. Thus, by gaining access to said luxuries said middle class is now supportive of the system that provided it. Third, now with the general support of a

⁹⁸ (Kauffman, 2018, 10.)

⁹⁹ There have been cases however of populace protests of blatant corruption of wealth at the provincial level that are then cracked down on by the central state. Though this has significantly decreased with implementation of the social credit system as well as further restrictive control of internet media. Additionally, political protests of the central state however is and was never permitted.

significant portion of the nation's populace the steady increase of authoritative policy, that was always nominally in place, is not questioned. Therefore, by combination of an increasingly authoritarian regime with a populace that is in broad support of the system at large, you create the unique trend that can be seen within the modern PRC.

The third and last concern revolves around the hybrid nature of the PRC that has shifted back and forth from emphasis of single party state to personalistic regime. It is this last democratization trend that most directly benefits to the understanding of the historical eras of the nation. One could argue, that within the 1970s of the PRC, Deng's economic and political shift of the nation facilitated the regime away from the personalistic regime of the Maoist era into a single party state; while also having nominal Western frameworks such as transitions of authoritative power and similar constitutional foundations. Since Deng's death however, while there was a slow general shift to further forms of authoritarian control as well as continued faction infighting, the nation continued to follow in his objective of a consolidated single party regime. This shift was not to last though, as Xi's stringent implementation of centralization of power has completely broken from his predecessors. Because of this shift of emphasis of single party state to personalistic, Xi has begun to engrain the cult of personality of the Maoist era once again into the PRC. Thus, by centralization of power, the democratization trends of personalistic regimes begin to take precedence over the prior single party state. For example, within personalistic regimes it is far more "likely to be replaced by a new dictatorship than by a democracy," and that the regime is "more likely to be overthrown in revolutions, civil wars, popular uprisings, or invasions."¹⁰⁰ This is wholly unlike single party states who "when they see

¹⁰⁰ Geddes Barbara, "What Causes Democratization" *The Oxford Handbook of Political Science*, Oxford University Press, 2009, 17.

the writing on the wall, put great effort into negotiation of electoral institutions” to best serve the ease of transition and safety for themselves.¹⁰¹ The indoctrination of Xi’s political thought and removal of his term limit however has erased previous modes of succession and divisions of power. Thus, following trends in democratization theory, I argue Xi’s new emphasis of a personalistic regime has shifted the future of PRC beyond his administration into an arguably even more unstable path. His emphasis of centralized control is something the country has not seen since Mao, and the current prospects of democratization are just as grim.

Through the combination of an evolving centralized authoritative state directly controlling the influence of all Western soft power, with a large portion of the population who economically benefited from the regime system, and thus have no interest in these influences, the notion of a democratizing PRC within the relative future, beyond complete and dramatic shift in administrations, is relatively unthinkable.

Conclusion

The transition across the historical eras since the 1980s shows us a transformation of not only party leadership, but CCP’s evolving understanding of stability across each decade. This evolving understanding of stability within each era from acceptance of change, to priority economy, and last importance of control have shown to be the significant influences to party ideology and the nation at large.

Within 1989, student protests materialized for many within the party inner fears of not only challenges to their leadership, but of the significant divisions within the party itself. The

¹⁰¹ (Ibid.)

party and its grip of the nation was not as stable as many thought it to be. Hence, we can come to understand the party's lashing out at what it saw as those who undermined that stability, as well as the acceptance that there must be change if they are not to repeat themselves.

The transfer of Hong Kong in 1997, the acceptance of the "One Country, two systems" motto, and the influx of democratic scholarship within the nation after the fall of the Soviet Union reflect the growth of its priority of the economy. Rather, that because the PRC accepted the Western influences that the original Hong Kong motto and open scholarship represented, this era reflects that transitional understanding that the economy comes first if its policy does not directly undermine stability of the party.

Conversely, the Hong Kong protests in 2019-2020, redefining of the one country, two systems motto, silencing of scholarship, constitutional incorporation of Xi Jinping Thought, removal of term limit, push of MCF, total control of the PLA, and more have all come to symbolize the stringent shift from the prior era's central emphasis of the economy. Within Hong Kong alone this shift has come to represent the understanding that Xi Jinping now sees the original deal made under the prior administration, and the Western influence that it represents, as unbalanced. It can be understood that the current CCP administration no longer intends to, or rather that it no longer has to, display a veneer or even entertain the idea of a democratizing or democratic institution. Xi's priority of control and centralization of power have come to define the current era of the PRC and represent his personal understanding of the nation's, as well as the party's, best path to stability.

What Hong Kong's future holds cannot be said, however one can assume that if they are to continue along a similar disposition under the Xi administration there will be no difference between it and other PRC provinces when it comes to authoritative control. As long as the Xi

administration holds power, the prospects of democratizing China is inconceivable. Though scholarship on the discussion is apt to note the democratic prospects pointed to by the existence of the National People's Congress and the possibilities it could hold, until substantial institutional change occurs the NPC will remain a rubber stamp committee.

Nevertheless, as I noted within the beginning of this work, my intent was never to demonize political systems nor to advocate anti-democratic rhetoric. It must be said, however, that the authoritative and internationally aggressive path that the current PRC has taken, though perhaps leading it in the direction of the nation's end goal of retaking its place as the global hegemon, is isolating itself on the global stage. Beyond discourse on the nations perceived largest aggressor, the United States, or even what has been discussed within this work the PRC's international dialogue has become increasingly confrontational under Xi. Even the relationship with its Asian neighbors is in constant tension, especially with the growing concern in sovereignty and jurisdictional boundaries within the South China Sea. Within the case of Africa, concerns of large scale Chinese infrastructural investment as covers for Chinese work immigration, rapid securing of raw resources, and debt trap diplomacy have economically damaged developing regions. Highly aggressive nationalist rhetoric on the reunification of Taiwan and the dramatic increase in PLA Naval drills within the region only serve to further emphasize the issue.

No country or administration is free of its ridicule yet concerns over the rampant growth of PRC's presence in international realm, with the sole aggressive intent of its own national interest, is a growing concern. What the future holds for the nation, even beyond its nominal possibilities of democratization, is unknown; only that if the current path that the PRC has taken

is to continue there are seemingly only two likely outcomes each based on the stance taken by not only the currently effected nations but the international stage at large.

For the first outcome, an equivalently defiant stance from most influential effected nations is taken against the PRC's economic and military coercion; choosing instead to reestablish international trade and defense treatise to the overall detriment of the PRC. As is the current intention of the *Quadrilateral Security Dialogue* or QUAD, a coalition of between the U.S, Japan, India, and Australia with the central intention of limiting the PRC's influence within East Asia. Only time will tell of its effectiveness as the official coalition is in its infancy and international pressures from the PRC on the individual member states are contending against rhetoric within the pact. Therefore, like the QUAD, this process of defiance would not be quick, and it would be expected that the PRC would equally raise its international pressure to confront what it would perceive is a strangle hold to the nation. How long the CCP could keep the nation stabilized under growing international sanctions or regulations is unknown, as though Xi has further subjected the nation and the party under his ideology and control, much of the legitimacy of the party comes from the economic stability and growth of the nation. It would thus be expected that this international pressure would in turn rapidly increase nationalist and militarist rhetoric within the nation, with the party further leaning on the notion of foreign intervention and century of humiliation, which would likely be a means of significant stabilizing power for the party, at least momentarily. If not careful however, the conditions of Germany after the first World War would tell us what industrious and internationally isolated nation riled up on the rhetoric of nationalism and militarism can create. Hence, within this path, if not treaded carefully, international isolation may force the party to believe militaristic intervention is the only option.

While one might argue that in order to tread carefully and not create the analogous conditions of Germany after first World War within this outcome, a clear line must be set on the separation of the party and Chinese people. I argue this would likely be futile. It would be futile as those most effected by a seemingly isolated PRC would be those very people, hence even if they were to learn of this outside distinction of party and people within the PRC, why would they believe discourse from nations who have put them in this very hardship. Rather, I would argue that the most realistic possibility that does not involve international militaristic intervention is the creation of the clear line of separation between Xi's administration and the party as a whole. Therefore, instead of the expectation of an apolitical or nationalistic populace internally shifting the nation, international dialogue would make it clear that it is the current authoritative direction the nations leadership has taken and not the party itself. This in turn would create the possibility to cause further internal pressure against more authoritative path of the party and lean it in a direction back to Deng Xiaoping's more open policies of the 1980s, who most within the PRC still readily acknowledge as the modernizer of the nation. With Xi's centralization of power in the recent years however how this internal factionalism would play out is unknown, but as long as the realization within the party that international sphere's actions are due to the nation's current direction and not the party itself the possibility of peaceful coalition of the PRC under the Communist Party and international realm at large remains.

For the second outcome, instead of defiant stance from all or most, the majority remain indecisive or indifferent believing it does not concern their nation or it is an issue for larger global powers. Within this outcome economic or military coercion from the PRC is at least nominally accepted, and through this the nation slowly but continuedly gains influence within the international realm as nations are coerced or persuaded individually. This continued gain

with the international realm then begins to directly compete with United States current position as the global hegemon, and further pressures the U.S to either take military and economic action or withdraw influence within current strategic U.S backed regions. Inaction is not an option, as PRC's presence within these regions would be seen by allies as weakness or faulting promises of U.S security. For example, within the South China Sea, rapid increase in PRC's confrontation over international jurisdictions claims with its smaller neighbors have increased calls for U.S allied support; with the perception that lack of said support prior was forcing the hands of the smaller neighbors to lean closer to accommodating the PRC's jurisdictional claims. Thus, at least within the realm of democracies, if the international realm chooses instead to accommodate and accept the new PRC, the nation will no doubt soon find its place back as the global hegemon to the detriment of democracy everywhere. Within this possibility it is not far off to look back to the cold war's bipolarity of two politically oppositional monoliths within the world; each monolith igniting proxy wars over fear of all out military conflict.

In the end, with all signs pointing to the ever increasingly authoritative nature of PRC for the foreseeable future, there is still room for debate. For even in the last years of the Soviet Union, much of Western scholarship readily acknowledged socialist monolith just as influential, stable, and seemingly eternal as they did decades prior. For example, within on August 1st 1989, just after the Tiananmen Incident, Henry Kissinger wrote an article addressing the need not to isolate and punish China as "the United States needs China as a possible counterweight to Soviet aspirations in Asia"¹⁰²Hence, even though in hindsight scholars now know the Soviet system was breaking at the seams and would fully crumble under its own weight two years later,

¹⁰² Kissinger, Henry. "THE CARICATURE OF DENG AS A TYRANT IS UNFAIR." The Washington Post. WP Company, August 1, 1989, 1.

scholarship of the period failed to predict it. Could the same be said of the PRC? Francis Fukuyama argued in 1992 that “Western confidence in the stability of Soviet communism rested on a belief, conscious or not, that the Russian people were not interested in or ready for democracy,” something I argue about the Chinese populace within this very work.¹⁰³ As much as scholarship can point to trends and make predictions even the best of it cannot predict the future. The best hope when looking far beyond modernity is being general with our predictions and acknowledging that there will be both foreseeable and unforeseeable events that will influence the course of Chinese history in unknown ways. People are ultimately unpredictable, why would their history or their future be any different?

¹⁰³ (Fukuyama, 1992, 25.)

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VITA

Agustin Clayton Miranda attended the University of Texas at Austin in 2015 and received a Bachelor of Arts for double majoring in History and Sociology in 2019. Soon after he attended Texas A&M International University and joined the History and Political Thought Program where he completed his Master of Arts in 2021. His field of specialization focuses on the rise and developments of major modern powers on the international stage, with current major focus on the Peoples Republic of China.