

**Incremental Democratization with Chinese Characteristics**

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## **Synopsis**

This thesis is centrally concerned with the ‘democratic debate’ and assessing the prospects for democratic transition in contemporary China. The first part of the thesis (including Chapters 1 and 2) reviews the (primarily) Western academic literature on democracy and democratisation. It is argued that while this literature is useful-up to a point-in understanding how the debate of democratisation is unfolding in China, and the processes that are generating political reforms and other changes that are conducive to democracy, it has wholly neglected the specificity of the Chinese case. The third chapter of the thesis duly embarks on a discussion of both the history of debate and discussion in China historically, arguing that this debate and discussion has to be understood in the context of Chinese history and culture specifically. This chapter identifies two strands of thought about democracy among academic commentators in China: first those who foresee a swift transition to democracy and the ‘gradualists’, who are primarily concerned with how problems of attendant social and political instability will impact on the prospects for democratisation. The second half of the thesis assesses the impact of Chinese economic reforms since the late 1970s, along with contemporary globalization and China’s growing integration into the global economy on the trajectory of political change in China. It explores important political changes within the regime, the emerging civil society forces, focusing specifically on changing state-society relations evidenced in growing village autonomy, changes in press media, and in other areas.

The thesis combines the technique of discourse analysis (‘reading’ and analysing the changing discourse among state and civil society actors, including official political

documents and speeches; and media -television and newspapers- and NGO sources) with an assessment of institutional changes within the party (elite), changes in power structures (the limited diffusion of power to civil society through electoral reform and changes in media operation and control), and changing state-society relations.

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## **INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

## 0.1 What's (Believed to Be) Happening in China?

A few years ago, when a woman at my work place got to know that I came from China, she raised her left eyebrow and asked, 'What's China's capital? Is it Japan?' From the expression on her face, I realized that she was not making a joke. In 2008, Beijing successfully hosted the 29th Olympic Games, and about 30 million British audiences watched the game live broadcasted by BBC. I guess that kind of questions would not be asked again.

Indeed, with China's economy experiencing an average annual Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate in excess of 10% for the past 30 years, it has become the third largest economy in the world. People's impression of China as a red communist state has been changing along with China's economic growth and opening up. China's accession to the World Trade Organisation in December 2001 has accelerated the opening of the Chinese economy and improved the competitiveness of its industries. With a market of over one billion consumers, China has also become one of the most attractive markets in the world. Foreign direct investment has increased rapidly after the Reform and Opening up. Some commentators have described this phenomenon as 'China rising.'<sup>1</sup>

Alongside market liberalization and economic prosperity, the politics in China are undergoing changes, and some of the changes are significant. After three decades of market liberalization reform and opening to the outside world, in Chinese people's

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *China's Rise: Challenges and Opportunities*, by C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Nicholas R. Lardy and Derek J. Mitchell, 2008, ISBN

daily vocabulary, or those published in the newspapers and appearing in official documents or government reports, we find popularization of words such as ‘fazhi (rule of law)’ , ‘renquan (human rights)’ , ‘yifazhiguo (govern the state according to the law)’ , ‘zhengzhiwenming (political civilization)’ , ‘yirenweiben (people as the bases of governance)’ , ‘baohusichang (protection of private property)’ , ‘hexieshehui (harmonious society)’ , ‘gongminshehui (civil society)’ and ‘minzhu (democracy)’ . For instance, in the Political Report to the Seventeenth Party’ s Congress of Chinese Communist Party, the word ‘minzhu (democracy)’ appeared over 60 times. All these ideas and values are those found to be more popular in the western liberal democratic world. Meanwhile, anti-democratic ideas or actions have lost their popularity. What can be traced in the recent years in China’ s politics is the decentralization of powers from the party-state in different ways. Particularly, different ways of distribution of power and influence among a range of actors other than just state (government),

### 0.1.1 Grassroots democratic practice

Autonomy and self-governance has become the lifestyle of Chinese citizens. On 8<sup>th</sup> of January, 1980, villagers of He Zhai, in Guang Xi Province, took part in an election of their own Villagers’ Committee, which gave birth to the first self-governing organization. Seven years later, after fierce arguments, the Trial of Organic Law of Villagers’ Committee was finally drafted; another ten years later, it was heavily amended and became a real law. ‘Sea election’ is another creative invention by

villagers. The first such practice was found in Pin An Village of Lishu County in Ji Lin Province in 1991. A principle of ‘no drawn frame, no set tone (bu hua kuangkuang, bu ding diaozi)’ was agreed and all the candidates were nominated by villagers. (It used to be the authority that made the list of the candidates and villagers had to vote from the prearranged list). This is described as ‘picking up a needle from the sea’ and that’s what this way of election is named after. Of course, soon it was copied and advanced in the practice by villagers from other places.

The City Residents Committee is the counter part of the Villagers Committee as the grassroots autonomous organizations in the cities. In a very long time, the members of the City Residents Committee were appointed by the government. In June 1999, the first trial election took place in Shen He District of Shen Yang City in which the residents practised their own right to choose the members of the committee. Since then, this new form of democratic practice has become the focus of the media and the public. For example, the experiment of direct election in Wu Ming of Guang Xi Province in 2001, the Cha’ e election (margined election) in Jiu Dao Wan community in Beijing in 2002, and the incidents during the direct election in Yan Tian District of Shen Zhen in 2005, were reported extensively by media. Until the end of 2007, all the residents committees in Ning Bo City of Zhe Jiang Province have successfully practiced this direct election.

However, it is undeniable that, whether in the cities or in the rural areas, the grassroots democratic self-governance has not reached its ideal state. For instance, the long lasting clans influence, administrative intervention, and bribery in the election to

buy votes, have thrown a shadow upon this new form of autonomy and self-governance. Also there are other doubts about peasants' capability to practice democracy as they are assumed to be under educated and dull, and the competence of the city residents committee to handle the clashing interest both inside and outside the community. These keep posing as challenges to the grassroots self-governing practice. Despite these challenges, many commentators have noticed this bottom-up democratic path which they believe will provide more opportunities and a wider platform for more advanced democratic practice or even political transformation<sup>2</sup>.

### 0.1.2 Separation of powers

Separation of powers in the state organs, the enhancement of the role of People's Congress as the legislature, and the rule by law has changed into the idea of the rule of law. The regime of China has been undergoing a series of changes. For example, the centralization of power has been regarded as one of the reasons for China's inefficient bureaucracy. Since the beginning of the Reform in the late 1970s, the leaders of the Communist Party have been trying to carry out the separation of powers, including the separation of the Party and the government, and the separation of government and the enterprises. Constitutionally, the National People's Congress is the highest legislature of China<sup>3</sup>. However, during the Cultural Revolution, the whole legislature system was almost paralysed. One of the major tasks in the Reform era is

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<sup>2</sup> As elaborated in Chapter 5

<sup>3</sup> Article 57, Section 1, Chapter 3 of Constitution of People's Republic of China, Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress and promulgated for implementation by the Proclamation of the National People's Congress on December 4, 1982, 1457

to re-establish People's Congress at all levels. The Electoral Law of 1979<sup>4</sup>, and the New Constitution of 1982<sup>5</sup>, established the groundwork for the reform of the People's Congress which includes empowerment of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, setting up the rules that the delegates to the people's congress below the county-level should be directly elected by the voters, and for those local people's congress above the county-level should have standing committees. Another two functions and powers of the People's Congress were also supported by Legislation Law in 2000<sup>6</sup>, and Supervision Law in 2006<sup>7</sup> respectively.

The Reform era saw the progressive empowerment of the people's congress as the legislature. It all started in July 1979, when seven laws were ratified by the National People's Congress including the Criminal Law<sup>8</sup>. As of 2008, there are 229 laws in effect, and the quantity of other local rules and regulations is over 7,000, which altogether formed a modernized legal system. From the state of 'lawless' to the state of 'rule of law', in this process, the people's congresses have played an

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<sup>4</sup> The Electoral Law of the People's Republic of China on the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses, was enacted in 1953, revised in 1979, 44364,

<sup>5</sup> Constitution of People's Republic of China, Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress and promulgated for implementation by the Proclamation of the National People's Congress on December 4, 1982, 1457

<sup>6</sup> The Law on Legislation of the People's Republic of China, 2000, 26942

<sup>7</sup> Law of the People's Republic of China on the Supervision of the Standing Committees of People's Congresses at Various Levels, 2006, 78894

<sup>8</sup> Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, 1979, 556; the other six laws are, Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China, 558; Organic Law of the People's Republic of China on Local People's Congresses and Local People's Governments at Various Levels, 44365; The Electoral Law of the People's Republic of China on the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses, 44364; Organic Law of the People's Procuratorates of People's Republic of China, 44457; Organic Law of the People's Courts of People's Republic of China, 44379; Law of

irreplaceable and contributive role.

Another more substantial change in the role of people's congresses as the legislature is that it is no longer a 'voting machine' in the procedure or 'rubber stamp'. For instance, in 1986, when discussing on the amended draft of 'Zhian Guanli Chufa Tiaoli' (Regulations of the PRC on Administrative Penalties for Public Security), severe disputes over lawmaking happened for the first time amongst the deputies in the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. The law was finally ratified after several reconsiderations and discussions. The delegates to all levels of the people's congress are more concerned about the protection of the rights of citizens. For example, in 1998, the draft of the Amendment to the Highway Law was twice rejected by the Standing Committee of the NPC based on the concern that the fuel tax would become a burden to the peasants (the Amendment was finally approved in October 1999)<sup>9</sup>. It is said to be the ice-breaking act in the lawmaking history of NPC. In Chapter 4 of this thesis, the reform of the legislature organ will be explored more in detail.

### 0.1.3 Checks and balances

Chinese people are now more able to vote periodically to choose and remove political leaders at the higher levels (the town level, county level and even the district level); they are more actively involved with politics, joining NGOs or other movements, for

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the People's Republic of China on Chinese-Foreign Equity Joint Ventures, 559.

<sup>9</sup> Highway Law of the People's Republic of China, 1997, 18138, Highway Law of the People's Republic of China (99 amendment), 23554

example, and they are more actively engaged in lobbying activities and they are more capable of influencing the decision-making process.

In 1998, the township mayor of Bu Yun Town in Sui Ning City, Si Chuan Province was voted directly by all the residents in Bu Yun Town. However, it was actually contradictory to the legal regulation that the township mayors should be voted by the people's congresses at the same level. Later this experimental election was called off. But the exploration was not suspended. Another new way was invented and named 'Gong Tui Gong Xuan' (recommended by the public, chosen by the public). In general, the candidates are chosen through three ways; self-recommendation, public recommendation and nomination by the authority (usually from the Party). After the procedures of assessment, giving speeches and asking and answering questions, the list of candidates is finalized and then the elections are held according to the statutory rules.

After 2002, 'Gong Tui Gong Xuan' reaches to the higher level of county and district. In 2003, the first county mayor elected through 'Gong Tui Gong Xuan' was appointed in Pei County of Jiang Su Province. In 2004, Bai Xia and Yu Hua Tai Districts of Nan Jing City also practiced the 'Gong Tui Gong Xuan' principle in the elections of the district mayors.

An official accountability system has gradually come into being. Especially after the 2003 SARS epidemic, the central government started the first 'accountability storm' in a national scale after the foundation of PRC. Since then, more officials are being



held to account. For instance, in recent years, the officials in charge of the coal mines which had a gas explosion in Shan Xi province were reported in the news and were either dismissed or accepted blame and resigned.

The Administrative Procedure Law in 1989 was considered as a law for people to lodge a complaint against the officials.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, after its ratification, the cases of ‘people accusing the officials’ increased rapidly, about 27-40% of the time the people wins the case<sup>11</sup>. In the public decision making process, people have more opportunities to express their wills through different ways and the price hearing system is one of the most important ways.

## **0. 2 How Can We Understand This Change? Who Are In The Debate?**

There has been plenty of research that explores and analyses all the social, political and economical changes that are taking place in contemporary China<sup>12</sup>. There have also been long lasting debates over this subject, especially on the implications of the

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<sup>10</sup> Administrative Procedure Law of the People’s Republic of China, 4274,

<sup>11</sup> Minxin Pei, ‘Citizens v. Mandarins: Administrative Litigation in China,’ *China Quarterly* (December 1997): 832-62, cited in Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’ , *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.15

<sup>12</sup> For example, *China’s Rise: Challenges and Opportunities*, by C. Fred Bergsten, Charles Freeman, Nicholas R. Lardy and Derek J. Mitchell, 2008, ISBN 978-0-88132-417-4, Peterson Institute for International Economics; Henry S. Rowen, ‘When Will the Chinese People Be Free?’ , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 38-52; Dali L. Yang, ‘China’s Long March to Freedom’ , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.61; Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57; Mickel Oksenberg, ‘Confronting a Classic Dilemma’ , *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 27-34; B. He, Dilemmas of Pluralist Development and Democratization in China, *Democratization*, 3, 3, 1996; etc.

change and the prediction of what will be happening in China in the future, both inside and outside of China. Of course, one of the most intriguing predictions for the future of China is a (liberal) democratic state with free market policies. In the second chapter of this thesis, different academic groups within the debates are reviewed critically.

### 0.2.1 Modernization School

Basically, there are two large loosely formed groups who disagree with one another. The first one is called modernization school. They believe in the connectedness between economic development and political freedom. Modernization as a discipline began with Lipset's seminal article in 1959<sup>13</sup>. In his essay, modernity was regarded as universal experience, which would lead to similar societies and states.

Democracy is the outcome of modernization and capitalism. Modernization is also predictive: democracy appears in those societies that are able to 'replicate the original transition<sup>14</sup>' to capitalism and become enmeshed in global economic structures.<sup>15</sup>

For the modernization school, economic development can bring about democracy

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<sup>13</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *American Political Science Review* 53, 1, March 1959, pp. 69-105

<sup>14</sup> I. Roxborough, *Theories of Underdevelopment*, 1979 Atlantic Highland, NJ: Humanities Press

<sup>15</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p47, Publisher, Palgrave Macmillan

through a number of factors. It improves the education level of the citizens who can appreciate democratic values. It increases the income of the mass of the population. Because poverty, incomes gaps and mal-development could lead disadvantaged groups to seek redress through non-democratic means, or to support anti-democratic (nationalist, populist, communist) parties in the electoral process<sup>16</sup>. With economic security, the populace would develop a longer time perspective and more complex and gradualist views of politics. Economic development increases the size of the middle class who moderate conflict as they would choose moderate and democratic parties not the radical ones. It would also create unbearable pressure for an authoritarian structure. It also increases people's wealth and their liberties. Hence leads to the emergence of a large number of voluntary, autonomous social organizations. These autonomous organizations seek to increase political participation, place a check upon government, enhance political skills, and generate and diffuse new opinions. Economic development is therefore instrumental in the emergence of civil society.<sup>17</sup>

In the Chinese case, during the last three decades, China's openness to the world and the move away from the command economy has resulted in continuous nationwide economic growth. The theorists in the modernization school thus believe democratization will become inevitable as the political consequences of the economy, the communication revolution, and the emergence of a more diverse society and an urban middle class. Individuals will gain more independence, resources and power

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<sup>16</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.55, London: Sage

<sup>17</sup> Based on discussion in Diamond, pp. 475-485, which is in turn based principally on Lipset; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil*

vis-à-vis the state which necessitates the adoption of democracy and the rule of law. The representatives of this school are Henry S. Rowen<sup>18</sup>, Dali L. Yang<sup>19</sup>, Minxin Pei<sup>20</sup> and others. They tried to draw out the implications for democracy in a range of recent reforms, including the decentralization of power within the Party<sup>21</sup>, the strengthening of People' s Congresses at all levels of the hierarchy, especially the National People' s Congress, the rule of law, the rise of a civil society, and the democratic grassroots elections at the village-level.

Some observers also pointed out that as literacy, urbanization, and mass-media exposure rise, modernizing societies experience characteristic shifts in values. They assert that economic performance has become the legitimacy of rule<sup>22</sup>, therefore, the CCP, facing the risks of economic stagnation and political disaffection, will have to hold on to economic liberalization, which lays the groundwork for democratization.

The market economy which has been introduced to take the place of the central planned and command economic system has fuelled China' s growth in the last 3 decades. Along with the erosion of ideology belief, Chinese Communist Party has become Communist only in name.

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*Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3-5

<sup>18</sup> Henry S.Rowen, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?' , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 38-52

<sup>19</sup> Dali L. Yang, 'China' s Long March to Freedom' , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.61

<sup>20</sup> Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>21</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma' , *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>22</sup> B. He, Dilemmas of Pluralist Development and Democratization in China, 20

Liberalization does not automatically spawn democratization, however, once liberalization is initiated, there is always pressure for the regime to expand it. During this process, liberalizing moves may become radicalized and transformed into forces for democratization<sup>23</sup>. (This process is contingent upon individual circumstances.)

The modernizationists tend to see in China the same economic and sociological processes that have led to democracy elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia<sup>24</sup>. Here, some theorists raised the question of the sequence of economic and political when they explore into the democratization process in Asia.

Recent development in East Asia reopened the debate on the sequencing question. Combining ‘democracy’ and ‘developmentalism’ into the model of ‘democratic developmental state’, became especially influential in the early 1990s. This school asserted that the development-oriented, growth-promoting authoritarian regimes might be good for democracy in the long run.

To sum up, as most of these theorists agree, democratization will come to China sooner or later, of which the most possible form of Chinese democratization would be: a democratization initiated ‘from above’<sup>25</sup>; a process which might be difficult, protracted, complicated, and inconclusive.<sup>26</sup> The actual transition will undoubtedly be

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*Democratization*, 3, 3, 1996

<sup>23</sup> Based on discussion by Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, pp.48-9

<sup>24</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, ‘Confronting a Classic Dilemma’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 28

<sup>25</sup> Suisheng Zhao, ‘Three Scenarios’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.58

<sup>26</sup> Suisheng Zhao, ‘Three Scenarios’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.58

a politically contingent process.<sup>27</sup> China's leaders are likely to find introducing democracy at lower levels of the system and firmly committing themselves to the attainment of full democracy over a protracted period to be an increasingly attractive option.<sup>28</sup>

## 0.2.2 The Sceptics

The methodology of the modernization school has long been criticized. Firstly, it creates a model that claims that all societies can replicate this transition which actually occurred at a particular moment in space and time; secondly, modernization takes the experience of the West, especially the leading capitalist democracies, as universal rules whilst ignores the development of the East, it is overly structural, it is a purely political economy approach which ignores local cultural and socio-political legacies of nations and regions<sup>29</sup>; and last but not least, modernization theory never has been able to demonstrate a clear cause and effect relationship between economy and democracy<sup>30</sup>.

In the sceptics' camp, however, there has been criticism towards the over-determined nature of modernization theory. The sceptics see the authoritarian regime of China has been strengthened rather than weakened by the Reform, as the economic growth

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<sup>27</sup> Dali L. Yang, 'China's Long March to Freedom', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.61

<sup>28</sup> Michel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.33

<sup>29</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.227

<sup>30</sup> Paul G. Lewis, 'Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 13(1), 1997,

provides more resource for the elite to hold on to the control of the hierarchy<sup>31</sup>. In China's case, there are some specific points that are made by the sceptics.

The economic development itself is very uneven amongst different areas. It is very problematic using economic development as a yardstick for the probability of democratization. China has a vast rural peasant population, and there are significant area disparities between east coastal and west inland, for example. The modernization school see the implications of the Reform as pro-democratic, while the sceptics see them as strengthening the authoritarian regime, which is anti-democratic in nature<sup>32</sup>. Therefore, they concluded with the rise of a corrupt 'soft' authoritarianism like that found in Suharto's Indonesia or Park Chung Hee's South Korea other than towards democracy.

Some of the sceptics started to attribute the regime's resilience to its institutionalization during the Reform years. One of the most influential China experts, Andrew Nathan published an essay in 2003 in which he examined the CCP regime's institutionalization thoroughly. Nathan asserted that the regime, unlike other communist regimes in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, which fell apart in the third wave of democratization, has been able to reconsolidate itself<sup>33</sup>. The

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p.13

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

<sup>32</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>33</sup> Here, Andrew J. Nathan adapted a concept from democratic consolidation theory; the CCP has once again made itself the only game in town and is in the process of carrying out a successful transfer of power. See, Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17, notes

increasingly norm-bound nature of CCP' s succession politics, the increase in meritocratic as opposed to factional considerations in the promotion of political elites, the differentiation and functional specialization of institutions within the regime, and CCP' s legitimacy being strengthened by the establishment of institutions for political participation are the factors for the resilience of CCP regime as discovered by Nathan. Thus he concludes that China has made a transition instead from totalitarianism to a classic authoritarian regime, and one that appears increasingly stable<sup>34</sup>.

As opposed to the first camp of modernization theorists, the sceptics claim that there is no direct link between liberalization and democratization. For instance, Pei says there is a critical distinction between liberalization and democratization<sup>35</sup>. Grugel, agreed with Pei, when she claims that there are some political changes that followed the opening up of economy, but the Reform in the political domain, rather than initiation of a controlled democratic transition, has only been the rationalization of the state and the improvement of bureaucratic efficiency<sup>36</sup>. The economic liberalization is not leading to greater openness with the ruling party or a greater receptiveness to civil society demands; in other words, economic liberalization is not bringing political democratization.

The sceptics are suspicious about the myth of the success of the Asian Model, which

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<sup>34</sup> Here, a totalitarian regime can be understood as a regime that control all aspects of its citizen's lives, and there is no public sphere, for example, Maoist China, as opposed to a democratic state, where citizen enjoy their democratic rights, authoritarian regime is a regime in transition which resembles a totalitarian regime, however, the control of the state over the lives of its citizens are much looser.

<sup>35</sup> Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>36</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p224



was regarded by the modernization school as bringing both democracy and economic prosperity. The reason for the Asian countries resistance of liberal democracy found by the sceptic, lies in the power of the culture. Bell et al. argues that it is the persistence of ‘Asian Values’ that has allowed the region to resist full liberal democracy, or even democracy at all, in some cases; it is developing its own culturally specific form of political model, which is a model aiming at economic growth, mixed with some of the principles of democracy and authoritarianism. ‘Illiberal democracy<sup>37</sup>’ is the term they used to label this model.

### **0.3 The Incremental Model**

What has been missing so far in the debate is the voice of Chinese domestic scholars who grew up in China and have actually experienced (all or partially, depending on their ages) the changes brought by the Reform of the last three decades. What these people have in common is that they are not trained in the background of a western political science discipline. Democracy and democratization as a literature did not originate from China and thus their understanding of these terms is not exactly the same as those in the West. It is therefore necessary to follow a historical approach to trace how democracy and democratization is perceived /constructed in China. From this historical perspective, one can better understand what the core issues are both in the practice of Chinese liberals and the debate amongst the Chinese academy. Meanwhile, in the analysis, cultural factors will be considered and discussed in a way that is not overlooked or exaggerated. The history of the introduction of democracy

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<sup>37</sup> Daniel A.Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995;

into China will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3. In this part of the introduction, I will introduce some mainstream democratic ideas and thoughts in contemporary China and position my work amongst the incrementalists.

The historical discourse of democracy can be divided into three eras: the first introductory era starts from the middle 19<sup>th</sup> Century and ends right before the beginning of New Cultural Movement (1915-1922), when ideas of liberal democracy was the mainstream; the second era starts with the New Cultural Movement and ends after the foundation of PRC, during which time socialist democracy took the place of liberal democracy as mainstream and became the ideology of Chinese Communist Party, which later founded PRC as a party-state; the third era starts from the Beijing Spring Democratic Movement (in 1977) and till now, which is a very complicated period filled with divergent debates and fierce discussions over the ideas of democracy and democratization between different groups of Chinese intellectuals.

Democracy was firstly introduced to China in late Qing Dynasty, around the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many Chinese people, especially the intellectuals, started to think about the reason why China, which used to be the great Middle Kingdom, had become so weak and backward compared to the Western states. Some of them made a conclusion that it was the feudal autocratic monarchy based on Confucianism that was too incompetent to build a strong and united China; it has lost its legitimacy of rule and thus should be replaced by a more advanced and legitimate democratic polity. Revolutionaries, led by Sun Zhongshan, inspired by this idea, successfully founded a new Republic of China in 1912 (Xinhai Revolution), which was built upon the principles of national independence and democracy.

However, the government of the time was in fact controlled by warlords, and the democratic constitution was not carried out. The democratization of China was actually a failure. Chinese people were still facing the task of national independence and state salvation, especially after Japanese troops invaded China later in 1931. Under this circumstance, the New Cultural Movement (1915-1922, culminated in the May Fourth Movement in 1919 with students and intellectuals protests against the warlord government) marked a turning point in the discourse of democratization<sup>38</sup>.

The New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong*) was inaugurated by the creation of *Xin Qingnian* (the New Youth journal), established in 1915 by Chen Duxiu, one of the intellectual leaders of the Movement. In an essay published in January 1919 to celebrated the third anniversary of the journal, Chen Duxiu gave democracy and science the nicknames ‘Mr Democracy’ (*de xiansheng*) and ‘Mr Science’ (*sai xiansheng*), and proclaimed that ‘only these two gentlemen can save China from the political, moral, academic, and intellectual darkness in which it finds itself’.<sup>39</sup>

Democracy thus became a symbol of the May Fourth era. It is in this movement that Chinese intellectuals turned away from Western liberal democracy and started to show their enthusiasm in Marxism. In the May Fourth discourse of democracy, firstly there was a trend from democracy to populism, then from populist democracy to the

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<sup>38</sup> Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.621

<sup>39</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘*Xin qingnian zuian zhi dabianshu*’ (New Youth’s reply to charges against the magazin), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (15 Jan. 1919), pp. 10-11; cited by Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ ,

dictatorship of workers and peasants, in a word, as one theorist pointed out, eventually some May Fourth radicals became converted to the revolutionary Marxism-Leninism<sup>40</sup>. The radicalization of the intellectuals in the New Culture Movement brought the Chinese communist movement which resulted in a drastic change in society that fuelled the birth of the Communist Party of China.

PRC was founded in 1949 after the Second World War and the Civil War. The socialist party-state, with Mao Zedong as the supreme leader, was in nature a totalitarian regime<sup>41</sup>. Between the period of 1949 to 1976 (when Mao Zedong died), the belief of Chinese people in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was deeply rooted during numerous political mobilizations and mass movements initiated by Mao and CCP.

After the disastrous Cultural Revolution (started in 1966 by Mao and ended with his death in 1976), the new top leader of the so-called second generation, Deng together with other leaders in CCP found it urgent for a reform in the laggard planned economy system. The reform was mainly in the economic domain, which includes the introduction of a market economy and opening up to the outside world in order to attract new technology and foreign investment. The series of reform programmes started in 1978. The information from the outside world and communications with the international society gave Chinese intellectuals new inspirations since the New Culture Movement earlier in the century, the reform changed the old state-society

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*Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), pp. 589-621

<sup>40</sup> Edward X. Gu, 'Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.621

<sup>41</sup> Here, no difference is made between the Party regime and the Party-state in this

relations, people had more civil liberty than before, which caused some scholars to rethink and redefine the China state-society relations. Also, after years of economic reforms focusing on development and modernization without political democratization, many problems such as corruption, inequality and environmental degradation have triggered a debate within the literati on the prospects of democratization as a solution to China's crisis. Generally speaking, after 1976, especially after the start of the Reform, there have been four groups of intellectuals taking part in this debate<sup>42</sup>: the dissidents; the liberal economists; the New Left (or the Conservatives); and the mainstream incrementalists.

The dissidents are a loose group which consists of the leaders of Chinese Democracy Movement (Wei Jingsheng as one of the representatives) and some liberal journalists (He Qinglian<sup>43</sup>). Generally speaking, they disagree with the current authoritarian regime of CCP and believe that democracy is the answer to solve all the problems confronting China today. They also took part in the social movements as attempts to initiate a fully democratization, such as Beijing Spring liberalization movement which was considered to be inspired by the manifesto Fifth Modernization by Wei Jingsheng in 1978; students' movements during 1986 which was cracked down by the CCP under the name of 'anti-bourgeoisie liberalization' ; and the 1989 student demonstrations in Tiananmen Square which resulted in the 4<sup>th</sup> June Incident followed

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thesis, although theoretically, these are two different entities.

<sup>42</sup> It is noticeable that the majority of these intellectuals are experts in economics. Because their start point of the research is to find solutions to the problems come along with economic reform, political democratization is one possible solution which is taken into consideration as a request for economic development.

<sup>43</sup> She became well-known for disclosing the corruption of government officials and cadres of state-own enterprises, and she attributed the root of corruption to the authoritarian regime. Her books were banned and she fled to the US out of the fear of

by a strong international response. However, the limited scale and influence of these movements have not resulted in fundamental social or political changes in China's state and society relations. Especially after 1989, many student leaders and dissident intellectuals fled overseas for safety. Their voices can hardly be heard by ordinary Chinese. The dissidents group represents the most radical and democratic ideas and thoughts in the debate.

The liberal economists form the second group of scholars within the debate. The representatives of these economists are Mao Yushi, Zhang Shuguang, Sheng Hong, Tang Shouning and so on. Mao Yushi together with the others founded the Unirule Institute of Economics in Beijing, aiming for high quality research in economic theory and cutting-edge social-economic problems. What they have argued is that the market system cannot work properly with CCP's one party rule. Sooner or later, economic stagnation will appear<sup>44</sup>. Based on liberalism, they ask for the protection of private property and political reforms towards democratization.

The New Left, or Conservatives are a group of economists whose ideas and thoughts are closer to social democracy other than Marxism-Leninism<sup>45</sup> as opposed to the

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prosecution by the authority.

<sup>44</sup> CCP's one party rule is realized by control over all the departments of the society, distributing all resources and products according to its central planning, while the market oriented economic system asks for the fluent flow of resources and products. These two systems are incompatible in nature. During the Reform, the authority has given up some of its power to nurish the growth of market economy, but in the long term, it still holds on to some important departments which will impede the maturing of the market economy.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Zheng, Yongnian talked about the New Left in his book, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity and International Relations*, 1999; C.H.Kwan's article, 'Zhongguo Jingji Xuejia Shili Fenbutu-Chaoyue Geige yu Baoshou de Kuangkuang', (*Distribution of forces of*

liberals. One of the representatives is Hu Angang who works in the National Conditional Research Centre of Qinghua University. The others include Cui Zhiyuan, Wang Hui, Lang Xianping and so on.

The fourth group is the largest of all in the debate. Therefore, they are called mainstream incrementalists. Their ideas about an incremental model of democratization are based upon critiques of the ideas of the dissidents. Firstly, the radical model of political democratization before the establishment of a market economy and growth of a considerable middle class is not realistic which has been proved by the failure of the previous democratization movements. Secondly, radical political reforms as implemented in the former Soviet Union have resulted in economic stagnation and chaos and unrest in the society which proved to be a not so perfect model. Thirdly, the Asian models of economic development and gradual democratic transition are regarded as a successful precedent. Their polity is a mixture of authoritarianism and democracy, which is determined by Confucian traditions and history. China shares these features with them therefore China should be taking the same path towards democratization. Last but not least, the only way to a democratic transition which the CCP and the elites would possibly agree on is this incremental model. Incremental means slow but progressively in this term; however, a few years of stagnation before a threshold is understandable and a sudden advancement towards democracy can also be expected after years of steady progress. The CCP has been taking the economic liberalization and started to implement democracy in grassroots such as the villages. Under the incrementalism, the process seems under the control of

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*Chinese Economists-Go beyond the Frame of Reformer and Conservative*), (13th, Dec, 2002) who is a consulting fellow in RIETI (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and Industry), accessible by <http://www.rieti.go.jp/users/kan-si-yu/cn/c021213.html>

the elites. They still possess the power to cease or intervene, therefore, they will not feel too threatened to tough it out.

This group consists of Chinese scholars and China specialists both inside and outside the system; they can be economists or political theorists. The thoughts of some domestic scholars can be influential as the authorities often consult them for advice. Some of the representatives include Yu Keping and his incremental democracy conception; He Zengke, with the role progressive political reforms plays in the democratic transition; Shao Daosheng, and internet-style democracy as an important part of incremental democracy; Chen Sixi, and the implementation of incremental model in the electoral institutions; Liu Yawei and the incremental democratic model at grassroots<sup>46</sup>; and Ji Weidong and the dynamics of incremental reforms<sup>47</sup>.

There are also some economists such as Wu Jinlian, Fan Gang, Lin Yifu and so on who are not so interested in political reforms, they are advocates for Asian authoritarian style developmental path. They are influential experts who have been taking part in the establishment of the CCP' s economic developmental strategy. However, so far one of the most comprehensive researches on incremental model would be the work that has been done by Tang Liang whose major contribution is embodied in the book, *Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in Transition*

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<sup>46</sup> Liu Yawei, 'Incremental-style Democracy – Direct Elections in China' s counties and villages' (*Jianjinshi Minzhu – Zhongguo Xianxiang de Zhijie Xuanju*), [www.Yannan.cn](http://www.Yannan.cn), <http://www.yannan.cn/data/detail.php?id=2975>

<sup>47</sup> Ji Weidong, 'New Dynamics of Incremental Reforms – From Breaking up the Whole into Parts to Combining Parts into Whole' (*Jianjin Gaige de Xindongli – cong Huazhengweiling dao Helingweizheng*), *Twenty-first Century* (online edition), Sep, 2002, Issue No. 6.



*(Jianjin Minzhu: Biange Zhong de Zhongguo Zhengzhi)*<sup>48</sup>. To summarize all these people's ideas and with a special emphasis upon Tang's thoughts, an incremental model of China's democratization should be, firstly, what we are exploring in China is a polity under transformation and change. A radical or swift model of China becoming a democracy overnight, as compared to an incremental one, has proved to be unrealistic in the past. It does not mean that it will not happen in the future. The feature with an incremental model is that the pace of transformation is indefinite. A few years of fast transformation or institutionalization can be expected, but there can also be backs and turns, or stagnation with the political reform for quite some time.

Secondly, although the path to the transition can be long, the direction of the tendency is what we could expect. In the incremental model, the process has begun for about three decades, and when comparing the present with the past, one could find a lot of differences and some are fundamental. For instance, how much liberty and freedom Chinese people are enjoying at present as compared to the situation of 30 years ago. With the Chinese government, also, it is more willing to engage in human rights talks with other governments than it used to be.

Thirdly, there are a few dynamics that are driving this incremental model, which includes the interaction between economics and politics, the impact of globalization, the transformation inside the Chinese Communist Party, and the development of civil society forces.

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<sup>48</sup> Based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004

Fourthly, there are also some obstacles to this incremental model. They are also the most important social and economic problems existing in China: poverty, poor performance of state-owned enterprises, region discrepancy, crescent wealth gap between rich and poor, great number of laid-offs and educational problem and so on. It is also because of these problems, the transition to democracy follows the incremental path other than a swift path. For the incrementalists, democracy is not the solution for all these socio-economic problems deeply rooted in today's China. One of the examples often cited nowadays is the former Soviet Union, in which case the adoption of multi-party free election has created a lot of problems and even brought crisis to the new regime.

#### **0.4 Structure of This Thesis**

In the first chapter of the thesis, the existing literature on democracy and democratization will be reviewed, which gives us ideas about how these two terms are constructed in the western political discipline. A historical approach is adopted here when explaining the evolution of the concept on democracy. The two original strands of democracy (direct democracy and liberal democracy) are identified. A constructivist view of democracy is adopted. The route of liberal or representative democracy becomes the only justified form of democracy since the 1940s is also explored. An explanation of how an elite-oriented democracy has gradually been replaced by a more participatory democracy is provided. The expansion of democratization studies in the 1990s as a result of the large-scale regime change in the former European communist states will be fully investigated together with Huntington's well-known wave theory. With the literature, major representatives

coming from three different schools and their main claims will be introduced, including the modernization school, comparative historical sociology and transition literature. Critiques towards each of the schools will also be presented as they are either emphasizing too much the determinate nature of the structure in constructing their theory while neglecting the initiative of the agency or vice versa. Of course, their works are valuable in the sense of providing this thesis with a broader literature background.

In the second chapter, the debate between modernization school and its critics over the question of whether China is going through a democratic transformation will be revisited. The argument of the modernization school is largely based on the economic development of China in the last three decades after the Reform initiated. From the historical experience of some other countries where the modernization of national economy facilitated the conditions for an all-around democratization such as a considerable well-educated middle class and a robust civil society, the modernizationists believe that the same story will happen in China. They have completed quite a lot comprehensive researches and found evidence to support their argument. The most cited ones are, the decentralization of power within the regime, where a quasi model of the division of powers can be found; the competitive democratic grassroots elections at the village-level and in recent years, took place in the higher administrative level; the emerging civil society forces such as the press media and so on. They also identified economic liberalization as laying the groundwork for democratization. And a model of ‘democratic developmental state’ is established from the experience of the other countries of East Asia. The sceptics toward the modernization theory are those who see the economic development as

strengthening the authoritarian regime and the regime has become more resilient. The ‘Asian values’ are actually leading to an ‘illiberal democracy’<sup>49</sup>.

However, what is missing in this big picture, from my view, is the Chinese culture context by which I think a methodology combined with language should be introduced. The context is important in two regards, firstly, the focuses of the debates in and out of China are quite different, because the ideas of democracy and democratization, after introduced to China from the West, have been reconstructed under a Chinese cultural background. In other words, Chinese scholars’ perception of these two terms are inevitable blended with their own experience and knowledge, which are formed in a Chinese context. Secondly, the scholars *in* China are those who actually participated in the social-economical processes that have taken place in recent years, their studies into this issue have been enriched by personal experience. Furthermore, their views of this issue could affect their practice. Through their activities, for example, publishing papers, teaching students, giving speeches and being invited by the authority to offer consultancies, their opinions about the change in China and where it is heading for, will more or less have an effect in the real world. In the third chapter, the historical perspective will be introduced and the vision of Chinese theorists in the debate will be presented and the incremental model which is a main stream opinion amongst Chinese scholars is discussed in more detail.

In the following three chapters, three aspects of the incremental model will be explored respectively, the evolution within the regime (Chapter 4), how the Chinese

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<sup>49</sup> Daniel A. Bell and Kanishka Jayasuriya, ‘Understanding Illiberal Democracy’, in Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards*

Communist Party has evolved during this time, and the empowerment of people's congress system as the legislature (quasi separation of powers); the democratic practice at the grassroots level, how the village electoral system has been established to assure an autonomous self-governance; the press media as an emerging civil force and the study on People's Daily, which shows the changes in the last 3 decades in the CCP's most important and authoritative newspaper. In these three substantive chapters, large quantities of Chinese sources are cited to support the argument, including governmental documents, newspaper reports, periodicals and books, which are translated by me.

The seventh chapter is the conclusion, which is not so much actually concluded due to the open-endedness of the incremental model. This is due to the changing nature of the object of this thesis. After three decades of consecutive economic reforms, the political openness and civil awareness have increased in China. It seems more like a hybrid polity with some remains of an old authoritarian regime, some new mechanisms that are manifested in the western liberal democracy, and a democratic system that is still far from fully established.

## **0.5 Theoretical Approach**

The ontological question is about the reality, about the being. However, from a constructivist view, as opposed to objectivist's claim that people can come to know external reality, the only reality is what we believe that is happening. All our claims

and arguments are based on what we are aware of, which has a limited nature. That's what I have described in the first part of this chapter, what we believed to be happening in China are some social-political processes from which a trend of quasi-democratization can be identified.

The epistemological question is how we can get to know the reality that is believed to be happening. The reality is about our knowledge of the world, and the observers, or the knower, are humans. There are different approaches (epistemological perspectives) for humans to get to know the reality, because of the human nature, all our knowledge about the reality comes with a cultural context. This explains why different schools from the background of democratization literature perceive the same reality quite differently, and even reversely. Language is an inseparable part of a culture. It is the tool for people to communicate and acquire information and thus construct their knowledge of the world. However, a language itself is developed in the context of a certain culture. In other words, in the case of how to explain the significant social-economical changes that took place in China in the last three decades, people from different cultural backgrounds will have developed their own epistemological perspectives.

What we can find at the moment is the huge volume of researches and studies done by the western scholars. Their knowledge about China mainly comes from English language sources. Some of them do speak Chinese and may have had research done in China. However, their cultural background determines that their knowledge about the reality will be different from the knowledge of the Chinese theorists and scholars. It is not justified to claim that one person's knowledge is superior to the other. However,

to bring a different approach from the same cultural context where all the changes are taking place will undoubtedly help to enrich the existing literature.

Another important implication of this approach is that, although the original research of some of the scholars were done in China and did involved some sources from Chinese language manuscripts, the discussions and debates afterwards took place mainly under a English context or other languages. During this process, the knowledge has been constructed (in Chinese and other languages) and reconstructed (mainly in English or other languages rather than Chinese). There is a potential trend that due to language barriers; our knowledge about the object would be gradually driven away from the original cultural context. Therefore, to bring in a Chinese cultural perspective into the literature from time to time through investigating into the original Chinese sources is meaningful and necessary.

The importance of the views of Chinese<sup>50</sup> scholars can be demonstrated in another way, especially those of the main stream incrementalists. They are in the main stream which means their views are those held and believed by majority of the Chinese academe. Some of them are influential consultants for the Chinese government. They actively participated or are heavily involved in the public policy-making process of China. Their views are also accepted by high-ranked government officials and party leaders. It seems that, because their knowledge which comes from a certain cultural context will guide them in their activities, in other words, they will act in terms of their own knowledge which will make a change to the reality they believe. And the change they perceived will reconstruct their knowledge. Because these people believe

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<sup>50</sup> 'Chinese' here has its cultural meaning, referring to the culture, race and so on.

in the incremental democratization model and they will practice according to their belief, which will have an effect on the reality. However, whether it turns out that this incremental democratization model is accomplished or reconstructed in this long process (because their perception of the model is that it will take a very lengthy time), a democratized future of China is a possibility that is undeniable.

## **0.6 Methodology**

While quantitative research methodology is most commonly adopted by natural scientists investigating into the physical world, other methodologies such as qualitative research are not invalid according to a social scientist. The object of the social scientist is the complex social relationships and interactions which are carried out by human beings. Also, as what social constructivists believe, the knowledge of the social scientists is constructed by their own experience and has a cultural context, which means, social scientists coming from different cultural backgrounds may likely to choose different observational methodologies.

The object of the thesis is the relationships and interactions between Chinese state and society. However, it is not feasible to investigate into every sector of the state and society. In this thesis, the social relationships and interactions between different sectors of Chinese state are categorized into three parts, each in one chapter. The most important changes took place in the state-society relationships can be found in the evolution of the Chinese regime. Chinese Communist Party, the sole ruling party of Chinese regime, has undergone some transformations and the implications of these transformations are identified and analyzed mainly through collection and readings of



official documents and papers, media texts, and other secondary sources. The reforms in the National People's Congress are examined as well. The direct election in village committees is one the most encouraging democratic practices in recent years; the materials are collected through secondary source and personal experiences. The change of the media from a propaganda tool for ideology to a more neutral and professional body is significant as an emerging civil force. I've had my field work done in China. I had my B.A. in Journalism and thus have a few contacts in the media industry. I've conducted a few meetings with my contacts, although mainly in an informal way. After the examination of the over-all trends in the press media, I have focused my attention on the case study of the People Daily, the most authoritative newspaper in China.

My language skills as a native Chinese speaker have enabled me to access to Chinese language sources. One of the features of this thesis is where there is both English version and Chinese version of a document or a paper; I will read the Chinese version carefully and draw my conclusion based on the Chinese manuscript other than the English one. Also, I have read a large quantity of newspapers, periodicals and books written in Chinese before and during the writing up of this thesis. What I am trying to do is through this method and approach, a thesis under a Chinese cultural context will be produced and brought into the existing literature so as to fill in what I call a 'missing part'<sup>51</sup>. Original Chinese source materials are heavily used, and translated all by me, both in the literature review part of the thesis and the substantive chapters. The original thoughts come from a close reading and analysis of media texts, plus quantitative data I collected. I have not simply drawn on secondary literature, but

have conducted field work in China, in the later chapters, on rural reform and the media/civil society, the analysis in these chapters is based on primary research and not secondary sources, although I have necessarily drawn on some secondary sources.

## **0.7 Adopting the Incremental Model**

Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, when a large number of former socialist states took a swift transition path to democratization, CCP (Chinese Communist Party) has chosen to initiate economic reforms to solve the social-economical problems they were facing at that moment. After Thirty years of consecutive reforms and opening-up to the outside world, the Chinese government is still claimed to be a Marxist-Leninist regime and PRC is still referred to as a socialist state, however, there have been some subtle but substantial changes taking place both within the regime itself and within the society. Most significantly at the following three levels:

The first set of changes can be identified at the state level, which is within the regime itself, including CCP, the ruling party and the NPC, constitutionally recognized as the highest organ of state power<sup>52</sup>. CCP has evolved out of a former revolutionary party to a reformed party. One of the most recent and significant reforms is the enlarged party membership. The Party is now taking in new members from the middle class (including private entrepreneurs<sup>53</sup>, who were classified as the bourgeois as opposed to

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<sup>51</sup> It is elaborated in Chapter 2.

<sup>52</sup> Article 57, Section 1, Chapter 3 of Constitution of People's Republic of China, Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress and promulgated for implementation by the Proclamation of the National People's Congress on December 4, 1982, 1457

<sup>53</sup> The term 'private entrepreneurs' is taken from Jiang Zemin's Speech on the

proletariat). The NPC has become more assertive in exercising its power as a legislature, including law-making and supervising the works of local government and the court and the procuratorate.

The second level where the changes are taking place is at the grassroots. The reforms have accelerated urbanization in China and boost the economic growth in some big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, however, the majority of Chinese population still live in the numerous villages in China's suburban and rural areas. The democratic practice created in the Village Committee election in the 1980s has given numerous Chinese citizens an opportunity to exercise their political rights which in turn helped to nurture their democratic consciousness.

The third level is the growth of the civil society forces, especially the change in the press media. The authoritative Dangbaos (Party Newspaper) has suffered a huge decline in the circulation and numbers, while the new Shiminbaos (Civil Newspapers) has quickly become prevalent and enjoyed an increasing readership of various social levels. To attract more readers, Dangbaos have started to provide more diversified content as Shiminbaos which gradually blurs the distinction between these two. Citizens of China enjoy more information and more transparency which enlarged their right to know.

To sum up, changes are taking place at the state level, the grassroots level, and the society level. In this thesis, the changes of the three levels are explored in three case studies, embodied in Chapter 4, 5, and 6 respectively. The incremental model is

adopted here to explain the democratization process because of its applicability.

Firstly, it is incremental, it is also pro-democratic. In Chapter 1, a lot of discussion is devoted to the two terms ‘democracy’ and ‘democratization’. Although there is no such thing as a real democracy in this world, it still has its undeniable values as an ideal. Whether it is in direct form as in ancient Greece or in modern representative (liberal) form<sup>54</sup>, whether it needs ‘procedural minimum conditions’<sup>55</sup> or it is just a ‘Polyarchy’<sup>56</sup>, whether it should be ‘elite-oriented’<sup>57</sup> or participatory, the ideal of democracy has inspired people in and out of China to think, to debate and to strive.

Secondly, the aim of the incremental model is to explain the uniqueness of Chinese democratization. The uniqueness of the China case should not be underestimated or exaggerated. The terms of democracy and democratization have their historical, cultural and social contexts while a core of meaning and value should be ‘anchored’<sup>58</sup>, which means unchanged. That is why the literature review of this thesis introduced both the western and eastern (Chinese) scholar’s understandings about these two terms. The idea of democracy was originally created in the western world, and it was not introduced to China until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It is meaningful and helpful to trace back how this ‘democracy’ literature has grown in China historically.

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*People’s Daily*, 02-07-2001, translated by the author

<sup>54</sup> David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 1996, p.6

<sup>55</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, ‘What Democracy is...and is Not’, in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 1993, p.45;

<sup>56</sup> R. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, 1989, 221

<sup>57</sup> Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (New York: Harper, 1975) orig.pub.1942

<sup>58</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford:

Thirdly, the incremental model does not expel the possibility of a swift transition to democracy. To avoid being too structural as the analysis is presented at three levels, the thesis also concerns about the role of agencies in the democratization process, for example, the power struggle amongst some of the most influential political figures.

Last but not least, it is not a model that is so loosely established to accommodate any possible changes, in which case, it can not be referred to as a model at all. It is a model that has been constructed on the ground of substantial analysis. It varifies the changes that have already taken place and it anticipates the tendencies and draws on some possible outcomes from those changes. For instance, the rules of democratic election were created by village peasants in the early 1980s, later, the rules became statute law and were carried out in all the village elections in China. It has shown the tendency of enlarging the democratic practice at the grassroots level. It also means, where the democratic elections were carried out and people's political rights are guranteed it is impossible to reverse.

**Chapter One**  
**Understanding Democracy and Democratisation:**  
**Reviewing the Literature**

## 1.0 Introduction

Since the 70s of the last century, there have been profound economic reforms taking place in People's Republic of China, which have caused fundamental transformation in all societal, political and cultural realms. There has also been considerable literature and research undertaken to explore and explain why these changes have happened, what consequences have come about or will come in the future. However, so far most of the researchers are taking on the approaches which were developed and advanced in Western social and political science, few has tried to take the Chinese perspective; that is, the way Chinese scholars perceive the changes in China. In Chinese scholarship, one of the related topics that has been discussed tremendously is the probability of democratization prospect for China. However, their discourse of democracy has its uniqueness which makes it distinctive from the conventional Western way due to the uniqueness of China's historical and cultural development.

This thesis tries to explain the recent social and political development in China in relation to the existing democratization literature which includes the debates over democracy and democratization in and out of China. Therefore, the literature to be reviewed refers to the Western literature on democracy and democratization, the literature on democracy and democratization *in* China, and the historical discourse of democracy and democratization in China.

By examining the Western tradition, it provides the big picture of the historical development of the democratic concepts through which these concepts became predominant within the literature. The literature on Chinese democracy and

democratization is the offspring of this vast comparative democratization literature, which brought in perspectives as regional comparison, and historical and cultural factors. The discourse in China tells how democracy and democratization is constructed and reconstructed in China; it helps us to understand why some of the democratic ideas of the West were chosen and/or modified by the Chinese while others were not. And the ideas and values Chinese intellectuals have been inspired by are not necessarily those advocated by scholars from the West. The explanation can only be found in the divergent development of discourses in the West and in China.

It would be impossible and inappropriate to discuss any issues related to democratization without knowing what 'democracy' means. The first task in this chapter, therefore, is to trace the discourse of democracy and democratization in the West where these conceptions were originally from.

The origin of democracy can be found in the ancient Greece in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. Since the born of this new form of government, it has undergone some important changes over the centuries. A modern version of democracy, which is also the most popular form of governing at the present, is based on the ideals of liberal democracy (representative democracy). Some theorist defined it through 'minimum' procedures which helped in a way as to identify a democracy through the specific requirements<sup>59</sup>. However, it is too narrow as it neglects the values of democracy. Democracy has its core meaning and its applicability should be adapted to historical, cultural and social contexts<sup>60</sup>.

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<sup>59</sup> See, for example, Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, (New York: Harper, 1975) orig.pub.1942

<sup>60</sup> Based on Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, 48



Democratization can be simply understood as a process through which democracy is realized. Democratization studies expanded in the 1990s as a result of the large-scale regime change in the former European communist states. Three major schools with the literature can be identified, namely, the modernization school, comparative historical sociology and transition literature. Each school has its own critiques as they are either emphasizing too much the determinate nature of the structure in constructing their theory while neglecting the initiative of the agency or vice versa.

### **1.1 On Democracy (Why Liberal Democracy)**

When confronted with the task of conceptualizing democracy, theorists diverge. Indeed, as Laurence Whitehead put it, this topic has already been examined from every conceivable angle for over 25 centuries<sup>61</sup>. Democracy can be understood as an ideology in so far as “it embodies a set of political ideas that detail the best possible form of social organization<sup>62</sup>” . Democracy can also be understood as a concept or a theory. Different schools formed their own preference of conception of and theories on democracy. Some democrats define democracy as rights. Their stress is on the equality and rights of people. For instance, Beetham summarized the meaning of democracy as “a mode of decision-making about collectively binding rules and policies over which the people exercise control, and the most democratic arrangement

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(Oxford: Oxford University Press)

<sup>61</sup> See e.g. John Dunn (ed.), *Democracy: the Unfinished Journey: 508 B.C. to A.D.1993*, 1992; quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.7

<sup>62</sup> I. Mackenzie, ‘Introduction: The Arena of Ideology’ , in R. Eccleshall, V. Geoghegan, R. Jay, M. Kenny, I. Mackenzie and R. Wilford, *Political Ideologies*, 1994; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p12

is that where all members of the collectivity enjoy effective equal rights to take part in such decision-making directly – one, that is to say, which realised to the greatest conceivable degree the principles of popular control and equality in its existence.”

<sup>63</sup>The school of constructivists believe the constructedness in conceptualizing this term; therefore, for them, democracy would be better understood “not as a predetermined end-state, but as a long-term and somewhat open-ended outcome<sup>64</sup>” .

The two strands of democratic theorizing are: direct (or participatory) democracy and liberal (or representative) democracy<sup>65</sup>. Direct democracy means citizens take part in the decision-making directly, the tradition of which can be traced back to the Athenian legacy of popular government at the time of city state, and the Renaissance republican time. This definition of democracy which meant the direct rule of the assembled people held the field until around the time of the American and French Revolutions<sup>66</sup>. Rousseau, a great thinker in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, argued for unmediated popular government, by which he meant that citizens should decide laws and make public policy without the mediation of political representatives<sup>67</sup>.

However, by the 18<sup>th</sup> century the meaning of democracy was re-defined in accordance with the emergence of a specific form of political community-the modern nation-state. The latter is far larger in size of the polity and much more pluralistic; societies instead

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<sup>63</sup> D. Beetham, ‘Liberal Democracy and the Limits of Democratization’ , *Political Studies*, special issue, vol. 40, 1992, p40; quoted in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p12

<sup>64</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p.3

<sup>65</sup> David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 1996, p.6

<sup>66</sup> Michael Moran, Geraint Parry, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1994, p.3

<sup>67</sup> Albert Weale, *Democracy*, 1999, pp. 24-5, cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization:*

of communities became the name of its social organizations. Liberal notions of representation, equality before the law, and accountability were eventually grafted onto democracy<sup>68</sup>. Another feasible type of democracy- liberal/representative democracy became the choice for new democrats, and since then, has become the dominating subject in democratic studies. Indeed, as one observer indicates, especially after 1945 democracy was successfully married to liberalism-liberal democracy was no longer seen as one strand of democracy, it was presented as the only version there was<sup>69</sup>. Therefore, the form of liberal democracy, the procedures of liberal democracy and the level of liberal democracy are becoming the frequently debated topics.

One influential group in the debate ground their argument on the definition of a standard ‘minimum’ procedural democracy, which is said to have originated with Joseph Schumpeter.

Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl sum up the seven ‘procedural minimum’ conditions for democracy suggested by Robert Dahl, and add two more of their own. These nine conditions are: control of government decisions about policy is constitutionally vested in public officials; elected officials are chosen in frequent and fairly conducted elections in which coercion is comparatively uncommon; practically all adults have the right to vote in the election of officials; practically all adults have the right to run for elective offices in the government; citizens have a right to express themselves without the danger of severe punishment on political matters broadly

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*A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p13

<sup>68</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p14

defined; citizens have a right to seek out alternative sources of information. Moreover, alternative sources of information exist and are protected by law; citizens also have the right to form relatively independent associations or organizations, including independent political parties and interest groups; popularly elected officials must be able to exercise their constitutional power without being subjected to over-riding (albeit informal) opposition from unelected officials; the polity must be self-governing; it must be able to act independently of constraints imposed by some other overarching political system.<sup>70</sup>

This definition gives out a clear list of procedures which they believe could fulfil the demand of democracy, however, in Laurence Whitehead's book, he criticized it as 'too precise', 'demanding' and 'insufficient'<sup>71</sup>. His arguments are: it is too precise as it does not recognize any democracy before universal adult suffrage, which means Switzerland was not a democracy before 1971 prior to when women were not allowed to vote and the United States became a democracy only after the 1965 Voting Rights Act; it is also insufficient as it stresses only the procedures while ignores the outcomes or democratic values.

Whitehead recalled Sartori's definition of democracy in which democratic values were regarded as indispensable. Sartori believes that a democratic system is established under deontological pressures. "What democracy is cannot be separated

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<sup>69</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p17

<sup>70</sup> Philippe C. Schmitter and Terry Lynn Karl, 'What Democracy is...and is Not', in Larry Diamond and Marc F. Plattner (eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 1993, p.45; quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press) p.10-11

<sup>71</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford:

from what democracy should be.” Without democratic ideals and its values, no democracy could said to exist. It is doubtless that the political system is sustained by imperatives and value goals. But he further states that a democracy needs imperatives and value goal more than any other political systems. Because “in a democracy the tension between fact and value reaches the highest point, since no other ideal is farther from the reality in which it has to operate. And this is why we need the name democracy” <sup>72</sup>.

In Whitehead’ s book, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*,<sup>73</sup> he presented a ‘floating but anchored’ conception of democracy which needs to be quoted. Some of his central arguments can be summarized as follows: a moderate constructivist approach is necessary when exploring the meaning of ‘democracy’ , because “all round the world new political experiences continually test, bombard, and interrogate established labels and ways of theorizing about political reality”; there can be no single ‘cook book’ recipe for democracy applicable to all times and places, therefore, historical, cultural, and social contexts matter in the applicability of this term; since democracy is both a descriptive label and a desirable value, and since the precise outer boundaries of the concept are inherently debatable, there is bound to be disagreement over particular applications of the term; democracy is an ‘essentially contested’ concept, there can be both a core of meaning that is ‘anchored’ and a

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Oxford University Press), p.3

<sup>72</sup> Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory*, 1962, p.4; quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.20, footnote.

<sup>73</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

margin of contestation that is ‘floating’<sup>74</sup>; in contemporary conditions there is a dominant conception of democracy which differs from earlier views, and which may itself mutate; whatever the prevalent hegemonic conception of democracy it is always provisional and subject to further challenge and development in the light of collective deliberation; this deliberative filter also serves to stabilize understanding of the term, it provides much of the ‘anchoring’ .<sup>75</sup>

### 1.1.1 From Elite to Participatory Democracy: Empirical Democracy and Its Critique

#### Background of Elite-oriented Democratic theory:

During the 1930s, facing the challenge posed by European fascism and Soviet communism, the Austrian political economist Joseph Schumpeter (1942) produced a new major conception which came to be known as an elite theory of democracy<sup>76</sup>. His work inspired later the empirical democratic theorists which group expanded after the onset of the Cold War. After 1945, as was quoted before, democracy married to liberalism, liberal democracy or representative democracy became the only form of

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<sup>74</sup> Whitehead argues that difficulties arise from the claim that the term ‘democracy’ has a clear core meaning that is universally applicable and that is essentially objective due to historical, cultural and social contexts. Yet this is not a claim that can be abandoned lightly. He sees those who aspire to the construction of a rigorous ‘theory’ of democratization will require a standardized unambiguous and empirically testable definition of what they would call the ‘dependent variable’. And in addition, there is a much wider range of analysts who, without embracing such strict criteria of objectivity, are nevertheless bound to hold out for a relatively stable and uniform definition of the term. Thus he claims there could hardly be reasoned dialogue about the international scope and significance of democratic aspirations in the absence of an agreed core of meaning and some shared assumptions about the evidence that would be needed to justify use of this term.

<sup>75</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.3; p.6-8

<sup>76</sup> Nagle, 1992, cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and*

democracy, the meanings and the usages of this word has shifted. Democracy is regarded to imply a particular set of arrangements for government and the empirical ‘reality’ of the West. Empirical democratic theorizing was bound up with the Cold War and with the need to justify liberal democracy.<sup>77</sup>

This trend of empirical democracy coincided with the rise of behavioralism within political science in the 1950s and 1960s. According to Lijphart, democracy was a reality that existed in the ‘real world’ .<sup>78</sup>

For many years after the end of the Second World War, Schumpeter’s realist or elite-oriented theory of democracy gained in acceptance as the standard by which democratic politics should be judged, given the still vivid challenges of anti-democratic alternatives<sup>79</sup>.

The work of Joseph Schumpeter can be summarized as follows:

He is pessimistic about democracy of his time. The times he lived in had seen many interwar democracies in Europe collapse and replaced by right-wing authoritarian or fascist regimes. The ideals of a citizen-based and grassroots democratic polity seemed to be an unfulfillable task; therefore he was inspired by the insights of classic elite theorists, especially from Michels, Pareto and Mosca.

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*Democratization*, 1999, p.8

<sup>77</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p17

<sup>78</sup> A. Lijphart, *Democracies: Patterns of Majoritarian and Consensus Government in Twenty-One Countries*, 1984; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p18

<sup>79</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.9

Realistic democracy. Schumpeter criticizes classic democratic idealism as dangerous utopianism and viewed his elite-oriented democratic theory as a mark of political realism. His theory sought to recognize the weakness of the interwar democracies, and aimed to build and maintain what he regarded as a stable democracy; once established, the dangers of fascism and communism could be avoided.

Elite-oriented democracy. His theory of a realistic democratic politics sought to recognize what he regarded as weakness of interwar democracies, and to reconstruct a short and more practical list of requisites for democratic politics: a minimalist role for the citizen, whilst a much more prominent role for political elites<sup>80</sup>.

He stressed the importance of limiting popular expectations of the democratic system. Underlying Schumpeter's approach was an assumption that the majority of the population could not be entrusted with the important task of decision-making<sup>81</sup>.

High quality leadership in political parties. For a successful (that is, stable) democracy, Schumpeter stressed the need for a political leadership of 'high quality', for which it would be important to "increase their fitness by endowing them with traditions that embody experience, with a professional code and with a common fund of ideas"<sup>82</sup>.

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<sup>80</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.8

<sup>81</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p18

<sup>82</sup> Eva, Etzioni-Halevy, *Classes and Elites in Democracy and Democratization*, 1997, p.82; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and*



These elites would require a high measure of autonomy, that there be a capable and independent bureaucracy, an opposition and civil society that accept the rules of the game, and a political culture of tolerance and compromise. Citizens should not put undue pressure on their elected representatives. Schumpeter suggested that such practices should be avoided both formally and informally – “also less formal attempts at restricting the freedom of action of members of parliament – the practice of bombarding them with letters and telegrams for instance – ought to come under the same ban”<sup>83</sup> (Etzioni-Halevy, 1997: 84, cited in Nagle and Mahr, 1999:9).

What inspired the empirical democratic theorists is how he saw democracy as a form of government and in particular as a mechanism for the election of leaders.

For Schumpeter, the English system came closest to his realist theory, since it rested upon a wide and traditional elite consensus on rules of the political game.

Long-time theorist of democracy, Robert Dahl, who started out very close on the Schumpeterian model<sup>84</sup>, then developed a rather different approach. According to him, the actually existing democracies cannot be regarded as the political ideal democracy.

A ideal democracy is the ultimate goal and value which people strike for and the present Western ‘democracies’ fail to fulfil some conditions for democracy. In a

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*Democratization*, 1999, p.9

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Dahl still defines democratic regimes as those which provide ‘selection of top officials in free and fair elections, extensive freedom of expression, wide access to alternative and independent sources of information, rights to form relatively independent associations and organizations, including political parties entitled to compete in elections, and an inclusive electorate’ (1995:4), but he also acknowledges that standards of democracy have risen; cited by John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr,

review of the ‘Time of Triumph’ for democracy (1995), he reminds us that even in the stable Western democracies, there were major shortcomings. He cited the cases of Switzerland and the United States, in which countries the universal suffrage was not realized after years of the installation of democracy; which, by today’s standards would disqualify a nation from democratic standing.<sup>85</sup> He even suggested not using the word ‘democracy’; instead, he used the term ‘polyarchy’.

Dahl defined the institution of polyarchy as: polyarchy rests on a combination of elected government and civil liberties, which should ensure that different groups in society have access to the political system. The main institutions are:

- The election of government officials.
- Free and fair elections.
- An inclusive suffrage.
- The right of all citizens to run for public office.
- Freedom of expression.
- Citizens have a right to source of information other than official ones.
- Associational autonomy and the right to form independent associations or organizations, including political parties and interest groups.<sup>86</sup>

Empirical democracy has its other critiques: Firstly, it is too predictable. As Whitehead put it, ‘if theory-building means only the construction of tightly defined covering law type predictive theories, then this exercise has generated almost nothing

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*Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.12

<sup>85</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.2

<sup>86</sup> R. Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, 1989, 221; cited in Jean Grugel,

that can be ‘tested’ against.’<sup>87</sup> He pointed out this fatal weakness of empirical theorizing. For instance, by the end of the 1980s, when comparative democratization studies were well advanced, a dramatic regime transition and democratization took place in the former communist countries, most political scientists were caught by surprise as previously, ‘some eminent scholars had even explicitly predicted that this would not come about’.<sup>88</sup> Another critique is that empirical democratic theorists stress overwhelmingly the practice of government. Thus, democratization, for them, is perceived as ‘essentially an exercise in creating institutions for government’; other factors which would actually place influence on the process of democratization, such as culture, society and the economy were, ‘by and large, ignored’<sup>89</sup>. I will go on to emphasise the importance of these social and cultural factors later in my thesis.

### 1.1.2 Participatory democracy

Due to the failure of democratization in interwar Europe and the renewed communist challenge of the Cold War, the world has seen the development of this new type of political study (more comparative, more realistic and more like a science) since 1945. Howard Wiarda notes that among the first generation of post-war comparative democratization theorists, most were committed to Western models of democracy,

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*Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p19

<sup>87</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.237

<sup>88</sup> Notably, in ‘Will More Countries Become Democratic?’ *Political Science Quarterly*, 99/2 (Summer 1984), Samuel Huntington specially stated that ‘the likelihood of democratic development in Eastern Europe is virtually nil’, (p.217); quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.237 footnote.

<sup>89</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p31

along with a new and radically different approach to studying different political systems.<sup>90</sup>

However, by the 1960s, there has been rising scholars' criticism toward the Schumpeterian model and the empirical theorizing. As some observers pointed out, based on the earlier criticism of the new and unaccountable 'power elite' growing within American democracy by C. Wright Mills<sup>91</sup>, left-liberal theorists like Peter Bachrach<sup>92</sup>, Jack Walker<sup>93</sup> and Henry Kariel<sup>94</sup> sought to retrieve the classic vision of a democratic politics, 'in which the citizen had more access to political information, more access to political leaders, and more direct input into political processes, both in choices of candidates and in shaping policy making'<sup>95</sup>.

The historical background of the rising demands for a more participatory democracy can be summarized as:

- The rising standards of living and education during the post-war years, which, according to modernization theory, would raise citizens' political consciousness to demand more involvement and information in political process.
- In 1968 the student and youth rebellion throughout Europe.

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<sup>90</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.4

<sup>91</sup> C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, 1956

<sup>92</sup> Peter Bachrach, *The Theory of Democratic Elitism: A Critique*, 1967

<sup>93</sup> Jack L. Walker, 'A Critique of The Elitist Theory of Democracy', *American Political Science Review*, 60 (June 1966), pp.285-95

<sup>94</sup> Henry Kariel, 'Creating Political Reality', *American Political Science Review*, 64, no.4 (December 1970), pp.1088-98

- Then in 1970s the new social movements around issues of war and peace, environment, women’ s rights, gay rights and anti-imperialist solidarity, the emergence of environmentalist movement and then the Green parties. <sup>96</sup>

According to Pateman<sup>97</sup>, participatory theories of democracy challenge the myth that liberal democracy as the one ‘classical’ theory of democracy. The ‘New Left’ and student movement in the 60s and 70s in Europe offered a critique of the way ‘actually existing democracies’ functioned, that the existence of voting rights and alternation in government do not, in themselves, guarantee the existence of democracy, while the importance be placed upon freedom and activism; focusing on the role of the state, state-society relations and the impact of economic development on citizenship<sup>98</sup>. However, the implementation of a genuine participatory democracy could be problematic since it is difficult to apply it to large communities such as the nation state.

## 1.2 On democratization

The democratization literature expanded quickly during the 90s, as the ‘democracy trend’ of 1980s when European communist regimes collapsed and turned into democratic regimes. The embracing of this most important democratic experiment since the end of the Second World War and the spread of democratization to a

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<sup>95</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.10

<sup>96</sup> Summarized from John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.9-10

<sup>97</sup> Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory*, 1970

<sup>98</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p23

post-communist Europe has for the first time given comparative politics a truly global task in its study of democratic political development<sup>99</sup>.

Democratization can be defined as the processes whereby governments, states and societies attempt to move away from some form of authoritarianism towards some form of democracy<sup>100</sup>.

This definition is a plain one; it gives people the general and ordinary idea of democratization as processes. However, as same as the concept democracy, there is more to explore and explain in conceptualizing democratization.

Democratization process is best understood as ‘complex’ , ‘long-term’ , ‘dynamic’ , ‘protracted’ and ‘open-endedness’<sup>101</sup>.

- Complex opposed to simple. By the simple ‘two turnover test’<sup>102</sup>, three countries, Italy, Japan and South Africa, which are categorized as democracies for years, (democratic constitutions have been installed in Italy and Japan for forty years) have failed to comply with this definition. For this reason, this definition of democratization is ‘simultaneously too permissive for some

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<sup>99</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.1

<sup>100</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p12

<sup>101</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.27; 246

<sup>102</sup> The ‘two turnover test’ says that a democratization begins with the exit of an authoritarian regime and ends after competitive elections have given rise to two successive peaceful transfers of government between contending parties. Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.27

cases and too exacting for others' <sup>103</sup>.

- Long-term opposed to short-term. It is necessary to identify a number of temporal patterns of long-term democratization, because the forces that drive democratization forward at one stage may not function in the same manner, or with the same intensity, at other stages. <sup>104</sup>
  - Quick democratization: a quick step change from authoritarian rule to full democracy. One illustrative instance would be the re-democratization of Uruguay after a decade of military regime.
  - Accumulative linear advance: a process of linear advance steadily sustained over a decade or a generation, for example, in response to a stable and compelling structure of external inducements, such as prospective membership of the European Union.
  - Sudden advance, then followed by long periods of stagnation or even reversal.
  - Or long periods of reluctant and partial reform, followed by a breakthrough, Mexico after the electoral defeat of the PRI is possibly in this camp.
  - Decline or reversal, as in the case of Colombia and Sri Lanka.
- Open-endedness opposed to fixed. Democracy itself is to be viewed as contextually variable and deontological, hence democratization is to be regarded as subject to interpretation and revision by the society. The power of citizenry to reconsider and modify their democratic practices in the light of

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<sup>103</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.27

<sup>104</sup> Summarized from Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.244-5

reflection and experience—this deliberative process determines the open-ended nature of democratization.<sup>105</sup>

- Protracted opposed to cut-and-dried one step shift. Some of the earlier literature portrayed democratization as ‘the end of history’<sup>106</sup>, ‘consolidation’<sup>107</sup>, and ‘the only game in town’<sup>108</sup>. However, an overview of the entire spectrum of available experience indicates that democratization processes are often more protracted and troubled than this language would suggest.<sup>109</sup>

### 1.2.1 Waves of democratization

The literature on waves of democratization owe to political scientist Samuel P. Huntington, which, according to at least one observer, has become a conventional part of the story of democratization.<sup>110</sup>

For Huntington, a wave of democratization is to be described in the following way:

A wave of democratization is a group of transitions from non-democratic to

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<sup>105</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.240

<sup>106</sup> Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, 1992;

<sup>107</sup> e.g. Andreas Schedler, ‘What is Democratic Consolidation?’ , *The Journal of Democracy* 9, 2, 1988, pp.91-107; John Higley and Richard Gunther (eds.), *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Eastern Europe*, 1992; Richard Gunther, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros and Hans-Jurgen Puhle (eds.) *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* 1995;

<sup>108</sup> Juan J. Linz, ‘Transition to Democracy’ , *The Washington Quarterly* 13, 3, Summer 1990, p.156;

<sup>109</sup> Summarized from Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.27; 240; 244-6.



democratic regimes that occur within a specific period of time and that significantly outnumber transitions in the opposite direction during that period of time. A wave also involves liberalization or partial democratization in political systems that do not become fully democratic. Each of the first two waves of democratization was followed by a reverse wave in which some but not all of the countries that had previously made the transition to democracy reverted to non-democratic rule.<sup>111</sup>

In his landmark book, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991, he illuminated three waves of democratization which was separated by two reverse waves:

- The first wave started at about the year 1828 and the number of democratic governments grew gradually until 1930, lasted for about a century; during which period national democratic institutions were established in some 33 countries. It was rooted in the American and French revolutions. 33 countries include the United States, Britain and some of its colonies, France, some of the smaller countries of Europe and a number of the independent states of South America. The liberal democracy expanded during this time but later was confronted with two totally different ideologies, Socialist democracy and Fascism; with latter posed the most substantive challenge and eventually brought the first wave to an end when the rising Fascist movement successfully seized power in Italy and Germany.
- It also marked the beginning of the first reverse wave which lasted from 1926 until 1942. Many of the previous democracies, especially those recent

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<sup>110</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p33

<sup>111</sup> S.P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991, pp 15-16;

established regimes (just before or after the First World War), failed and lost power to authoritarian regimes. These includes, Italy, Germany, Spain, Argentina, some of the fledgling democracies in Central and Eastern Europe, the Iberian Peninsula, Japan, and South America.

- Right after the first reverse wave started the second wave of democratization which covered for the period of 1943 to about 1962. The physical defeat of the Axis powers in 1945 marked the end of the Second World War; many countries became new liberated democracies including a large number of former European colonies, and a range of countries in South America. However, most Eastern European countries, also liberated, were under the rule of authoritarian regimes during this wave.
- The second reverse wave came along between 1958 until 1975, in South America and many of the former colonies particularly.
- The third wave and the most recent one, started in 1974 when Portugal and Greece turned democratic, later, striking other countries such as Spain, Latin American countries and in the late 1980s and early 1990s, rolling through the former Communist states of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and Mongolia, and also influencing events in East and South-east Asia.<sup>112</sup>

Huntington adopted the metaphor of the ‘third wave’ to indicate that although people are more impressed by the recent influential democracy trend in the 1970s and 1980s, it is not the first time when so many non-democratic regimes changed into democracies in a certain period of time. He also analysed the cause behind these

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<sup>112</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991, pp.13-26; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization:*

democratization waves. Different factors and forces can be verified for the first, second and the third waves.

- For the first wave: capitalism and liberal democracy was at expansion, the global markets were coming into being, while the values and ideals of democracy were diffused during capitalist' s global expansion.
- For the second wave: the defeat of Fascism by the Allies who were the leading democracies of the time, they were able to set up the global authority and influence the capitalist world, the influence of the West in decolonization, and the Cold War, which suggested the ideological triumph of liberal democracy within the capitalist 'free' world.
- For the third wave: he argues for five key factors, the deepening legitimacy problems of authoritarian system; demands for raised living standards and education, especially on the part of the middle class; the liberalization of the Catholic Church; the changing policies of global organizations such as EU, and of actors such as Gorbachev and the shift in US policy towards endorsing an agenda of democratization and human rights; the snowballing effect of democratization. <sup>113</sup>

### 1.2.2 The Critique of wave theory:

There has been some criticism towards Huntington' s theory; major arguments can be

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*Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.1-2

<sup>113</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991, pp.45-6; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization:*

summarized as follows:

Empirically, this wave approach is problematic. The waves as he described are rather ‘indistinct’ and ‘overlapping’. For instance, it is arguable that three countries, Portugal, Greece and Spain fell in the third wave but not the second wave. There is a time gap of 20 years between the beginning of democratization in Portugal and the end of democratization in West Germany. Also, at least one observer has argued that the democratization can not said to be fully installed in Germany until its reunification. The distinction between waves is quite ‘blurred’.

Huntington’s understanding of democracy is too narrow. For example, he called Italy and Argentina democracies as early as in the first wave, but actually they only became so at the time of the First World War<sup>114</sup>.

Thus, he exaggerated the effect of global democratization. The wave approach excessively emphasizes the global aspects of democratization which could be misleading. While at the same time he was not able to specify the causes of democracy or ‘identify the mechanisms that bring democracy into being’. Globalization, for example, is overstated.<sup>115</sup>

### **1.3 Literature on democratization**

After examining the influential wave theory, we need to bear in mind that there are significantly different ways of how this term is understood. There is a vast literature on democratization; it has been conceptualized as ‘a discourse, a demand, a set of

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*Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.1-2

<sup>114</sup> This brings us back to the disagreement on what democracy is.

<sup>115</sup> Summarized from Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002,

institutional changes, a form of elite domination, a political system dependent on popular control, an exercise in power politics and a demand for global solidarity’ ; it has also been analyzed from ‘the perspective of political theory, comparative politics, international relations, sociology, cultural studies and political economy’ .<sup>116</sup>

To investigate democratization literature within political science, we may conclude that there are two big categories of theorizing:

Structuralism: explanations that emphasize structure or context which includes social structure, economic structure, cultural context and historical context and so on. Modernization theorists and comparative historical sociologists belong to this school.

Agency theory: explanations that emphasize agency or conduct, elite could be the agency, the state could be the agency. The transition literature is the most influential agency theory group in democratization literature.

In the following chapter, Modernization, comparative historical sociology and transition literature will be introduced one by one.

### 1.3.1 Modernization

There have been a number of studies that have tried to explain the causality of democratization with different variables; some of the societal variables such as

‘modernization’ , per capita income levels, the expansion of commercial society, the rise of a middle class, the emergence of organized labour<sup>117</sup>; some culturally specific variables such as ‘civic culture’<sup>118</sup>, belief in the legitimacy of polyarchy<sup>119</sup>, the rational and individualistic values embodied in European culture<sup>120</sup>, and the presence of Protestantism<sup>121</sup>, ethnic homogeneity, and so on.

As one observer pointed out, during the Cold War era, democratization theorists, especially those doing the comparative studies, recognize that they were obsessed with the Western liberal democracy model as opposed to the communist political model. Hence the researchers tend to ignore the other perspectives and other paths, focusing on whether a regime belongs to the West camp or the Soviet bloc.

Over this course, one specific approach became the most influential-the ‘modernization’ school, which sought to find the causal nexus between economic development and democratization. Modernization theory was thus codified within democratization studies and draws on a mix of Weberian notions of the ‘modern’

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<sup>117</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.65

<sup>118</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, 1965; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>119</sup> Robert A. Dahl, *Polyarchy. Participation and Opposition*, 1971, Chapter 8; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>120</sup> See the discussion in Huntington, pp.298-311; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>121</sup> See the discussion in Kenneth A. Bollen, ‘Political Democracy and the Timing of Development’ , *American Sociological Review*, 44, 4, 1969, pp.572-87; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

state and the preoccupation of classical sociology with describing social transitions – from feudalism to capitalism, from traditional to modern, from ascription to achievement – which occurred in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>122</sup>.

The modernization approach was begun with Lipset's seminal article in 1959<sup>123</sup>. He presumed modernity as universal experience, which would lead to similar societies and states. Democracy is the outcome of modernization of capitalism. Modernization is also predictive: democracy appears in those societies that are able to 'replicate the original transition<sup>124</sup>' to capitalism and become enmeshed in global economic structures.<sup>125</sup> Later his basic finding, namely, there is a positive correlation between economic development and democracy, has been carried forward by numerous subsequent analyses.<sup>126</sup>

Lipset's notion of capitalism as the source of democracy was strengthened by the work of some development economists such as Walt Rostow in the 1960s. Rostow<sup>127</sup> (1960) identified a lineal path for economic development along defined 'stages', as they were termed, until capitalism was achieved: the traditional society; the pre-take-off society; take-off; the road to maturity; and the mass consumption

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<sup>122</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p47

<sup>123</sup> Seymour Martin Lipset, 'Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy', *American Political Science Review* 53, 1, March 1959, pp. 69-105

<sup>124</sup> I. Roxborough, *Theories of Development*, 1979;

<sup>125</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p47

<sup>126</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>127</sup> W.W. Rostow, *The Process of Economic Growth*, 1960; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p48

society<sup>128</sup>.

As Lipset's research demonstrates, higher levels of economic development tend to be found in democratic countries other than non-democracies: 'the more well-to-do a nation, the greater the chances that it will sustain democracy.'<sup>129</sup> Other researchers such as Diamond have discovered that when the development of a nation's economy rises, it does not indicate that the possibility of democracy would rise as well. They found the importance of a middle income range, defined in terms of per capita income expressed in American dollars<sup>130</sup>. The highest possibility of a democratization transition in an authoritarian regime exists in the countries that are within this middle income range. For the countries under this range, the possibility of democratization are lower and even the regime change is possible, it is unlikely to sustain a stable democracy. For the countries higher than the range, researchers have different opinions. For instance, Diamond, citing Dahl's argument<sup>131</sup>, shows that there is an upper threshold which is above the middle range, and beyond this threshold the probability of a democratic regime is so high that economic development has no effect. On the other hand, Przeworski and Limongi<sup>132</sup> argue that above such a threshold, the probability of regime change is low, since not only the democratic but

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<sup>128</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p48

<sup>129</sup> Lipset, p.75, cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>130</sup> e.g. Larry Diamond, 'Economic Development and Democracy Reconsidered', *American Behavioral Scientist*, 35, 4/5, March/June 1992, pp.454-455; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>131</sup> Diamond, p.454; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>132</sup> Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, 'Modernization: Theories and Facts', *World Politics* 49, 2, 1997, pp. 159-60 cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of*



also the authoritarian regimes can sustain themselves.

However, the basic founding remains unchallenged; for countries that are below this upper threshold or middle range, economic development increases the possibility of democratization.<sup>133</sup>

A number of aspects of the process of economic development have been identified to explain the emergence of democracies.

- Economic development can improve the education level of citizenry. The better educated citizenry would be more likely to accept democratic values and thus become more tolerant, moderate, restrained and rational.
- Economic development increases the income to the mass of the population. Because poverty, incomes gaps and mal-development could lead disadvantaged groups to seek redress through non-democratic means, or to support anti-democratic (nationalist, populist, communist) parties in the electoral process<sup>134</sup>. With economic security, the populace would develop longer time perspective and more complex and gradualist views of politics.
- Economic development increases the size of the middle class. The increased wealth reduces inequality and class distinctions. The middle class moderates conflict as they would choose moderate and democratic parties not the radical ones.

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*Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>133</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3

<sup>134</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.55

- Economic development brings more jobs for the populace, therefore implying less reliance on the state for employment.
- Economic development would also create unbearable pressure for an authoritarian structure. The class structure has dramatic shift: the growth of a middle class in urban areas and the migration of the rural poor to the cities becoming peasant working class; which breaks the feudal links of the authoritarian regime.
- Economic development increases people's wealth and their liberties. Hence leads to the emergence of a large number of voluntary, autonomous social organizations. These autonomous organizations seek to increase political participation, place a check upon government, enhance political skills, and generate and diffuse new opinions. Economic development is therefore instrumental in the emergence of civil society. <sup>135</sup>

Gill asserts that most of the factors listed above may explain why popular sentiment broadly favours democracy, but not why political actors might act to replace authoritarian by democratic rule; they are socio-economic explanations which establish contexts for political action without explaining why particular political actors act the way they do. Gill chose the final factor – the development of civil society forces – to be the vital dynamic of democratization. <sup>136</sup>

There are also other modernization researchers who focused their work on economic

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<sup>135</sup> Based on discussion in Diamond, pp. 475-485, which is in turn based principally on Lipset; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.3-5

<sup>136</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the*

development not as the cause of democratization but the factor for consolidation of democracy. For instance, Haggard and Kaufman (1995) develop theories of democratization through non-regional comparisons along thematic lines heavily centred on economic reforms and their relation to democratic consolidation.<sup>137</sup> Diamond, the theorist influential in updating modernization theory, has picked up the 1960s concern with mass participation and political culture in newly ‘modernized’ states and emphasizes, in particular, the role of political culture and a dynamic civil society for democratization. In the process, he has shifted modernization away from a discussion on the causes of democracy towards a focus on consolidation<sup>138</sup>.

### 1.3.2 Critique of Modernization Theory

In the latter 1960s and early 1970s, there was much criticism of the original Western-inspired modernization theory, from those on the right (Huntington, 1968) who were sceptical of the Western model’s universalism, and those on the left, who connected Western policy toward development in various regions to Western ethnocentrism, the dependency syndrome and imperialist domination<sup>139</sup>. This was probably a low point in post-war confidence in the general theoretical and empirically backed connection between economic development and political democracy, especially with numerous military takeovers of government in Latin America, Asia and Africa, and with several communist takeovers through armed struggle in Vietnam,

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*Transition Process*, 2000, p.5

<sup>137</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.227

<sup>138</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p.50

<sup>139</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.227

Laos, Cambodia, Angola and Mozambique<sup>140</sup>.

To sum up, the critiques of modernization are from the following aspects:

Modernization is ahistorical. It presumes that all societies can replicate a transition which actually occurred at a particular moment in space and time. At least one observer has shown it is not so. O' Donnell's<sup>141</sup> (1973) suggests that in bureaucratic authoritarian developing countries, the development of capitalism gives a numerically small but political powerful bourgeoisie more resources and opportunities to maximize their interests through the repression under dictatorship but not the democracy.

Modernization is inherently ethnocentric. Modernization takes the experience of the West, especially the leading capitalist democracies as universal rules whilst ignores the development of the East, the third world. So it is Eurocentric and ethnocentric.

Modernization is overly structural. As analysts pointed out, a purely political economy approach tends to downplay local cultural and socio-political legacies of nations and regions, in order to highlight economic policy issues and to develop more universal policy preferences<sup>142</sup>. Also it is at the expense of human action.

Modernization is also methodologically problematic. Lewis rejects modernization theory as an explanation for why democracy is likely to occur, because it never has been able to demonstrate a clear cause and effect relationship (1997:13). He does cite the level of socioeconomic development as useful in explaining the sustainability of

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<sup>140</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.227

<sup>141</sup> G. O' Donnell, *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*, 1973; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p49

democratic practices, though<sup>143</sup>. Przeworski and Limongi<sup>144</sup> (1997) suggest that the evidence supports the thesis that democracy survives better in wealthier nations but not the original proposition that democracy is a simple consequence of economic growth.<sup>145</sup>

Generally speaking, over the years, the charges of Eurocentrism brought other varieties of political development into political literature, including Latin American corporatism, Third World dependency politics, indigenous systems, and most recently East Asian developmental-ism which I will discuss at greater length below.

### 1.3.3 Comparative historical sociology

In democratization literature, historical sociology and structuralism are the two terms which are often used interchangeably. The two intellectual origins of this approach are: it offers a state-centred view, to ‘bring the state back in<sup>146</sup>’ to politics, which arose out of a reaction to the excessively society-based accounts of political change embedded in behavioural-ism in the 1960s; it also drew explicitly on a critique of the short-termism and causal simplicity of modernization as an explanation of

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<sup>142</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.227

<sup>143</sup> Paul Lewis, ‘Theories of Democratization and Patterns of Regime Change in Eastern Europe’, *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, 13(1): 4-26; quoted in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.55

<sup>144</sup> Adam Przeworski and Fernando Limongi, ‘Modernization: Theories and Facts’, *World Politics* 49, 2, 1997, pp. 159-60; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p50

<sup>145</sup> Based on Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, pp.49-50

<sup>146</sup> P. Evans, D. Rueschmeyer and T. Skocpol, (eds), *Bringing the State Back In*, 1985; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p51

democratization<sup>147</sup>.

Scholars have long recognized the importance of longer-term historical analysis in the study of the path to Western liberal democracy. This school of historical sociology constituted the major alternative perspective of analysis of the emergence of democracy to the modernization literature before the transition literature; one of the most stimulating and fruitful attempts to do this has been the work of Barrington Moore Jr.<sup>148</sup>

Through class conflict over time, historical sociologists trace the transformation of the state, in order to explain how democracy – which they see as state transformation – has sometimes emerged. Barrington Moore's (1966) major study of political change constitutes a significant milestone for historical/sociological understanding of democratization. His comparative analysis of 8 'big' countries, Britain, France, the US, Germany, Russia, Japan, China and India, through the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the 20<sup>th</sup>, identified the different historical trajectories that each had travelled to reach modernity<sup>149</sup>.

The approach adopted by Moore was very different to that used by many writers from the modernization school which was prominent in political science at his time of

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<sup>147</sup> D. Rueschemeyer, E. Stephens and J. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 1992; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p51

<sup>148</sup> Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 1969, originally published in 1966; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.95

<sup>149</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p52

writing. Moore defines his task as to ‘discover the range of historical conditions under which either or both of these rural groups (the landed upper classes and the peasantry) have become important forces behind the emergence of Western parliamentary versions of democracy, and dictatorships of the right and the left, that is, fascist and communist regimes.’<sup>150</sup>

There are four actors, landed upper classes, peasantry, state and bourgeoisie, in Moore’s basic assumption, whose patterns of relationship create different paths to modernity, and also resulting different political outcomes. The three paths he identified are: a bourgeois revolution, leading to capitalism and democracy; revolution from above, leading to industrialization and fascism; and revolution from below, leading to communism.

Only through the path of bourgeois revolution, can it be led to capitalism and democracy, and the crucial variable is the absence of a conservative alliance against the lower classes which would be able to consolidate traditional power arrangements. The absence of such a structure was associate with the development of an independent, and powerful, bourgeoisie which was itself the key to democracy, ‘No bourgeois, no democracy.’<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 1969, p.viii; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.96

<sup>151</sup> Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 1969, p.418; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000,

The nature of Moore's explanation for democracy is overwhelmingly societal and economic rather than political, and also his work was concentrated mainly on the emergence of the first democracies; to update his work with the expansion of the new parliamentary and stable democracies and also to bring in a political dimension with specific political institutions and actors, Moore's work was modified by Rueschmeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) whose work emphasize the central importance of urban working classes for democratization<sup>152</sup>. Their work has been made in a very important book called *Capitalist Development and Democracy*<sup>153</sup>.

Class power, the power and autonomy of the state and the trans-national configuration of power are the three power constellations whose relationships structure the path to democratic or non-democratic transition in Rueschemeyer *et al.* In discussing the impact of class forces on the course of political development, Rueschemeyer *et al.* argue that classes have behaved in a systematic manner during the development of capitalism.

- The landed upper class appears to be the chief opponent of democratization.
- The bourgeoisie plays as both the supporter for a representative democratic constitution; and the opponent for a participatory government where lower classes have the right to political participation.
- The middle class support democratic values in principle, but its part becomes ambiguous, as it tended to oppose to democracy when felt threatened by

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p.101

<sup>152</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, pp.52-3

<sup>153</sup> Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyne Huber Stephens and John D. Stephens, *Capitalist Development and Democracy*, 1992;



popular pressure.

- The role of peasants and rural working classes is restricted by their capacity for autonomous organization and vulnerability to influence by the dominant classes.
- The urban working class constitutes the most consistently pro-democratic force. As Moore asserts that the independent bourgeoisie is essentially democratic and the main force for democracy. On the contrary, it was the working class, unusually with the support of middle class that was responsible for the achievement of full democracy.
- Capitalism is important in the rise of democracy. The urban working class is strengthened during the expansion of capitalism but not the rural subordinate classes. The landed upper class is weakened at the same process. The bourgeoisie is strengthened as well and becomes a counterbalance to the power of the old upper class.<sup>154</sup>

These historical sociological studies have shown that how agricultural commercialization and industrialization shaped the character of different social interests; hence changed the social and economic structures which paved the path to democracy.

### 1.3.4 Critique of Historical Sociology

The work of historical sociologists on comparative democratization is regarded as

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<sup>154</sup> Based on Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, pp.107-9

richly grounded which offers an alternative explanation with the possibility of comparison across time and regions. The major critiques can be summarized in the following:

- For structuralism, the same problem lies with its ontology and epistemology. Structuralism provides us with a view of the world that is too simple or simply wrong.
- The historical sociologists do recognize the role of agency as significant in the political development, for example, the class, or even the state as the agent for democratization. However, for critics who only accept individuals as agents, it is not persuasive taking collective action as agency.
- It emphasizes the long-term historical transformation, in which democracy is reached by class struggle. It seemed unable to offer an explanation for the sudden democratization which later took place in East and Central Europe and the former communist countries in the Soviet Union. Another new literature on Transition became influential which is aiming to solve all these shortcomings of structuralism. <sup>155</sup>

### 1.3.5 Transition literature

The emergence of the third wave of democratization in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to what has been called ‘transition literature’, or sometimes termed, the agency approach, which sees democracy as created by committed conscious actors,

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<sup>155</sup> Summarized from Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p.55

‘providing that they possess a degree of luck and show a willingness to compromise<sup>156</sup>’. Transition literature has been very influential in shaping our understanding of the regime shift.

For the transition literature, modernization theory and historical sociology are both over-determining when explaining political outcomes with economic, historical and societal factors. Because only when capitalism is developed to a certain level or the leading classes have gained enough power, in a word, a democratic outcome is determined by structural elements. Where the structure is unfavourable, the democracy is not likely to happen or, even if it takes place, it is not possible to endure. Transition approach, being optimistic rather than pessimistic, prefers a perspective that democracy can be created independent of the structural context by agency<sup>157</sup>.

The intellectual starting point and perhaps the most important work of transition literature is the work of Dankwart Rustow<sup>158</sup> who is also a critique of modernization. His ideas can be summarized in the following:

The only condition for democracy is a unified national state, which he calls a background condition. It shows that citizenry of the democracy in question agree that they all belong to the same particular political community. Therefore, the aim of democratization is not to create a new conception of the political community but to transform the existing political system.

The creation of democracy is a dynamic process in the context of a ‘prolonged and

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<sup>156</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p.56

<sup>157</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p.57

<sup>158</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, ‘Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model’, *Comparative Politics* 2, 3, April 1970, pp. 337-363.

inconclusive political struggle’ , which passes through three stages which later transformed into liberalization, transition and consolidation. <sup>159</sup>

- a) The first phase is the preparatory phase during which a polarization of political life results.
- b) The second phase is the decision phase. During this period, the political leaders recognize that there is a diversity of views, and thereby seek to institutionalize ‘some crucial aspect of democratic procedure’ to structure and channel this diversity during which, ‘a small circle of leaders is likely to play a disproportionate role’ .
- c) The third and final phase is habituation phase during which political leaders learned from the successful resolution of some issues and thereby start to trust the new rules and procedures. New structure is established and linked with the mass of the populace by effective parties.<sup>160</sup>

The dynamics of elite interaction during the process of transition played a key role throughout the three phases in this model. It later yielded a rich and interesting literature. The path-breaking, and paradigm-setting, work in this regard was the collective study edited by Guillermo O’ Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead. <sup>161</sup> Their work can be summarized as:

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<sup>159</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p.57

<sup>160</sup> Based on Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, pp.43-4

<sup>161</sup> Guillermo O’ Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Southern Europe*, 1986; *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America*, 1986; *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Comparative Perspectives*, 1986; and Guillermo O’ Donnell and Philippe C.

Transition is the interval between one political regime and another, and it is characterized by uncertainty and indirection. This uncertainty means that the transition may lead to democratic regime or another form of authoritarian rule.

There are insufficient structural or behavioural parameters during the transition. Structural factors may help with the process but they are much less salient than under normal circumstances.

The high degree of indeterminacy is embedded in situations where unexpected events (*fortuna*), insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity, political identities, as well as the talents of specific individuals (*virtu*), are frequently decisive in determining the outcomes.

Hence it is almost impossible to identify what alternative the groups would choose to support. Not only the rules of the political game are subjected to uncertainty, but also is the identity of all of the main actors, their motives, and the likely course of action they will pursue.

The main focus of study is the dynamics of various elite actors' interaction. The division within the authoritarian regime is regarded as crucial and the root of every transition. This division is usually caused by domestic issues other than international. It created opportunity for other political actors to participate in the political process.

The vital question in the division is whether to take liberalization or repression. The people who are going for liberalizing the regime need to make sure that the hardliners are not too threatened to stop the change from happening. They would form pacts

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Schmitter (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Tentative Conclusions about Uncertain Democracies*, 1986. All four volumes have also been published in a consolidated version, Guillermo O' Donnell, Philippe C. Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead (eds.), *Transitions from Authoritarian Rule: Prospects for Democracy*,

which play a very important role during the transition.

The influence of civil society is also mentioned in the transition however short-lived. Popular involvement is provided. The people can also participate through involvement in ‘founding elections’, which may be important for the development of parties. However they argue that the populace becomes demobilized as democratization proceeds. The opening of negotiations between regime reformers and opposition moderates is important in bringing this about. <sup>162</sup>

The work of Schmitter, O’ Donnell and Whitehead provided an agency-centred theory of democratization, which situated the study of democracy with mainstream political science methodologies and epistemologies. It became the key reference for transition studies which, by drawing on theories of political action, it offered a political explanation of political development as opposed to sociological or historical approaches.

Another transition theorist, Przeworski <sup>163</sup>(1991:19) pioneered a rational choice explanation of transition processes, which ran parallel with the rise to prominence of rational choice in other areas of the study of politics<sup>164</sup>. Along with other agency scholars who see the role of civil society as ambiguous or unimportant, Przeworski (1991) went further to suggest that popular mobilization has been unfavourable to democratization as elites feel so threatened that they abolished the ongoing

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1986.

<sup>162</sup> Summarized from Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, pp.44-5

<sup>163</sup> A. Przeworski, *Democracy and the Market: Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America*, 1991, p19; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p58

liberalization.

### 1.3.6 Critique of Transition Literature

There have been a number of critiques towards the elitist approach of transition school. To sum up, these are a few main points:

Transition approach is excessively empirical and voluntaristic. The key elements in the approach are its elite/individual focus and the emphasis upon uncertainty. As discussed before, structural factors are not supposed to be decisive, the decisions and actions of elites or even individual leader thus become overly important in the process; the uncertainty of personal preferences and actions exists throughout the transition. This elite focus and uncertainty prominence makes the theorizing impossible. It is thus impossible to make any predictions for change. <sup>165</sup>

Transition scholars set out a conservative definition of democracy. They prefer to concentrate on democracy as a set of procedures for creating institutions and the government. <sup>166</sup> They suggest that it makes more sense to establish a ‘procedural minimum’ for a functioning ‘democracy’ and work from this. <sup>167</sup> There are clear problems for their analysis. If the normative aspect of democracy is ignored, then it cannot explain the appeal of this form of government except through the terms of the rational actor seeking personal advantage, an explanation which does not fit well with

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<sup>164</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p58

<sup>165</sup> Based on Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p 45

<sup>166</sup> P. Schmitter and T.L. Karl, ‘What Democracy Is ... and Is Not’, in L. Diamond and M. Plattner (eds), *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, 1993; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p61

the enthusiasm often evident at this time.<sup>168</sup>

The ambiguous role it defines for civil society is also questionable. It downplays any non-elite and in particular civil society, actors, which weaken its explanatory power.

#### **1.4 Does the literature help our understanding of the Chinese case?**

After reviewed the literature on democracy and three major schools on democratization, we can see the divergence among different democratization theorists in the West, which is due to the different perspectives they take to research. When relating the country in question to this vast literature, in this case, China, scholars fall into two camps in terms of the perspective they take: the first one is the modernization school, who sees the positive relations between economy and democracy, China's record of high percentage economic development in nearly three decades since the Reform, and the noticeable political, social transformation which resulted from it, for instance, the enlarged civil rights, the liberalization of press, the direct democratic election practiced at the village level, the proliferation of NGOs, convinced them that democratization is something that will happen sooner or later. The sceptics, however, see the unbalanced economic and political reform, the strength and resilience of the authoritarian regime, the under developed civil society, the suppressions that took place now and then, as the signs of continuing authoritarianism, and for them, democracy is not coming any closer to China<sup>169</sup>, even if it comes, it is not liberal<sup>170</sup>.

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<sup>167</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: a Critical Introduction*, 2002, p61

<sup>168</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p 88

<sup>169</sup> See, for example, Tsai, Kellee S. (2007) *Capitalism without Democracy: the Private Sector in Contemporary China*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

<sup>170</sup> See, for example, Daniel A. Bell and Kanishka Jayasuriya, 'Understanding  
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For the sceptics, there are a large number of them, tend to put China in the category of East Asia, as they found many common features of the countries within this region: comparatively stable authoritarian regimes which have enjoyed economic development in recent years with the delay of democratization. The distinctive East Asian history, culture and identity, thus became the explanation for this phenomenon. This will be elaborated in the following chapter.

## **1.5 Conclusion**

In the first chapter of the thesis, the existing literature on democracy and democratization have been reviewed, which gives us ideas about how these two terms are constructed in the western political discipline. A historical approach has been adopted here when explaining the evolution of the concept on democracy. The two original strands of democracy (direct democracy and liberal democracy) have been identified. A constructivist view of democracy has been presented. The route of liberal or representative democracy becomes the only justified form of democracy since the 1940s has been also explored. An explanation of how an elite-oriented democracy has gradually been replaced by a more participatory democracy has been provided.

The expansion of democratization studies in the 1990s as a result of the large-scale regime change in the former European communist states have also been fully investigated together with Huntington' s well-known wave theory. With the literature,

major representatives coming from three different schools and their main claims have been introduced, including the modernization school, comparative historical sociology and transition literature. Critiques towards each of the schools have also been presented as they are either emphasizing too much the determinate nature of the structure in constructing their theory while neglecting the initiative of the agency or vice versa. Of course, their works are valuable in the sense of providing this thesis with a broader literature background.

Recalling the definition of democracy, we can find that the applicability of this term requires historical, social and cultural context. In fact, for all the three predominant democratization schools, this context matters.

Historical context. Each school comes from a specific historical background or bases their findings upon a historical approach. For instance, modernization school became influential after the onset of Cold War as theorists tried to justify liberal democracy as opposed to the Soviet bloc. The transition of East European Communist countries into democracies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to the transition literature. The historical sociologists based their findings on the history of capitalism. The well-known wave theory seems simply describing the history since 1828<sup>171</sup>.

Social context. Some works of the modernizationists have paid attention to the relationship between economic development and the rise of civil society. While the historical sociologists are mostly concerned about the social structure and the roles

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<sup>171</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991

different social classes have played on the way to democracy<sup>172</sup>.

Cultural context. Some cultural specific variables such as ‘civic culture’<sup>173</sup> and the rational and individualistic values embodied in European culture<sup>174</sup> were applied to explain the causality of democratization by the modernization school.

In the following chapter, the democratic debate regarding the specific state—China will be investigated fully with historical, social and cultural context.

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<sup>172</sup> Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 1969, originally published in 1966

<sup>173</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, 1965; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>174</sup> See the discussion in Huntington, pp.298-311; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000,

**CHAPTER TWO**  
**DEMOCRACY AND DEMOCRATISATION *IN* CHINA**

## 2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will review the literature which relates China<sup>175</sup> with democratization. Generally speaking, ever since the suppression of student demonstrations in June 1989, scholars in and out of China have vigorously debated about the prospects for a democratic transition in the PRC. The school of modernization theory, based on the fact that the Reform in China has achieved considerable economic growth, conclude that democratization will sooner or later take place in the PRC. Their claims are based on four aspects. Firstly, democratization is regarded as long-term political consequences of democracy. The economic development will lead to democratization as it did elsewhere. Secondly, the implications for democracy can be found in a range of recent reforms, such as the decentralization of power within the Party, the strengthening of the Legislature, the expansion of media as the civil society force, and the competitive democratic grassroots election at the village level. Thirdly, economic liberalization lays the groundwork for democratization. Last but not least, the sequence of the liberalization, ‘economic first, political second’, will help to build a more sustainable democracy in the future.

The sceptics, on the contrary, stress the strengths and resiliency of the existing authoritarian arrangements and the legacy of history and culture in China and other East Asian authoritarian states. They cautiously apply some democratic concepts to

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<sup>175</sup> Here, in the thesis, ‘China’ refers to the People’s Republic of China, the PRC, which is the so-called mainland China; the Republic of China i.e. Taiwan, and Hong Kong, the Special Administrative Region of the PRC, are not included in the discussion due to distinctive historical and political backgrounds. Taiwan has already

China and/or East Asia, terms such as, ‘semi civil society<sup>176</sup>’, ‘illiberal democracy<sup>177</sup>’ or ‘capitalism without democracy<sup>178</sup>’. Firstly, the sceptics state that there is no causal relation between economic development and democratization. Secondly, the implications for democracy actually are implication for the strengthening of the authoritarian regime. Thirdly, economic liberalization does not automatically lead to democratization. Last but not least, the Asia Model has a distinctive order from the Western liberal traditions.

## 2.1 Modernization School

In the first camp, theorists and researchers focus less on the toughness or fragility of the current political system, and look ‘instead at the long-term democratizing implications of economic and social change’<sup>179</sup>. Their views can be concluded as follows:

### 2.1.1 Economic Development and Democratization

During the last three decades, China’s openness to the world and the move away from the command economy has resulted in the continual nationwide economic growth.

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started democratic transition, and there is a vivid civil society in Hong Kong.

<sup>176</sup> Baogang He, *The Democratic Implications of Civil Society in China*, (Basingstoke : Macmillan), 1997, p1

<sup>177</sup> Daniel A. Bell and Kanishka Jayasuriya, ‘Understanding Illiberal Democracy’, in Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995

<sup>178</sup> Tsai, Kellee S. *Capitalism without Democracy: the Private Sector in Contemporary China*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press), 2007

<sup>179</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, ‘Confronting a Classic Dilemma’, *Journal of Democracy*

Democratization will become inevitable as the political consequences of economy, the communication revolution, and the emergence of a more diverse society and an urban middle class. Individual will gain more independence, resource and power vis-à-vis the state which necessitates the adoption of democracy and the rule of law.

Henry S. Rowen's article, 'The Short March: China's Road to Democracy', published in the Fall 1996 issue of *The National Interest*, began by observing that all countries (leaving aside states that make nearly all their money from oil exports) which had attained a Gross Domestic Product per capita (GDPpc) of at least US\$8,000 per year (as measured by the Purchasing-Power Parity or PPP standard for the year 1995) stood no worse than Partly Free in the ratings of political rights and civil liberties published annually by Freedom House.

In his thought-provoking essay, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?'<sup>180</sup>, Henry Rowen revisits and updates his optimistic argument that China will experience gradual democratic change. This change, he claims, will raise China from Freedom House's 'Not Free' category to its 'Partly Free' category by 2015 and then to the ranks of 'Free' countries just ten years after that.

Rowen's theory is drawn mainly on the modernization literature. Rowen noticed that over the last decade, China's per-capita growth has averaged a highly impressive 8.5 percent annually, reaching a GDPpc of \$6,000 in 2006 international-PPP dollars. He

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9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>180</sup> Henry S. Rowen, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 38-52

then estimates that an average per-capita growth rate of 7 percent a year will be enough to raise GDPpc to \$10,000 PPP by 2015; that is when China edge into the Partly Free category. After that, slower workforce expansion plus China's expected approach toward convergence with the world's leading developed economies suggest that the growth rate will climb less steeply. Annual growth of 5 percent in GDPpc starting in 2015 will bring China to roughly \$14,000 PPP (in 2006 dollars) by 2025. That is when, Rowen predicts, the more than one-sixth of the world's people who live in China will be citizens of a country correctly classed as belonging to the Free nations of the earth.

Rowen inquired into recent modernization scholarship which tells about the nexus between economic development and political freedom. The hypothesis that development might lead to democracy, is associated with Seymour Martin Lipset. After analyzing more than a hundred countries, Robert J. Barro found that higher incomes and higher levels of (primary) education predict higher freedoms<sup>181</sup>. He also found significant time lags between the appearance of a factor positive for electoral rights and its expression in politics. He interpreted such lags as tokens of inertia in institutions affected by changes in economic and social variables, and noted that after about two decades 'the level of democracy is nearly fully determined by the economic and social variables.'<sup>182</sup> This observation helps one to understand why a

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<sup>181</sup> Robert J. Barro, 'Determinants of Democracy', *Journal of Political Economy* 107 (December 1999): S158-83; cited by Henry S. Rowen, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.39

<sup>182</sup> Robert J. Barro, 'Rule of Law, Democracy, and Economic Performance', *2000 Index of Economic Freedom* (Washington, D.C.: Heritage Foundation, 2000); cited by Henry S. Rowen, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.40



rapidly growing country such as China has a freedom rating today well below the level that its current income would predict.

As other theorists found in the contemporary Chinese polity, there are many new factors and variables at work,<sup>183</sup>

- The nature of political discourse is changing. There is an important evolution in the thinking of the leaders;
- an increased probability of social unrest that will demand a high-level strategic, rather than tactical response;
- the influence of Hong Kong and Taiwan on mainland politics, and
- the consequences of the Chinese leadership's involvement in world affairs.

Despite the signs suggesting the durability or resilience of China's non-democratic regime, even the casual visitor to China would quickly note how much more freedom the Chinese enjoy today compared with the early years of economic reforms, let alone in the Maoist era.<sup>184</sup> Yang anticipated that, in the coming years,

- The Chinese economy will continue to grow to support improvements in living standards and educational levels;
- The rule of law will likely become more firmly established. The last development is the enactment of a March 2007 law that protects

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<sup>183</sup> Michel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.29

<sup>184</sup> Dali L. Yang, 'China's Long March to Freedom', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3

private-property rights.

- And village elections will probably spread to urban neighbourhoods, while other experiments in governance will go forward.

Thus Yang found it hard to avoid agreeing with Rowen that China will move into the Partly Free category sometime in the not-too-distant future. These reforms will be discussed in greater length in later chapters.

### 2.1.2 Implications for Democracy

The modernizationists tried to find implications for democracy in a range of recent reforms, which include:

Firstly, the decentralization of power within the Party: the change within the Party to accept a species of interest-based politics (even if most interests are pursued by and through agencies of the state)<sup>185</sup>; the strengthening of legislature - People's Congresses at all levels of the hierarchy, especially the National People's Congress; the rule of law: the development of a legal system in the legal reform;

Secondly, civil society: the expansion and commercialization of media, and the beginnings of investigative journalism; the proliferation of Non-governmental Organizations (registered with the government);

Last but not least, competitive democratic grassroots elections at the village-level.

During the Reform decades, as the modern market economy is gradually formed, its

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(2007) p.60

<sup>185</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy*

operation and function is incompatible with the Leninist requirement of comprehensive party and state control over society. For some observers, CCP has faced a dilemma which other authoritarian regimes have faced, to continue economic liberalization or to tough it out. Oksenberg cited Robert Dahl's theory<sup>186</sup> that we may anticipate that the leaders' calculations will be governed by an assessment of the relative costs, benefits, and risks to them of each course of action. That is, the leaders would calculate that communist rule, political stability, and honest government would be enhanced rather than weakened by a process of democratization.<sup>187</sup>

After the 1989 crackdown, although there are still some repressions happening now and then, there have been no harsh and large-scale suppression towards democratic movement or dissidents. Even the largest-scale suppression since 1989, towards Falungong's (a religious organization) demonstration in Beijing, has not involved martial law enforcement or military forces as those took place in 1989. As Rowen observed, the CCP has chosen to pull back in several domains. The 'separation of the Party and government', the 'separation of the Party and enterprises', although have not been implemented completely, during the decentralization process, more space and autonomy has been created and given to local councils and some special departments such as legal institutions and media outlets.

The National People's Congress and local congress at all levels, used to be a rubber stamp for the Party and government policies, now become more progressively

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9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>186</sup> Dahl, Robert A., *Democracy and its Critics*, 1989, Yale University Press

<sup>187</sup> Michel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy*

autonomous, initiating legislation and actively reviewing and altering the proposals for legislation presented to it<sup>188</sup>. The legal reform has enhanced the autonomy of the juristic institutions. More laws and regulations have been codified and enforced, which are providing the legal guidance for the economic activities in the new market economy. The civil society has expanded as the media now have more freedom in reporting and press and the number of various social associations, guilds, and environmental NGOs grows tremendously. One of most encouraging aspects of the liberalization Reform is the democratic practice in rural China, where villagers have the opportunity to decide which ones to be elected to form their village committees, which be discussed at greater length later.

### 2.1.3 Legitimacy and Liberalization

Some observers also pointed out that as literacy, urbanization, and mass-media exposure rise, modernizing societies experience characteristic shifts in values. They assert that the economic performance has become the legitimacy of rule<sup>189</sup>, therefore, the CCP, facing the risks of economic stagnation and political disaffection, will have to hold on with economic liberalization, which lays the groundwork for democratization.

The regime's legitimacy is defined as the public's belief that the regime is lawful and

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9.1 (1998) p.31

<sup>188</sup> Michael Dowdle, 'The Constitutional Development and Operations of the National People's Congress', *Columbia Journal of Asian Law* 12 (Spring 1997): 1-125; cited in Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003), p.12

<sup>189</sup> B. He, Dilemmas of Pluralist Development and Democratization in China,

should be obeyed<sup>190</sup>. The importance of legitimation can be shown in two aspects:

Firstly, the performance related legitimacy is tightly connected with the economic growth; the failure in performance could result in a perception that the right of the existing regime to rule is eroding, which may bring up political crisis leading to the transition of the regime.

Secondly, legitimacy is also crucial in the rulers' belief in their right to rule and their confidence to continue ruling. Indeed, if the rulers see their position in the hierarchy as legitimate and unshakable, they will have the confidence to continuing ruling. Should their belief in their right to rule erode; the regime thus becomes weak and vulnerable. Gill listed out different factors which can cause the erosion of the belief and failures in performance is one amongst them<sup>191</sup>.

The market economy which has been introduced to take the place of central planned and command economic system has fuelled China's growth in the last 3 decades. Prior to the disastrous Cultural Revolution and the economic crisis that came along with it, the rule of the CCP is legitimized by its military success in gaining national independence and driving away all the foreign imperial forces. However, after nearly three decades of the foundation of PRC in 1949, the life expectancy of Chinese people has not been improved but got worsen in terms of the non-stop political mobilization and laggard economic growth. Facing this severe crisis in the late 1970s, CCP leader

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*Democratization*, 3, 3, 1996

<sup>190</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003), p.13

<sup>191</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the*

Deng Xiaoping decided to launch a series of reforms with the major intention of promote economic growth while in reality these reforms helped with economic liberalization.

In Huntington' s view, liberalization:

is the partial opening of an authoritarian system short of choosing governmental leaders through freely competitive elections. Liberalizing authoritarian regimes may release political prisoners, open up some issues for public debate, loosen censorship, sponsor elections for offices that have little power, permit some renewal of civil society, and take other steps in a democratic direction, without submitting top decision makers to the electoral test. <sup>192</sup>

This conception of liberalization is valuable as seen in the following aspects<sup>193</sup>:

First, it refers to the opening of the political system to enable independent activity on the part of the citizenry or segments of it. Liberalization constitutes a partial rolling back of state activities and control in some sectors of life.

Liberalization is limited as compared to regime transition. Because it is initiated by

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*Transition Process*, 2000, p.33

<sup>192</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave, Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century*, 1991, P.9; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.48

<sup>193</sup> See the discussion in Adam Przeworski, 'Democracy as a contingent outcome of conflicts' , Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad (eds.), *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, 1988, p.61; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.48

elites, they will make sure liberalizing some parts of the society does not affect their power of rule. They make concessions at the edges while the essential power hierarchy remains unchallenged. Even in the spheres from which the authority has withdrawn, the authority retains the ability to rule or to change particular outcomes; in a word, they possess enough power to intervene and reverse an outcome which is unfavourable for the Party. For instance, as I discussed before, the village level competitive election is the lowest level of the hierarchy, therefore, the democratically elected offices have little power upon the higher levels; and if the higher authority does not favour the outcome of the election, it can change it by recalling another one. It is because of the nature of liberalization. When an authoritarian regime is under pressure, most of the time, pressure that is from performance failure, it would consider liberalization as one possible solution, making concessions without giving out essential power, in order to improve the bad performance and hold on to the legitimacy of rule. The distinction between liberalization and democratization, therefore, is the limited nature of the former. Democratization is the fundamental transformation from an authoritarian regime to a democratic polity, which requires the accountability of governors, checks and balances of power and so on. Theoretically, liberalization and democratization are distinctive political processes, but in reality, the two often shade into one another<sup>194</sup>:

Liberalization does not automatically spawn democratization, however, once liberalization is initiated, there is always pressure for the regime to expand it. During this process, liberalizing moves may become radicalized and transformed into forces for democratization. (This process is contingent upon individual circumstances.) For

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<sup>194</sup> Based on discussion by Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites*, 103

instance, as I mentioned before, the National People' s Congress, the legislative assembly, has become more progressively autonomous. During the 1989 incidence, it even tried to call emergency meetings of the people' s delegates, in order to abolish the martial law. However, it became result-less due to the intervention of the Party. Whether this tame legislative assembly will drive the political agenda in a democratising direction is not clear yet, but it has become more vocal and critical in the discussion of public policy.

The press of China, especially some urban newspapers, are becoming more assertive when less censorship is placed upon them since the Reform. More professionalized journalists now enjoy a freer hand compared to prior to 1978. Whether the press will become truly independent as the fourth power is uncertain yet, but new space for criticism and investigative journalism is being created.

The lowest level village election has been practised more than a decade. There has already been some similar practice at the higher county and township level. Although it is still very limited and at the moment seems unlikely to be enlarged to the provincial or national level, the practice will continue. Some surveyors have already discovered that truly democratically elected officers enjoy more legitimacy than those who are not.

Rowen, along with other modernizationists, believes that liberalization will lay the groundwork for democratization and China' s long-term prospects for achieving a stable form of liberal-democratic government will in all likelihood be best if the



liberal part comes first as groundwork for the democratic part<sup>195</sup>.

#### 2.1.4 Democratic Developmental State

They tend to see in China the same economic and sociological processes that have led to democracy elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia<sup>196</sup>. Here, some theorists raised the question of the sequence of economic and political when they explore into the democratization process in Asia.

There has been a recent scholar debate on the right sequence of economic and political liberalization. Firstly, there is the Southern European Model, which includes Spain, Portugal and Greece, where the transition governments were able to concentrate on political reform and political consolidation first, without embarking upon economic transformation at the same time. However, their capability for doing so is due to two factors: 1. the international factor, European Community provided financial aid for economic integration into the community, the structural adjustment funds amounted to a transfer of about 5 per cent of gross domestic product of Spain, Portugal and Greece<sup>197</sup>. 2. In these countries, there were already functioning market economic systems, which had made some progress during the post-war years. ‘The Southern European countries were structurally able, and consciously chose, to

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<sup>195</sup> Henry S. Rowen, ‘When Will the Chinese People Be Free?’ , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.47

<sup>196</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, ‘Confronting a Classic Dilemma’ , *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 28

<sup>197</sup> Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan and Richard Gunther, ‘Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Southern Europe, with Reflections on Latin America and Eastern Europe’ , in Richard Gunther, Hans-Jürgen Puhle and Nikiforos Diamandourous (eds), *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation*, 1995, p.120; cited in John D. Nagle and

concentrate first on politics, secondly on social welfare policies, and only later on structural economic reforms...we consider this the optimal sequence if it is all possible. ' 198

Recent development in East Asia reopened the debate on the sequencing question. Combining 'democracy' and 'developmentalism' into the model of 'democratic developmental state' ; became especially influential in the early 1990s. This school<sup>199</sup> asserted that the development-oriented, growth-promoting authoritarian regimes might be good for democracy in the long run.

The Asian Model refers to the developmental model of a number of Asian countries, notably South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, in which economic liberalization preceded political liberalization. This was considered to be the necessary sequence of democratic transition<sup>200</sup>.

However, it is not narrowly East Asian debate; the similarity can also be found in Pinochet' s Chilean dictatorship and in Franco Spain. Explanation of this model is

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Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.229

<sup>198</sup> Juan Linz, Alfred Stepan and Richard Gunther, 'Democratic Transition and Consolidation in Southern Europe, with Reflections on Latin America and Eastern Europe' , in Richard Gunther, Hans-Jürgen Puhle and Nikiforos Diamandourous (eds), *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation*, 1995, p.118; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.229

<sup>199</sup> See, for instance, Andras KÖves and Paul Marer et al, *Foreign Economic Liberalization: Transformations in Socialist and Market Economics* 1991; Gred Nonneman, 'Linkages Between Economic and Political Liberalization' , in G.Nonneman (ed.), *Political and Economic Liberalization*, 1996b

<sup>200</sup> Andras KÖves and Paul Marer et al, *Foreign Economic Liberalization: Transformations in Socialist and Market Economics* 1991; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.100

offered as follows,

Economic modernization along with the improvement of educational level, bring about civil society. Increased trade liberalization exposed citizens to other systems and governments to international pressure for political openness<sup>201</sup>. The state loses its control over the people during the economic liberalization, opening up space for the development of a civil society<sup>202</sup>. The economic dynamism can be carried over into the first years of the democratic transition which can help with political consolidation. In an initially poor country, 'it may first be necessary to rule by authoritarian means with strong and durable controls over labour, and unpopular measures to curb consumption and reward enterprise. Such controls may have to remain in place for a generation or longer, until they induce a self-sustaining system of productive efficiency. Only then is it safe to embark upon a controlled liberalization which may lead smoothly, and without economic dislocation, to an open and competitive political regime.'<sup>203</sup>

To sum up, as most of these theorists agree, democratization will come to China sooner or later, of which the most possible form of Chinese democratization would be:

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<sup>201</sup> Gred Nonneman, 'Linkages Between Economic and Political Liberalization', in G.Nonneman (ed.), *Political and Economic Liberalization*, 1996b, pp.308-311; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.100

<sup>202</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.100

<sup>203</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.205

- a democratization initiated ‘from above’ <sup>204</sup>.
- a process which might be difficult, protracted, complicated, and inconclusive.  
<sup>205</sup>
- The actual transition will undoubtedly be a politically contingent process. <sup>206</sup>
- China’s leaders are likely to find introducing democracy at lower levels of the system and firmly committing themselves to the attainment of full democracy over a protracted period to be an increasingly attractive option. <sup>207</sup>
- China’s political transformation will not be determined by the top elite alone, but will be subject to negotiation and contestation among diverse interests in state and society. <sup>208</sup>
- Can be called as a ‘hazy’ or ‘gray’ democratization. Both the people and the elites are self-interested, eager to maximize their own power and serve their own interests. As they jostle and compete with one another, it will become apparent that none can control the others completely. Thus they may be driven to agree upon rules to regulate the political process. <sup>209</sup>
- The sudden or big-bang transition toward democracy can occur only if all or most within the ruling elite calculate that the advantages of a shift from slow

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<sup>204</sup> Suisheng Zhao, ‘Three Scenarios’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.58

<sup>205</sup> Suisheng Zhao, ‘Three Scenarios’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.58

<sup>206</sup> Dali L. Yang, ‘China’s Long March to Freedom’, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.61

<sup>207</sup> Michel Oksenberg, ‘Confronting a Classic Dilemma’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.33

<sup>208</sup> Adam Przeworski, ‘Democracy as a Contingent Outcome of Conflicts’, in Jon Elster and Rune Slagstad, eds., *Constitutionalism and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 59-80; cited in Dali L. Yang, ‘China’s Long March to Freedom’, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) p.62

<sup>209</sup> Juntao Wang, ‘A ‘Gray’ Transformation’, *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.51

liberalization to more rapid and fundamental democratization outweigh the risks of maintaining authoritarian rule.<sup>210</sup>

## 2.2 Sceptics

In the sceptics' camp, however, there has been criticism towards the over-determined nature of modernization theory; beyond modernizationists, these sceptics see the authoritarian regime of China has been strengthened other than weakened by the Reform, as the economic growth provides more resource for the elite to hold on to the control of the hierarchy. Generally speaking, their views, as opposed to those of the modernization school, can also be summarized in four aspects respectively.

### 2.2.1 Pessimism versus Optimism

The approach and methodology that has been taken by modernization school is criticized by them as over-determinant and too simple. As we reviewed in the first chapter, the critiques towards modernization are mainly focused on its structuralism perspective. However, in China's case, there are some specific points that are made by the sceptics.

Firstly, the economic development itself is very uneven amongst different areas. It is very problematic using economic development as a yardstick for the probability of democratization. China has a vast rural peasant population, and there are significant area disparities between east coastal and west inland. Some theorists have asserted

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109<sup>210</sup> Suisheng Zhao, 'Three Scenarios', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.57

that to include mainland China in the catalogue of East Asian market economy is also inappropriate and incorrect. ‘The coastal areas of the mainland may indeed be subject to liberalizing processes similar to those at work elsewhere in the region, but for the time being communist-ruled China does not fully conform to an ‘emerging market’ logic, and can therefore be placed outside the limits of the region.’<sup>211</sup>

One of the critiques of Rowen’s prediction of China’s democratization prospect is Minxin Pei, a senior associate and director of the China Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Minxin Pei thinks that a more fruitful intellectual exercise might be to ask not when but how China could become free. For the variables (the implications for democracy as explained by the modernizationists) which are causing structural changes in societies and political systems are unforeseeable; these variables can indeed be identified and be speculated how they might contributed to the change, but it is difficult to predict when they will make that change occur<sup>212</sup>.

As a China specialist, Pei used to be optimistic about China’s transition to democracy, in his earlier essays such as ‘*Creeping Democratization*’ in China<sup>213</sup>, he claimed that although there have been no signs of direct or overt democratization, ‘endogenous and incremental changes in the political institutions of the authoritarian regime are gradually forming subtle but important checks and balances against the

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<sup>211</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.197

<sup>212</sup> Minxin Pei, ‘How Will China Democratize?’ , *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>213</sup> Minxin Pei, ‘Creeping Democratization’ in China, *Journal of Democracy* 6.4

ruling party' s monopoly of power, strengthening the rule of law, and cultivating self-government at the grassroots level' <sup>214</sup>. When he compared China' s reform with other states in East Asian, he further confirmed that democratization will come to China, and China' s model, along with other East Asian authoritarian regimes, is indeed a success model, since it achieves the twin goals of economic prosperity and democracy<sup>215</sup>.

However, after a decade, seeing no fundamental breakthrough in China' s political system, Pei revisited his incremental democratization ideas about autocracy, and became a sceptic towards modernization approach<sup>216</sup>.

Regarding Rowen' s optimism about China' s democracy, He listed four reasons to be not so optimistic:

Rowen may be underestimating both the determination and the resourcefulness with which the CCP stands ready to defend its political monopoly against the forces that economic modernization is now unleashing. He pays no heed to the grave or even fatal political consequences for the current ruling elites should economic growth slow down. He overlooks the deleterious effects of socioeconomic inequality, which

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(1995), 65-79

<sup>214</sup> Minxin Pei, 'Creeping Democratization' in China, *Journal of Democracy* 6.4 (1995), p.66

<sup>215</sup> Minxin Pei 'The Puzzle of East Asian Exceptionalism' , in Larry Diamond and Marc Plattner (eds.), *Economic Reform and Democracy*, 1995, pp. 112-125; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.258-9

<sup>216</sup> See, Minxin Pei, *China' s Trapped Transition: the Limits of Developmental Autocracy*, 2006; and Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

is rising at an alarming pace in China, on the country's democratic prospects. (China's Gini coefficient – a measure of overall income inequality in a society on a zero-to-one scale – has risen from 0.30 to 0.45 during the past three decades.) The evidence of liberalizing political reform that he cites is too weak to support the claim that economic modernization has spurred the anticipated democratizing process<sup>217</sup>. A serious flaw in Rowan's theory, Pei pointed out, is the assumption that, the ruling elite will accept democracy as inevitable and do nothing to blunt the political effects of socioeconomic modernization. He further claims that, crony capitalism – a political economy dominated by an elite-based alliance among authoritarian rulers, their relatives, and well-connected businessmen – is a rising reality in China.

Pei was once enthusiastic about the incremental style of democratization in China, but after over a decade of observation, he abandoned his former idea and instead states: the possible pattern of a democratic transition would only be, 'when the accumulated systemic risks and an unexpected shock jointly spark a huge political crisis that helps to break the equilibrium and – after other twists and turns, perhaps – ultimately precipitates a democratic transition',<sup>218</sup>.

### 2.2.2 Anti-democratic versus Pro-democratic

The modernization school see the implications of the Reform as pro-democratic, while the sceptics see them as strengthening the authoritarian regime, which is

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<sup>217</sup> Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>218</sup> Minxin Pei, How Will China Democratize?, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57



anti-democratic in nature.

Their arguments can be generally summarized as<sup>219</sup>:

- There was little support for democracy in Chinese political thought, whether traditional or contemporary. Even the 1989 student demonstrations, which are regarded as influenced by democratic waves at the time, were not fundamentally democratic in nature, and furnished little evidence of an emerging civil society.
- The Chinese dissident community is too weak to have actual influence over China' s future.
- The institutional arrangements are deeply embedded in society, institutional developments such as village elections and the strengthening of the National People' s Congress, which are often cited as evidence of democratization, are still in an incipient stage. They face considerable opposition and an uncertain future, and it is too early to say whether they will lead to democracy.
- The Reforms are yielding sufficient economic resources and coercive capabilities to keep the communist elite in power indefinitely who are determined to maintain its power through authoritarian rule.
- The regime' s capacity to suppress dissent and quell unrest through expanded surveillance and the strengthening of the People' s Armed Police is increasing other than decreasing.

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<sup>219</sup> Based on Mickel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma' , *Journal of*

Therefore, they concluded with the rise of a corrupt ‘soft’ authoritarianism like that found in Suharto’s Indonesia or Park Chung Hee’s South Korea other than towards democracy.

Some of the sceptics started to attribute the regime’s resilience to its institutionalization during the Reform years. One of the most influential China experts, Andrew Nathan published an essay in 2003 in which he examined the CCP regime’s institutionalization thoroughly. Nathan asserted that the regime, unlike other communist regimes in Soviet Union or Eastern Europe which fall apart in the third wave of democratization, has been able to reconsolidate itself<sup>220</sup>. He advanced the term authoritarian resilience<sup>221</sup>, and attributed the cause of its resilience to the concept of institutionalization, which can be demonstrated in four aspects<sup>222</sup>.

#### 2.2.2.1 Succession of CCP

The increasingly norm-bound nature of CCP’s succession politics. Nathan discovered that the CCP’s recent succession between its third and fourth generation has proved CCP an exception for authoritarian regimes which are regarded as not capable of

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*Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>220</sup> Here, Andrew J. Nathan adapted a concept from democratic consolidation theory; the CCP has once again made itself the only game in town and is in the process of carrying out a successful transfer of power. See, Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’, *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17, notes

<sup>221</sup> Regime theory holds that authoritarian systems are inherently fragile because of weak legitimacy, over-reliance on coercion, over-centralization of decision making, and the predominance of personal power over institutional norms. However, this particular authoritarian system has proven resilient. Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’, *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

<sup>222</sup> Based on Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’, *Journal of Democracy*

conducting orderly, peaceful, timely, and stable successions.

However, Nathan noticed that this institutionalization has not been achieved without painful lessons. The power struggles in the so-called first and second generation of CCP leaders provided a proof of this.

- Mao Zedong, as the central leader, enjoyed supreme authority until the end of his life. There was no rule for the terms of office or age limits for him. Party congresses and National People' s Congresses, which were supposed to meet regularly, seldom met. Mao purged Liu Shaoqi, the president of the PRC at the time. And Lin Biao, his successor, fled and died in the power struggle with Mao.
- Deng Xiaoping himself was purged several times until he seized power during his power struggle with Hua Guofeng. Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang were purged by Deng as his chosen successors.
- Jiang Zemin stepped to the central leader position after the power wrestling during the 1989 pointed by Deng.

However, the succession between the third generation of Jiang Zemin to the fourth generation of Hu Jintao was regarded so far as the most 'orderly, peaceful, deliberate, and rule-bound succession in the history of modern China outside of the institutionalization of electoral democracy in Taiwan<sup>223</sup>.' Nathan concluded the

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14.1 (2003) 6-17

<sup>223</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.7

indications of institutionalization as follows<sup>224</sup>:

- Terms of office and age limits: Jiang survived his full allotted time in office, and left, according to the informal rule of age limits which was established by the Politburo in 1997 that senior leader should not be reappointed to another term after they reach the age of 70.
- Successor: Hu was not appointed by Jiang, but was chosen by Deng as the successor to Jiang. Jiang did not remove Hu out of office.
- Non-intervention of elders: the retired elders, (consisting after 1997 of Wan Li, Qiao Shi, Song Ping, Liu Huaqing, and several others), unlike their predecessors (Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, and Li Xiannian), did not possess the power or the intention to intervene in the succession.
- Non-military intervention: the military exercised no influence over the succession.
- Consensus based: the selection of the new Politburo was made by consensus within the old Politburo. None of the top leaders was powerful enough to force a nominee on his colleagues against their wills.

#### 2.2.2.2 Meritocratic Cadres

Nathan found there is an increase in meritocratic as opposed to factional considerations in the promotion of political elites

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<sup>224</sup> Based on Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

Nathan noticed that there have always been both meritocratic and factional elements in promotions within the Chinese party-state except for the period of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). However, the new leading group rose to the top predominantly because of administrative skill, technical knowledge, educational background, rather than personal loyalty. Deng Xiaoping's 1980 instruction of undertaking a 'four-way transformation' (*sihua*) of the cadre corps is to promote cadres who were 'revolutionary, younger, more educated, and more technically specialized' (*geminghua, nianqinghua, zhishihua, zhuanyehua*). Hu Jintao was thus promoted several levels by the CCP first secretary of *Gansu* Province, where he was then working; Wu Bangguo became party secretary of Shanghai Science and Technology Commission; and Wen Jiabao became deputy head of the *Gansu* geology bureau.

In 1983, the CCP's Organization Department created a list of the most promising cadres of the 'four transformations' generation, which it turned to whenever it needed to recommend a younger cadre for a post carrying ministerial rank. Hu Jintao was selected from this list to become Party secretary of Guizhou, Wen Jiabao to become deputy head of the powerful Central Party Office. The same cadre-rejuvenation policy led Deng to order that someone younger than 50 be appointed to the Fourteenth Politburo Standing Committee in 1992. That choice fell upon Hu Jintao, so that his current accession to the position of General Secretary marks the orderly working out of the same process set in motion twenty years earlier.

Nathan further claims that a norm of staff neutrality has become to some degree accepted at high levels within the Party Centre, the State Council, and the Central

Military Commission, so that the careers of rising stars have been relatively unperturbed by factional turmoil at the top. He noticed that when Zhao Ziyang was purged in 1989, a few of his associates were immediately purged, but most of them were gradually moved into secondary bureaucratic posts over the course of the next couple of years; some even continue to advance in their careers. Wen Jiabao, for example, served eight consecutive years as director of the powerful Party Central Office under three different general secretaries, Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang, and Jiang Zemin. In contrast to the old spoils-like practices in which a leader's purge led quickly to the rooting-out of his followers several levels down the political system, the new system limits the damage that factional strife does to the orderly careers of the rising generation of leaders.

#### 2.2.2.3 Separation of Party and Government

It refers to the differentiation and functional specialization of institutions within the regime.

Nathan noticed that there has been a gradual 'separation of Party and government' and 'the separation of Party and enterprise', which was originally proposed by Zhao Ziyang; it has happened by evolution, as the separation of responsibilities and spheres of authority – which Max Weber saw as definitive characteristics of the modern state – has gradually increased.

The 'separation of Party and government', the 'separation of Party and enterprise'

and the institutionalization within the regime, are demonstrated in the following<sup>225</sup>:

- Party Centre: a group of specialists who manages ideology, mobilization and propaganda. In the outgoing regime, it includes people like Hu Jintao, Wu Bangguo, Jia Qinglin, Li Changchun.
- State Council: a group of people who are selected increasingly for their expertise, now make economic policies with less intervention from the ideology-mobilization specialists. This now includes Premier Wen Jiabao, Vice-Premiers Huang Ju and Wu Yi, most State Council members, and most provincial governors and Party secretaries.
- Provincial – level governors and Party secretaries: their authority to set local policy in economic development, foreign investments, welfare, environment, education and health is increasing.
- State enterprises: many large state own enterprises have changed to joint state-private ownership. Thus decisions of the managing level are made chiefly on economic rather than political bases.
- The NPC: it has become progressively more autonomous, initiating legislation and actively reviewing and altering the proposals for legislation presented to it<sup>226</sup>.
- The police and courts: a norm of judicial independence has been declared,

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<sup>225</sup> Based on Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

<sup>226</sup> Michael Dowdle, 'The Constitutional Development and Operations of the National People's Congress', *Columbia Journal of Asian Law* 12 (Spring 1997): 1-125; cited in Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003), p.12

predominantly in the 1995 Judges' Law<sup>227</sup>. In economic and criminal cases, judges are enjoying more independence than before.

- The military: has become smaller, more technically competent and more professional. Central Military Committee, the highest military office, its members are selected more for their professional accomplishments and less for political loyalties than before<sup>228</sup>. There have been calls to make the army a non-partisan national force, which is regarded as a sign of a growing professional ethos<sup>229</sup>.
- The media: although the media is owned by the state, it has become more commercialized and market-oriented. Some central outlets are directly under the control of the Party's Propaganda Department, such as the People's Daily, the New China News Agency, China Central Television, Party newspapers, and army newspapers and so on. But these media together with other newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, now compete in the national media market. 'In the political domain, they often push the envelope of what the regime considers off-limits by investigating stories about local corruption and abuses of power'<sup>230</sup>.

Nathan asserted that this institutional complexity, autonomy, and coherence, attributes

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<sup>227</sup> Judges Law of the People's Republic of China, 1995, (10943)

<sup>228</sup> Zong Hairen, *Disidai* (The Fourth Generation) (Carle Place, N.Y.: Mirror Books, 2002). Ch. 11; cited by Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.12

<sup>229</sup> Zong Hairen, *Disidai* (The Fourth Generation) (Carle Place, N.Y.: Mirror Books, 2002). Ch. 1; cited by Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.12

<sup>230</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.12



that according to Huntington's theory should equip the regime to adapt more successfully to the challenges it faces<sup>231</sup>.

#### 2.2.2.4 Political Participation

CCP's legitimacy is strengthened by the establishment of institutions for political participation.

In a 1993 nationwide random-sample survey conducted by Tianjian Shi, 94.1 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that, 'We should trust and obey the government, for in the last analysis it serves our interests' ; a 2002 survey by Shi also found high percentages of respondents who answered similarly regarding both the central and local governments<sup>232</sup>. For Nathan, the reason why China's authoritarian regime continues to enjoy high political legitimacy can be explained in the following ways.<sup>233</sup>

The improvement of the average persons' living standards is due to economic development. New direction in Party policy, represented by Jiang Zemin's theory of the 'Three Represents', which says that the Party should represent advanced

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<sup>231</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.13

<sup>232</sup> The 1993 survey was conducted for the project on 'Political Culture and Political Participation in Mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong.' The 2002 survey was conducted for the project on 'East Asia Barometer: Comparative Survey of Democratization and Value Changes.' By Tianjian Shi.

<sup>233</sup> Based on Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

productive forces, advanced culture, and the basic interests of all the Chinese working people. That is, that it should stand for the middle classes as much as or more than the workers and peasants; the Party offers Party membership to able persons from all walks of life; the new Property Rights Law<sup>234</sup> grants the property protection to private entrepreneurs. The Chinese population favours stability and fears political disorder. Political repression may itself have generated legitimacy by persuading the public that the regime's grip on power is unshakeable. The establishment of the institutions increases political participation.

This last explanation is valued the most by Nathan. He listed a number of them:

- The Chinese participate at the local and work-unit levels in a variety of ways: voting, assisting candidates in local-level election, and lobbying unit leaders. Participation is frequent, and activism is correlated with a sense of political efficacy<sup>235</sup>.
- Competitive village elections: In localities with competitive village elections, leaders' policy positions are closer to those of their constituents than in villages with non-competitive voting<sup>236</sup>.
- The Administrative Procedure Law of 1989 allows citizens to sue government agencies for alleged violations of government policy. According to Minxin Pei, the number of suits stood in 1999 at 98,600.

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<sup>234</sup> Real Right Law of the People's Republic of China, 2007 (89386)

<sup>235</sup> Tianjian Shi, *Political Participation in Beijing*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997); cited in Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.14

<sup>236</sup> Melanie Manion, 'The Electoral Connection in the Chinese Countryside', *American Political Science Review* 90 (December 1996): 736-48; cited in Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.14

The success rate (determined by court victories plus favourable settlements) has ranged from 27 percent to around 40 percent<sup>237</sup>.

- Party and government agencies maintain offices for citizen complaints – letters-and-visits departments (*xinfangju*) – which can be delivered in person or by letter.
- People’ s congresses, people’ s political consultative conferences, and United Front structures have become an increasingly important channel by which citizen complaints may be aired through representatives.
- The media are increasingly taking the role of tribunes of the people by exposing complaints against wrong-doing by local-level official.

Nathan’ s conclusion is that, under conditions that elsewhere have led to democratic transition, China has made a transition instead from totalitarianism to a classic authoritarian regime, and one that appears increasingly stable.

### 2.2.3 Democratization and Liberalization

The liberalization does not necessarily lead to democratization. As opposed to the first camp of modernization theorists, sceptics claim that there is no direct link between liberalization and democratization.

For instance, Pei sees there is a critical distinction between liberalization and

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<sup>237</sup> Minxin Pei, ‘Citizens v. Mandarins: Administrative Litigation in China,’ *China Quarterly* (December 1997): 832-62, cited in Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’ , *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.15

democratization<sup>238</sup>. Evidence of the former is fairly abundant in present China, Pei admits. But he further discloses that<sup>239</sup>: There are as yet no real institutional channels through which societal interests, political groups, and ordinary citizens can influence the selection of rules or the making of public policy. Legal reform has been limited to narrow technical improvements in laws and legal practices. Efforts to strengthen the legislative branch are stalled as well. Village-level elections – the most promising of all experiments aimed at political reform – have produced results that are mixed at best. Contrary to many optimistic predictions, moreover, the principle of electoral contestation has remained stuck at the village level, and has conspicuously not been expanded up the ladder to cover township governments.

Grugel, agreed with Pei, when she claims that, there are some political changes followed the opening up of economy, but the Reform in the political domain, rather than initiation of a controlled democratic transition, has only been the rationalization of the state and improvement of bureaucratic efficiency<sup>240</sup>. The economic liberalization is not leading to greater openness with the ruling party or a greater receptiveness to civil society demands; in other words, economic liberalization is not bringing political democratization.

The sceptics' points of view can be generalized in the following:

- Along with Pei's term of 'Crony Capitalism', the sceptics agree on the fact

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<sup>238</sup> Minxin Pei, *How Will China Democratize?*, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>239</sup> Based on Minxin Pei, *How Will China Democratize?*, *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

that the new bourgeoisie class in China, which is supposedly the driving force for democratization, is unlikely to play the same role in contemporary China.

In China, the business elites are closely tied with the government. As one theorist pointed out, industrial development is often heavily dependent upon government support in its early stages<sup>241</sup>. Because it needs proper policies of the government and the provision of government contracts, the informal favours and backdoor deals are the characteristics of China's developing economy. The economic liberalization gives rise to the connection between businessman and authoritarian rulers, thus the democratization lacks popular bases and supports.

- The state and elites have been able to resist the pressure for democratization, as during the economic liberalization, the capability of the state to repress is not weakened but, to some extent, strengthened.

As one theorist pointed out, the Chinese state aims to be both developmental and repressive; the strong state is legitimized in China because of its appeals not only to developmentalism but also to nationalism<sup>242</sup>. The state tends to be strong and its capacity to resist democratization is greater than those developing states in Latin America or Africa.

The bureaucracy in China under the single party control is capable of applying a

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<sup>240</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p224

<sup>241</sup> Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.115

<sup>242</sup> Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p218

two-sided strategy of economic growth and repression. Its capacity has been enlarged during the Reform years, thus help the regime to stay in power. As a consequence of this strong bureaucracy and state, the only possibility of a democratic transition will depend upon the elite and change within the ruling party<sup>243</sup>. However, it is very unlikely to happen.

The elites, both economic elites and political elites view democratization from below as the cause of instability in the society. Especially after 1989, the Party has been committed to economic modernization, which is legitimating its rule, and they use it as an excuse to resist any pressure from below asking for democracy. Any radical democratization will bring social unrest, which in turn may cause economic stagnation or even economic depression. The chaos in the former Soviet Union states seemed to have proved this to CCP leaders.

As one sceptic states, ‘China is not simply an authoritarian system undergoing democratization, but is a Leninist system undergoing both political change (one dare not call it democratization) and economic reform.’<sup>244</sup>

#### 2.2.4 Illiberal Democracy

The sceptics are suspicious about the myth of the success of the Asian Model, which were regarded by modernization school as bringing both democracy and economic

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<sup>243</sup> See for instance, C. Bernstein, ‘Democratization in China’, in R. Slater, B. Schultz and S. Dorr (eds), *Global Transformation and the Third World*, 1994; cited in Jean Grugel, *Democratization: A Critical Introduction*, 2002, p231

<sup>244</sup> Minxin Pei, *From Reform to Revolution*, 1994; cited in Joseph Fewsmith, *Elites Politics in Contemporary China*, pp. 55-6

prosperity. It seemed more so after the Financial Crisis which swept over Asian developmental states. On the contrary, sceptics found the reason for the Asian countries resistance of liberal democracy lies in the power of the culture.

Strong local culture has shaped the nature of politics in East Asia, as some theorists have pointed out. Especially for South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, the countries with the most homogeneous Confucian traditions, sceptics argue that the quality of democracy is of a distinctive order from the Western liberal tradition. Some observers, for instance, Daniel A. Bell, Kanishka Jayasuriya<sup>245</sup> and so on, asserted that this culture cannot support Western liberal democracy, although it may be compatible with an illiberal, more authoritarian and communitarian democracy.

Bell et al. argues that it is the persistence of ‘Asian Values’ that has allowed the region to resist full liberal democracy, or even democracy at all, in some cases; it is developing its own culturally specific form of political model, which is a model aiming at economic growth and mixed with some of the principles of democracy and authoritarianism. ‘Illiberal democracy’<sup>246</sup> is the term they used to label this model.

This term is useful as it captured the two essential elements of East Asian democratization. The one is democracy, because a recognizably more democratic polity has been established during this process.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Daniel A.Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995

<sup>246</sup> Daniel A.Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995;

<sup>247</sup> Based on John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.262

- The political role of the military has receded.
- The contrived high level of popular support for the dominant party has eroded and there is growing recognition of opposition support among the citizenry<sup>248</sup>.
- A public sphere of political issues has enlarged, state control over those kind of public discourse have been loosed, though not eliminated.
- A growing business class and its enlarged political role, its strengthened bargaining power with the state. The new middle class has partly shifted the balance between state elites and capitalist elites.

The other element is illiberal as opposed to liberal. The East Asian democratization process has its own distinctive features which can not be found in the western liberal tradition, but regarded as related to the local culture – Confucianism. These features are summarized as follows<sup>249</sup>:

- The concentration of power: power remains in the hands of a few elites, or the one top leader.
- There is little sign in any of the East Asian nations of an active and effective parliament, or an independent judiciary.
- Democratization is not about the empowerment of civil society, but rather reflects a renegotiation of the relationship between political elites and capital<sup>250</sup>.

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<sup>248</sup> David Brown, 'Democratization and the Renegotiation of Ethnicity', in Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995, pp. 134-62; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.262

<sup>249</sup> Based on John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, pp.262-3

<sup>250</sup> Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995, p.108



- It is based on Confucian-rooted cultural values. As Singaporean Prime Minister Lee outlined in official norms, these values are communitarianism, familism, decision making by consensus, and social and religious harmony<sup>251</sup>.
- This culture is different from western historical democratic experience, which evolved positive roles for individual citizens, and an autonomous civic culture which honours and sees virtue in social and moral pluralism. However, the same historical development cannot be simply repeated again in East Asian; while the adoption of some specific institutional of liberal democracy can be copied by Eastern Asian states.
- Incrementalism, gradualism and under control by elites are the features of the process. It is because the authoritarian regimes are able to conduct the strategy of firstly economic modernization and liberalization, then political openness. As earlier experience proved that a more radical liberal democracy is associated with failure in performance. The authoritarian regimes then used the priority of economic growth as an excuse to put off the political democratization. Later, the performance-based legitimacy of political authoritarianism allowed the regime to control the pace and limits of democratization, without clear-cut regime change.

However, in the Chinese case, there are other political cultures apart from Confucianism, which are identified as an antithetical to liberal democratic values, pre-Communist political culture and the long-standing Chinese power structures of the imperial tradition. (Randall 1997)

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<sup>251</sup> Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995, p.8; cited in John D. Nagle and

## 2.3 Missing Part

After I have discussed the major arguments of these two camps, modernization school and sceptics, I find both of them agree on one fact, that is, during these years of economic reforms and other series of reforms since 1978, there has been some important and intriguing changes within China' s society and state, which has resulted in the debates over democracy and democratization as the prospects for China' s future. However, there is an important part missing in the debate, which is the discourse of democracy within China.

It is thus necessary to engage with the historical aspects of the debate within China.

The historical discourse is helpful in telling us

- the development of the ideas about democracy in China;
- why some of the ideas are valued more by Chinese people and Chinese intellectuals than other ones;
- the role of China' s culture and identity in shaping the political discourse.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the discourse of democracy in China from the historical perspective in order to understand how democracy has been constructed and reconstructed after its introduction to China since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## 2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the views of two opposing groups (the modernizationists and the sceptics) have been fully investigated on both sides. The discussions and debates are largely focused on the changes that took place at the three levels of the state-society relations since the initiation of the Reform in the late 1970s.

Firstly, changes at the state level, including the ruling party CCP and the legislature, NPC. Modernization theorists see positive evolution inside CCP and the strengthening of the legislature as implications for liberalization which may eventually lead to democratization. The sceptics, on the other side, state that the Reform has given more resources to CCP and thus increased the resilience of the regime to democratic transition.

Secondly, changes at the society level. The expansion of media, especially the press, is regarded as positive civil society forces by the modernizationists, while the sceptics deny the existence of such forces at all.

Last but not least, the democratic practice at the grassroots level is noted by the modernizationists as positive institutional progress which may spread to the higher levels. The sceptics disagree that this very much limited democratic experiment will produce any significant influence upon the authorities in the future.

In the chapters 4, 5 and 6, these three levels will be discussed respectively in more details through the application of an incremental model. Modernizationists might be

too optimistic, and the sceptics might be too pessimistic, while an incrementalist is a pessimistic optimist whose job is to explain what is believed to be happening in the last three decades in China. Before that can be modeled, how the term of 'democracy' is introduced into China and what historical, social and cultural context is involved need to be explored.

**CHAPTER THREE**  
**DISCOURSE OF DEMOCRACY IN CHINA**

### 3.0 Introduction

So far we have examined the literature on democracy, on democratization, and on China democratization; however, all these are from the Western literature. Most of the scholars are from the West, who were born in the West and may or may not necessarily speak Chinese; some of them are Chinese and indeed speak Chinese, but they were either born, or educated, or trained in the West, for instance, the US, UK or other European Countries; or if not, they are taking the perspectives which have been set up and advanced in Western social and political science. One piece, an important piece, is missing from this huge literature; that is, how Chinese people, especially Chinese intellectuals, who were born, brought up, receiving education, doing research on the same topic and living most of them life time in China, the country which is under investigation, perceive democracy and democratization, which concepts were originally coming from the West and had been practiced by the Western people for as long as 25 centuries<sup>252</sup>. What perspective do these people take? Do they value democracy as the same as in the West? Do they have the same inspiration like those in the West to strive on the road to democracy? Although democracy was only introduced to China until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, it has been influential in Chinese people's national salvation and independence movement. It is then worthwhile to trace the historical discourse of democracy and democratization in China; and to examine how the conception of democracy is constructed and reconstructed in the Chinese academy.

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<sup>252</sup> See e.g. John Dunn (ed.), *Democracy: the Unfinished Journey: 508 B.C. to A.D.1993*, 1992; quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and*

In this chapter, a historical approach is adopted. Three eras are identified, the introduction of democracy into China, the intellectual movement during which socialist democracy (Maxism) triumphed and eventually became the ideology of CCP, the recent debate on democracy in China. The recent debate involves four major intellectual groups, the dissidents, the liberal economists, the New Left, and the mainstream incrementalist. Amongst them, theorists who share a view that China's democratization should follow an incremental model have done some intensive work on this subject. Some of their works actually formed the original thoughts of this thesis.

### **3.1 Democracy in China – From a Historical Perspective**

The historical discourse of democracy can be divided into three eras, the first one, starts from the middle 19<sup>th</sup> Century and ends right before the beginning of New Cultural Movement (1915-1922), it is the introduction of democracy, at that time, the liberal democracy was the mainstream democracy; the second era starts with the New Cultural Movement and ends after the foundation of PRC, during which the socialist democracy replaced liberal democracy and became the ideology of Chinese Communist Party, which later became the ruling party of China; the third era starts from the Beijing Spring Democratic Movement and till now, it is a very complicated process, during which time, there have been various debates and discussions on democracy and democratization between different schools of Chinese scholars.

#### 3.1.1 The Introduction of Democracy

Democracy was firstly introduced to China in late Qing Dynasty, around the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century. Wei Yuan, in his book *‘Hai Guo Tu Zhi’* , introduced the political systems in the US and Switzerland, the two democracies in the Western world at that time; which is the first time that western democratic system was introduced to China. Thus Chinese people for the first time, got to know that there was a way of organizing government that is different from feudal kingship which has been regarded by Confucianism as the only form of legitimate regime in China for thousands of years.

Since the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century, China has suffered a series of defeats in wars with the other countries. As a consequence of the unequal treaties Qing had to sign with the victors, China was forced to open its gate and new ideas of democracy, science, liberalism, which were originally from the West, were introduced into China. Many Chinese people, especially the intellectuals, started to think about the reason why China, used to be the great Middle Kingdom, had become so weak and backward compared to the Western states. Some of them came to the conclusion that it was the feudal autocratic monarchy based on Confucianism that was too incompetent to build a strong and united China; it has lost its legitimacy to rule and thus should be replaced by a more advanced and legitimate democratic polity. Revolutionaries, led by Sun Zhongshan, inspired by this idea, successfully founded a new Republic of China in 1912 (Xinhai Revolution), which was built upon the principles of national independence and democracy.

However, the government of the time was in fact controlled by warlords, and the democratic constitution was not carried out. ‘The New Republic...was designed to



be democratic, but soon deteriorated into a dictatorship under Yuan Shih-kai.’<sup>253</sup> The democratization of China was actually a failure. Chinese people were still facing the task of national independence and state salvation, especially after Japanese troops invaded China later in 1931. Under this circumstance, the New Cultural Movement (1915-1922, culminated in the May Fourth Movement in 1919 with students and intellectuals protesting against the warlord government) marked a turning point in the discourse of democratization.

### 3.1.2 The Revised Mr Democracy

The New Culture Movement (*xin wenhua yundong*) was inaugurated by the creation of *Xin Qingnian* (the New Youth journal), established in 1915 by Chen Duxiu, one of the intellectual leaders of the Movement. In an essay published in January 1919 to celebrate the third anniversary of the journal, Chen Duxiu gave democracy and science the nicknames ‘Mr Democracy’ (*de xiansheng*) and ‘Mr Science’ (*sai xiansheng*), and proclaimed that ‘only these two gentlemen can save China from the political, moral, academic, and intellectual darkness in which it finds itself’.<sup>254</sup> Democracy thus became a symbol of the May Fourth era.

The influence of the New Culture Movement can be summarized as follows:

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<sup>253</sup> Baogang He, ‘Reviewed Work(s): Explaining Chinese Democratization by Shuhua Hu’, *Pacific Affairs*, Vol. 74, NO. 1. (Spring, 2001), pp. 102

<sup>254</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Xin qingnian zuian zhi dabianshu’ (New Youth’s reply to charges against the magazine), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (15 Jan. 1919), pp. 10-11; cited by Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), pp. 589-621

### 3.1.2.1 Marxism

After the Chinese people's hope of building a strong modern China state was diminished by the corrupted warlord government, they have to explore a new way of saving China. It marked the upsurge of the wave of Chinese nationalism. While the Wilson's Fourteen Points<sup>255</sup> were regarded as hypocritical, the intellectuals turned away from Western liberal democracy and started to show their enthusiasm for Marxism.

After the foundation of the new government, the Beiyang warlords, who were driven by their own political interests, dominated in the regime. Instead of compelling away the influence of foreign imperial powers and building a strong and united state, they were afraid of losing political power over their territory and started fighting wars with one another; for the same reason, they made concessions with foreign imperial powers to get monetary and military support.

China took part in the World War I on the side of the Allies in the hope of eliminating German power in Shandong Province. However, after the victory, Shandong was awarded to Japan by the Versailles Treaty instead of returning to China. Chinese people, together with students, intellectuals, started to express their dissatisfaction through demonstrations.

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<sup>255</sup> The Fourteen Points was a speech delivered by President Woodrow Wilson of US, which was negotiated at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919.

This May Fourth Movement was regarded as the peak of the New Cultural Movement. It took place at a time when major developments in politics, thought and society were already under way. Its name is used to cover an era. It is also a turning point for intellectual thought about democracy.

Western style liberal democracy gave the reformists and revolutionaries their first inspirations during the late Qing and early Republic era. Instances can be found in the works of Yan Fu, Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, and Tang Sitong<sup>256</sup>. However, the imperial presence in China by some of the most advanced democratic states of the time gave rise to the anti-imperialism sentiments. The secret agreements between Japan and Great Britain, France and Italy to entitle Japan to remain in Shangdong after Germany was expelled were viewed as a betrayal. ‘This flagrant denial of the new Wilsonian principles of open diplomacy and self-determination touched off the May Fourth incident’<sup>257</sup>.

Compared with the betrayal of the West, the new Soviet Russian government very soon received acclaim among Chinese intellectuals by the declaration of the abolition of all Sino-Russian unequal treaties in March 1920.<sup>258</sup> Marxism now drew unprecedented attention from Chinese literati and was studied seriously by some pioneers.

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<sup>256</sup> Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.591

<sup>257</sup> Schwartz, Benjamin, ‘Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After’ , in John K. Fairbank, *Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1, The Cambridge History of China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.407#

<sup>258</sup> Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , 139

### 3.1.2.2 'Down with Confucianism'

Chinese intellectuals blamed the cultural heritage of China for its weakness and corruption, mainly Confucianism and asked for a re-evaluation of Chinese culture institutions. During the two thousand years of feudal society in China, Confucianism has maintained its all-important status as the basis of the rule of the dynasts. Confucianism, originally established by Confucius and Mencius, is mainly about the philosophy of forming a hierarchical state and society, by which people's relationships are defined. The core element is called 'Ren' (benevolence). For 'Ren', many Confucianists have given it different explanations in different dynasties. However, the basic meaning of 'Ren', is to love people, as Confucius once answered his student Fan Chi<sup>259</sup>. It requires love for relatives and friends, but also to love all the people; sacrifice of one's own interest to benefit the community; unselfishness, ethics and morals. In this way, the society can become a harmonious integral entity.

Mencius thought that the emperor was the 'son of the heaven', who was authorized by the heaven to carry out benevolent governance. He said 'people are more important than monarch'<sup>260</sup>. If the government fails to provide for the people's needs for adequate food, clothing, shelter, and education, then the people are entitled by the

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*Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.615

<sup>259</sup> Lun Yu Yan Yuan 12, (the Analects of Confucius, Chapter 12)

<sup>260</sup> Mencius Jin Xin Xia, (the Analects of Mencius, With One's Heart, the second half)

heaven to overthrow the reign of the dynasty. The thought of ‘benevolent governance’ and emphasis placed on the people’s interests other than the emperor can be taken as the original democratization of thinking in China. It has been argued that this ‘the people as fundamental’ thought is similar to John Locke’s social contract theory. The government is legitimated by the consent of those governed, which gives the powers to the government (John Locke, 1688). The people have the right to withdraw their consent which is similar to Mencius’s ‘the people as fundamental’ .

However, the major purpose of the dynasts to use Confucianism as the legitimate ideology is to legitimize their own right to rule. Confucianism requires the obedience of people in the lower rank of the hierarchy to the higher ones, especially the loyalty and conformity to the emperor himself. Any radical or revolutionary thoughts or speeches that are not within the boundary of Confucianism are regarded as dangerous and forbidden. Thus, despotism was legitimized and maintained by this system for thousands years. During the New Cultural Movement, Confucianism was subject to iconoclastic onslaught and was abandoned by participators within the movement.

The New Youth journal was seen as the main arena for this battle against Confucianism. ‘After the 1911 Republican Revolution, the newly born democracy failed to be consolidated, and was quickly replaced by authoritarian politics, imperial restoration, and warlord militarism’ <sup>261</sup>. In witnessing socio-political disorder, the

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<sup>261</sup> Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.591

radical and/or liberal scholars realized that the first task for building a new China was to evaluate or even destroy Chinese traditional values.

A wave of ‘down with Confucianism’ started by the serial article published in *New Youth* in 1916 – ‘*Appraisal of Confucius*’ (*Kongzi Pingyi*)<sup>262</sup> in which author Yi Baisha offered an analyse and evaluation of the abuses of the Confucianism. Chen Duxiu became one of the pioneers in ‘down with Confucianism’ by writing and publishing essays such as ‘*Nineteen Sixteen*’ (*Yijiu Yiliu Nian*)<sup>263</sup>, ‘*We Last Awareness*’ (*Wuren Zuihou Zhi Juewu*)<sup>264</sup>, ‘*Constitution and Confucianism*’ (*Xianfa Yu Kongjiao*)<sup>265</sup> and so on. The fiercest attack to Confucianism came from Lu Xun, who used the scribbles and novels as weapons to disclose the crime of feudal ethics. Wu Yu was regarded by Hu Shi as the old hero in the movement of ‘down with Confucianism’ who was well-known by denouncing feudal ethics as ‘people-eating’ .

Another strike to the old tradition is from the linguistic reform called Baihua movement which is to use colloquial language in writing instead of the classical Chinese. The intellectual transformation was due to the earlier institutional development, the creation of Peking University, as a modern institution of higher

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<sup>262</sup> Yi Baisha, ‘Kongzi Pingyi’ (Appraisal of Confucius), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (15.2.1916) and Vol. 2, No. 1, (1.9.1916)

<sup>263</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Yijiu Yiliu Nian’ (Nineteen Sixteen), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 1, No. 5, (15.1.1916)

<sup>264</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Wuren Zuihou Zhi Juewu’ (We Last Awareness), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 1, No. 6, (15.2.1916)

<sup>265</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Xianfa Yu Kongjiao’ (Constitution and Confucianism), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol.2, No.3, (1.11.1916)

learning<sup>266</sup>. Cai Yuanpei, who became the President of Peking University in 1917, started to reform this institution by welcoming ideas from all over the world. Chen Duxiu, who was then a professor in Peking University and the founder of New Youth, supported Hu Shi in the promotion of Baihua, as ‘an essential tool both for modern thinking and for bringing education to the common people’<sup>267</sup>. Actually, Baihua, as written vernacular Chinese, has a long history; but it is only after 1919, it finally took the place of mainstream classical Chinese. ‘*Madman’s Diary*’ (Kuangren Riji)<sup>268</sup> is the first novel written in Baihua by Lu Xun. For the Confucian doctrine, only intellectuals can learn and communicate with written classical Chinese; however, the esoteric language was soon abandoned by the participators of the New Cultural Movement. Later, the authority had to admit the use of Baihua in Schools.

### 3.1.2.3 Radicalization of the Intellectuals

During the intellectual transformation of the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Chinese literati became more radicalized; some of them are not just asking for the abandonment of Chinese traditional values, also asking for a total westernization of China state and society. In the May Fourth discourse of democracy, firstly there was a trend from democracy to populism, then from populist democracy to the dictatorship of workers and peasants, in a word, as one theorist pointed out, eventually some May

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<sup>266</sup> Schwartz, Benjamin, ‘Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After’, in John K. Fairbank, *Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1, The Cambridge History of China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.406#

<sup>267</sup> Schwartz, Benjamin, ‘Themes in Intellectual History: May Fourth and After’, in John K. Fairbank, *Republican China 1912-1949, Part 1, The Cambridge History of China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983, p.406#

<sup>268</sup> Lu Xun, Kuangren Riji (Madman’s Diary), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol,4, No, 5, (15.5.1918)

Fourth radicals became converted to the revolutionary Marxism-Leninism<sup>269</sup>.

Gu in his essay about May Fourth discourse of populist democracy and the radicalization of Chinese intellectuals, advanced a different approach as compared with other scholars who have produced a liberal image of the May Fourth notion of democracy<sup>270</sup>. Gu, on the contrary, asserted that the understanding of democracy by the May Fourth intellectuals was rather different from liberal democracy.

The discourse can be summarized in the following four phases<sup>271</sup>:

- In the first place, the sponsors of the New Cultural movement, such as Chen Duxiu, Li Dazhao, Hushi and so on, were intended to launch a cultural revolution in amongst the intelligentsia.

This means that from the beginning, these intellectuals were not interested in gradualist or incremental reforms; they felt it urgent for them to rescue China from collapse. That's why compared with their intellectual forerunners, New Culture intellectuals were more radical.

- These intelligent young men, inspired by patriotism, believing that the only

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<sup>269</sup> Edward X. Gu, 'Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.621

<sup>270</sup> Edward X. Gu, 'Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001)

<sup>271</sup> Based on Edward X. Gu, 'Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse



way to build a new powerful China state was to import new ideas and thought from the West. Therefore, they started to introduce a large number of Western doctrines which they considered necessary.

Especially those which reinforced the cultural criticism (to animadvert traditions); and nation-building, (to rescue China and rebuild a strong state); are favoured by the authors. For instance, Darwinism, utilitarianism and pragmatism of William James and John Dewey, (through the work of Hu Shi)<sup>272</sup>, experimentalism, Nietzscheanism, (associated with Lu Xun)<sup>273</sup> and so on. They were also advocates for democracy, science, literary revolution, individual freedom, human rights and the emancipation of women and the youth.

- From early 1919 onward, many journals and magazines started to propagate the idea of democracy as the so-called new tides of the world. However, Gu asserted that their perception of democracy was anything but liberal.

The three predominant representatives of the New Culture Movement, Chen Duxiu, Gao Yihan, and Li Dazhao, regarded democracy as Rousseausian democracy. There was a trend from democracy to populism. Chen Duxiu, in one essay published in the *New Youth*, stated that ‘the democratic state is the genuine state, in which the state is the public property for all the citizens, people are masters of the country, and the

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of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), pp. 589-621

<sup>272</sup> See, for example, Hu shi, ‘Wenxue Gailiang Chuyi’ (My Humble Opinion on Literature Reform), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 2, No. 5, (1,1,1971)

<sup>273</sup> Lu Xun, Kuangren Riji (Madman’s Diary), *Xin Qingnian*, Vol,4, No, 5, (15.5.1918)

rulers are servants of the people’ . <sup>274</sup>Gao Yihan introduced Western theories of social contract by comparing Rousseau’ s theory with Hobbes’ s and Locke’ s, according to whom, state sovereignty and the people’ s sovereignty were integrated as one, the government is no more than a servant for the public to impose the sovereignty of the state-that is , popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty can be carried out by people to substitute the government which fails to do so. Li Dazhao, also mentioned in his article that the state is built upon the principle of Rousseau’ s theory, ‘once social contract is reached, the land becomes the territory, and the people become the citizens of the country...It is the state.’<sup>275</sup>,

Furthermore, later the Rousseauian perception of democracy, in particular the popular sovereignty was radicalized to the extreme of populist democracy. Gu found that the translation of ‘democracy’ into Chinese gradually changed. It was rendered as ‘pingmin zhuyi’ and ‘shumin zhuyi’ in the New Culture era; both mean the principles of the common people. And the usage of these terms actually encouraged intellectuals to understand ‘people’ as ‘the lower classes’ , that is, the poor, the labouring class, the working class, workers, peasants and so on, as Gu noticed.

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<sup>274</sup> Chen Duxiu, ‘Jinri hi jiaoyu fangzhen’ (Today’ s guiding principles for education), *Xin Qingnian (New Youth)*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Oct. 15, 1915), pp.1-6; cited by Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.596

<sup>275</sup> Shouchang (Li’ s penname), ‘Baoli Yu Zhengzi’ (Violence and Politics), *Taipingyang (The Pacific Ocean)* (Oct. 15, 1917), reprinted in *Li Dazhao Wenji*, Vol. 1, pp.516-20; cited by Edward X. Gu, ‘Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)’ , *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No .3 (Jul., 2001), p.597

Especially during the May Fourth Movement, when workers started strike and shops were closed by business owners in Shanghai as supports and echoes of Students' demonstration and struggle in Beijing. Because of the scale and influence of Shanghai's strikes, the movement spread to over 100 cities in 22 provinces of China. Chinese intellectuals who took part in this movement have seen the power of the masses, particularly the lower classes that played the main role in the movement.

- Under these circumstances, Marxism started to attract more and more attention from the May Fourth radicals. Particularly after the Russian Revolution, in which Marxism played as ideology and was successfully implemented, New Culture intellectual started to regard Marxism as the one and only effective strategy of class revolution through which their ideals of Chinese modernization could be realized.

Actually, after the start of the New Culture, many intellectuals, apart from the conservative ones, showed their interests in various versions of socialism. Chen Duxiu regarded socialism, Darwinism and the doctrine of human rights as the so-called new tides. He, together with Li Dazhao announced their conversion to Marxism and turned *New Youth* into a vehicle for the new Chinese communist movement in 1920<sup>276</sup>. In July 1920, *New Youth* introduced a special column called 'The Study of Russia', in which many translations introducing and praising the achievement of the Soviet Union were published. The common people as in the

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<sup>276</sup> See *Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 12, pp. 396-7; also see Gu, 'Who was Mr Democracy? The May Fourth Discourse of Populist Democracy and the Radicalization of Chinese Intellectuals (1915-1922)', *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (Jul., 2001), p.592

rendering Chinese ‘*pinmin zhuyi*’ for democracy, were increasingly identified with the workers and peasants in the trend of intellectual enthusiasm from seeking populist democracy to explore the concept of the dictatorship of workers and peasants.

#### 3.1.2.4 Birth of CCP

The radicalization of the intellectuals in the New Culture Movement brought the Chinese communist movement which resulted in a drastic change in society that fuelled the birth of the Communist Party of China.

Chen Duxiu and Li Dazhao, the representatives of the Movement, were among the leading founders of the 1921 Chinese Communist Party. Mao Zedong, the future Party leader, was inspired by May Fourth thoughts and ideas became a communist. For the CCP, May Fourth Movement promoted the spreading of Marxism in China, which aroused the people’s consciousness and prepared for the unity of the revolutionary forces.

To conclude, it is the unique historical discourse in China that has turned Chinese people, especially Chinese intellectuals away from the liberal ideas of democracy, into embracing the more radical doctrine of Marxism. Several factors are essential in this process: firstly, the threat China was facing at the time – the reality of a fragmented and weak state, authoritarian corrupted government after the Republican Revolution, the foreign imperial presence on China’s territory – all urged intellectuals to find a solution to save the nation and the Chinese race, especially after the humiliation in the

international society in 1919, intellectuals became more radical; secondly, they have abandoned the old ideology and perceived democracy in a radical way, which explains why they were highly interested in the model of populist democracy; Last but not least, the success of Marxism in Russia showed a concrete scheme that is more practical than other abstract theories.

### **3.2 Recent Democracy Thoughts and Debates**

After the Second World War and the Civil War, the Nationalist Party retreated to the island of Taiwan, and the CCP founded a socialist state based on Marxism-Leninism in 1949. The party-state, with Mao Zedong as the supreme leader, was in nature a totalitarian regime<sup>277</sup>. The features of totalitarian state can be summarized as<sup>278</sup>: totalitarian regime is characterized by the absence of any social, economic or political pluralism, by an elaborate and guiding messianic ideology, continuing extensive and intensive popular mobilization, and a leadership which rules (often charismatically) within undefined limits and with great unpredictability for both members of the regime and ordinary citizens. (This is viewed as an ideal type, and therefore never realized in its ideal form.) Between the period of 1949 to 1976 (when Mao Zedong died), the belief of Chinese people in the ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism was deeply rooted during numerous political mobilizations and mass movements initiated by Mao and CCP. However, the monopoly of the ideology became less unshakable

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<sup>277</sup> Here, no difference is made between the Party regime and the Party-state in this thesis, although theoretically, these are two different entities.

<sup>278</sup> This is discussed in Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition ad Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America and Post-Communist Europe*, 1996, Chapter 3, and is well summarized on pp.44-45; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*,

after the death of Mao and the Reform programme pushed forward by Deng Xiaoping.

After the disastrous Cultural Revolution (started in 1966 by Mao and ended with his death in 1976), the new top leader of the so-called second generation, Deng together with other leaders in CCP found it urgent for a reform in the laggard planned economy system. The reform was mainly in the economic domain, which includes introduction of market economy and opening up to the outside world in order to attract new technology and foreign investment. The series of reform programme started in 1978, since when, new ideas and thoughts came to China along with the opening up policy. The information from the outside world and communications with the international society give Chinese intellectuals new inspirations since the New Culture Movement earlier in the century; the reform changed the old state-society relations, people have more civil liberty than before, which caused some scholars to rethink and redefine the China state-society relation. Also, after years of economic reforms focusing on development and modernization without political democratization, many problems such as corruption, inequality and environmental degradation triggered a debate within the literati on the prospects of democratization as a solution to China's crisis. Generally speaking, after 1976, especially after the start of the Reform, there have been four groups of intellectuals taking part in this debate according to their positions<sup>279</sup>: the dissidents; the liberal economists; the New Left (or the Conservatives); and the mainstream incrementalists.

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2000, p.73-4

<sup>279</sup> It is noticeable that the majority of these intellectuals are experts in economics. Because their start point of the research is to find solutions to the problems come along with economic reform, political democratization is one possible solution which is taken into consideration as a request for economic development.

### 3.2.1 Dissidents

The dissidents are a loose group which consists of the leaders of Chinese Democracy Movement (Wei Jingsheng as one of the representatives) and some liberal journalists (He Qinglian<sup>280</sup>). Generally speaking, these people are against the current authoritarian regime of CCP. To solve the problems confronting China today is and has always been democracy, which is juxtaposed by Wei Jingsheng as the fifth modernization with the four modernizations of industry, agriculture, national defence and science and technology.

There have been three mini democratization waves taking place in China since the end of the Cultural Revolution:

- Beijing Spring liberalization movement which was considered to be inspired by the manifesto Fifth Modernization by Wei Jingsheng in 1978.

Andrew Nathan's book 'Chinese Democracy' (1985) was devoted to this movement which has another name as the Democracy Wall. The wall refers to the one in *Xidan* of Beijing. At first, people put up big-character posters (*Da Zi Bao*) on the wall asking for rehabilitation and compensation for the wrong verdicts and injustice they suffered during the Cultural Revolution. However, later criticism towards Mao and the politics appeared; radicals even asked for democracy, human rights, rule of

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<sup>280</sup> She became well-known for disclosing the corruption of government officials and cadres of state-owned enterprises, and she attributed the root of corruption to the authoritarian regime. Her books were banned and she fled to the US out of the fear of prosecution by the authority.

law and the liberty of speech. Some people started to publish non-official journals, and by doing so, the dissidents' voice and activities became more organized.

'Beijing Spring' was one of the most influential journals at the time, (as the 'Prague Spring' of 1968), which was used to name the movement, showing people's demands for democracy and liberty after the ten years of chaos brought by the disastrous Cultural Revolution<sup>281</sup>.

The rise and fall of this movement was regarded as interconnected with the power struggle at the top level between Deng Xiaoping and Hua Guofeng after the death of Mao<sup>282</sup>. Hua Guofeng, as the successor pointed by Mao himself, tried to legitimize his status as the central leader by showing adherence and loyalty to Mao's doctrines.

'The Two Whatever's'<sup>283</sup>, the invention of his was criticized in the discussion of 'the criterion of truth' initiated by Deng and his subordinate Hu Yaobang. Hu in his article published at major party newspapers, Luminosity Daily, People's Daily and Liberation Army Daily, asserted that 'the practice is the sole criterion of truth' as opposed to Hua's 'whatever Mao decides we should vindicate; whatever Mao instructs we should follow'<sup>284</sup>. The Democracy Wall Movement, as the voice from

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<sup>281</sup> Chen Yan, 'Minzhu Qiang Yundong jiqi Lishi Diwei' (Democracy Wall Movement and Its Historical Status), *Modern China Studies*, Issue No. 93, 2006; translated by author.

<sup>282</sup> See, for example, Chen Yan, 'Minzhu Qiang Yundong jiqi Lishi Diwei' (Democracy Wall Movement and Its Historical Status), *Modern China Studies*, Issue No. 93, 2006

<sup>283</sup> On the 7<sup>th</sup>, Feb, 1977, Hua Guofeng approved the publication of the editorial, 'Xuexi Wenjian Zhua Gangyao' on People's Daily, Redflag Magazine and Liberation Army Daily, which states that 'whatever Mao decides we should vindicate; whatever Mao instructs we should follow'.

<sup>284</sup> Hu Yaobang, 'Shijian shi Jianyan Zhenli de Weiyi Biaozhun' (The Practice is the Sole Criterion of Truth) was firstly published on Luminosity Daily on 11<sup>th</sup>, May, 1978, 152



the masses, was seen as undermining Hua' s doctrines while supporting Deng' s. By 1980, Hua had to resign as chairman both for Party Centre and Central Military Committee. Deng won the battle and soon he realised that this mass democratic movement was out of boundary and decided to take action to cease it. That' s why he threw out the 'Fourth Cardinal Principles'<sup>285</sup> as the borderline for discussion.

On 5<sup>th</sup> of December, 1978, a big-character poster by Wei Jingsheng – 'The Fifth Modernization – Democracy and so on' at the first time put forward the request for Chinese democratization. In March 1979, the authority started to suppress the Democracy Wall. Deng in his speech on the 16<sup>th</sup> expressed his concerned that the Democracy Wall went too far. On the 29<sup>th</sup>, March, 1979, Beijing government announced prohibition to big-character posters and publication that was 'hostile to socialism, leadership of CCP, Proletariat Dictatorship and Marxism-Leninism-Maoism' <sup>286</sup>. Wei Jingsheng, the founder of 'Exploration' journal was arrested together with other dissidents and activists. Until 1981, the movement was totally suppressed by the authority.

- Students' movements during 1986 where subject to a crackdown by CCP under the name of 'anti-bourgeoisie liberalization' and the power struggle amongst the top leaders resulted in Hu Yangbang' s resignation as Party Secretary. The 1986

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and published on People's Daily and Liberation Army Daily the next day.

<sup>285</sup> Four Cardinal Principles: (we) must stick to Socialism; must stick to Proletariat Dictatorship; must stick to the leadership of CCP; much stick to Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. It was firstly raised by Deng in his speech on 30<sup>th</sup>, March, 1979.

<sup>286</sup> Chen Yan, 'Minzhu Qiang Yundong jiqi Lishi Diwei' (Democracy Wall

student movement was regarded as the forerunner of the 1989 demonstration.

The students' movement of 1986 expressed the request from students for political reforms of CCP. Students in universities and colleges, inspired by articles on democracy published in journals such as 'Beijing Spring' in Beijing and 'World Economics Guide' in Shanghai, asked for democratization, human rights and liberty. Some radicals started to criticise the CCP for its despotism and dictatorship. A number of demonstrations took place in Beijing organized by university students. One of the representatives was Fang Lizhi, at the time the vice president of Chinese Science and Technology University, who famously brought forward the importance of respects for 'democracy, liberty and human'. This astrophysicist praised students' democratic consciousness when he gave speeches in a number of universities.

However, at the time, although Hu Yaobang was the nominal Party Secretary (the highest position in CCP), Deng Xiaoping together with other elders such as Chen Yun, still held the power to intervene and overrule the Party. Hu showed his sympathy to the student movement and was not taking immediate action; which was regarded by Deng as conspiracy to mobilize masses to undermine the elders' power. (As Deng and Hu made use of the Democracy Wall to against Hua.) Deng removed Hu from power in 1987, and crackdown on the movement. Fang was dismissed from his office; and he, together with Wang Ruowang, Liu Binyan, was expelled from the Party in the name of 'bourgeoisie liberalization'.

- The 1989 student demonstration which started by the death of Hu, and ended by military intervention. This movement resulted in strong international response, the date when Tiananmen incidents happened was used to name the whole movement, June Fourth. (Like the May Fourth is abbreviation for the New Cultural Movement)

June Fourth Movement was inspired by May Fourth Movement which took place seventy years ago when students played a major role in seeking a democratic and prosperous prospect for China. After the 1986 student movement, some student activities, such as discussions and posters, although banned, have remained in some universities of Beijing. Fang Lizhi, one of the representatives of 1986, wrote to Deng in January, 1989, asking for amnesty for Wei Jingsheng and other political prisoners and political reforms. His letter was supported by other intellectuals. The sudden death of Hu triggered a series of activities of mourning and protesting. Students of universities in Beijing started to parade and demonstrate in public. They established autonomous student organizations and united as one union: Beigaolian (Beijing College Students Union). Students gave speeches in public on democracy, democratic movement in East Europe, Gorbachev's political reform in Soviet Union, expressed their protest to profiteering by bureaucrats and official corruption and their passion of striving for democracy and liberty.

On 26<sup>th</sup> of April, in terms of Deng's opinion, People's Daily published an editorial

'We must clearly and unequivocally be opposed to convulsions' (*Bixu Qizhi Xianming de Fandui Dongluan*) which is referred to as April Twenty-sixth Editorial afterwards. In this editorial, the student movement was defined as unrest manipulated

by a few with ulterior motives. It asked for the whole party and all people to realized this and unite together against it.

In response to the editorial, about 50,000 students paraded on the next day. Later, the student movement became radicalized, which resulted in a hunger strike by hundreds in Tiananmen Square as their request for a conversation with the authority was put off by the government. They added appeals for renouncement of the April Twenty-sixth Editorial and re-name the student movement as patriotic. During this time, not only students, but the ordinary citizens, workers and medical personnel in Beijing, started to support students voluntarily. Students in Shanghai and other big cities also expressed their supports although not as the same scale as that of Beijing. The authority's reaction was the enforcement of martial law on 20<sup>th</sup> of May. On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, military troops drove into Tiananmen, and students were forced to leave. The demonstration ended in bloodshed.

The Party Secretary, Zhao Ziyang, another sympathizer of students, tried to solve the confrontation between students and the Party by persuasion. However, he was dismissed by Deng and other elders in May 1989, and was placed under house arrest till the end of his life. Student leaders were either arrested and later released and left China, such as Wang Dan; or fled overseas and continue with the democratic movement, such as Feng Congde, Wang Chaohua.

The influence of these three waves of mini-democratization led by dissidents is significant in the following aspects:

Firstly, the background of these movements is connected with the international influence of democratization waves. Especially in the second and last student movement, the democratization process taking place in East Europe and Soviet Union encouraged China's youth to seek for China's its own path to democracy. During the June Fourth Movement, Gorbachev came to visit China and talked with student activists. The political reform he led under the same socialist system provided a possible model for China's reform.

Students and dissidents, unlike their forerunners of the May Fourth who were desperate to find a way out to rescue the whole nation, they are more rational in terms of choosing and thinking about the prospect of a democratic China. Perhaps the only merit of the numerous mass mobilization launched by Mao is educating a population with political sensibility and awareness. Because of the acquaintance with both Chinese state-society and the Western democratic system, the dissidents' criticism towards authoritarianism can be very sharp and to the point.

Some theorists have discussed the effect of civil society in these movements. They cited that the establishment of civil organizations such as student guilds (the most famous, Beigaolian), labour unions, and the role of press media. The non-official publications during the Democracy Wall Movements received little supports from official media. However, during the June Fourth, journals and newspapers reported the news on student demonstration despite the ban from government. For instance, 'Science and Technology Daily' (*Keji Ribao*)<sup>287</sup> published a front page report on

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<sup>287</sup>On the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April, 1989, Keji Ribao (Science and Technology Daily) published a front page report on student parade and on the 4<sup>th</sup> page as well.

the student's parade. In Shanghai, 300,000 copies of World Economics Guild's issue of 25<sup>th</sup> April were subjected to confiscation by Shanghai Party Committee, because it contained criticism towards Hu Yaobang's dismissal by the Party Centre and showed sympathy to students. Party Secretary of Shanghai, Jiang Zemin asked the editor-in-chief, Qin Benli to replace it, which was resisted by Qin; eventually the original content was eliminated but left vacant when published.

While for the sceptics, they blame the underdevelopment of civil society forces for the failure of these movements. Instead of praising the activism of civil society, they concluded that the organizations formed during the movements were very few and weak compared to the large number of official organizations. China's unbalanced development explains why such organized activities only took place in large urban cities such as Beijing and Shanghai. China's economy has just started to boom during the late 70s and 80s, middle class as the main force of a mature civil society has not grown to a considerable size.

Third, the strong international response from other countries put pressures upon the CCP leaders to continue liberalization instead of coercion. Right after the June Fourth Incidence, the US, UK, EU and a large number of democratic states express their condemnation towards this human rights abuse and in terms of which, loans to China were suspended; visits and meetings were cancelled or put off; weapon exportation to China was prohibited. Domestically, the CCP regime tends to be more conservative and many reform programmes were replaced by conservative plans. China's national economic growth slowed down due to both international and domestic factors.

Deng, as the supreme leader, was determined to push forward the reforms as originally designed by him. In 1992, his Nanxun speech was announced which expressed his determination<sup>288</sup>. In the same year, the growth of GDP peaked 12.8% and since then the rate has always been far higher than the average growth rate. Meanwhile, the loosening of ideological control during the liberalization, actually gave people more liberty than that of the 1989.

Although the dissidents led three major democratization waves in contemporary China, the limited scale and influence of these movements have not resulted in fundamental social or political changes in China's state and society relations. Especially after 1989, many student leaders and dissident intellectuals fled overseas for safety. Their voices can hardly be heard by ordinary Chinese. However, for the present, they may not be a powerful group who will play an important role in China's transition; they represent the most radical and democratic ideas and thoughts of the Chinese.

### 3.2.2 Liberal Economists

The liberal economists form the second group of scholars within the debate. To put economists in the political debate is because they actually are playing a role in the debate. Some of these economists are often invited by the government to attend

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<sup>288</sup> In 1992, Deng Xiaoping visited Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shanghai and other cities in the southern part of China, he gave a series of speeches which were called 'Nanxun Speech' (South Tour Speech), the main point of these speeches is to reemphasize the importance of continuing the Reform.

meetings for making national or local economic policy. The Leninism political system is incompatible with liberal economy; therefore, these liberal economists' ideas and thoughts towards a liberal economic system will inevitably have its influence in political system when designing relevant policies.

The representatives of these economists are Mao Yushi, Zhang Shuguang, Sheng Hong, Tang Shouning and so on. Mao Yushi together with the others founded the Unirule Institute of Economics in Beijing, aiming for high quality research in economic theory and cutting-edge social-economic problems. What they have realized is that the market system cannot work properly with CCP' s one party rule. Sooner or later, economic stagnation will appear. Based on liberalism, they ask for the protection of private property and political reforms towards democratization.

### 3.2.3 New Left

The New Left, or Conservatives are a group of economists whose ideas and thoughts are closer to social democracy other than Marxism-Leninism<sup>289</sup> as opposed to the liberals. One of the representatives is Hu Angang who works in the National Conditional Research Centre of Qinghua University. The others include Cui Zhiyuan, Wang Hui, Lang Xianping and so on.

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<sup>289</sup> See, for example, Zheng, Yongnian talked about the New Left in his book, *Discovering Chinese Nationalism in China: Modernization, Identity and International Relations*, 1999; C.H.Kwan' s article, ' *Zhongguo Jingji Xuejia Shili Fenbutu-Chaoyue Geige yu Baoshou de Kuangkuang* ' , (*Distribution of forces of Chinese Economists-Go beyond the Frame of Reformer and Conservative*), (13th, Dec, 2002) who is a consulting fellow in RIETI (Research Institute of Economy, Trade and



These people concerns are social equality and justice. Hu Angang thinks that the market system has its own limitation which creates the need for state ' s administration<sup>290</sup>. Efficiency and equity are both important in the making of social policies. They also emphasize the uniqueness of Asian values and culture, thus liberal democracy which originated from the West is not so relevant to the development of China. They also ask for solutions towards the environmental pollution brought by economic development. The works and reports by Professor Hu Angang have provided reference to the decision makers in the Party Centre and the State Council<sup>291</sup>. Although the ideas of the New Left were theoretically against the market economy strategy launched by the CCP, they are not treated as dissidents but can have their own voice inside the system. The New Left also differs from the dissidents in the way that they seek to negotiate with the authority by providing consultation and advices other than trying to overthrow the whole regime through radical democratization movement.

#### 3.2.4 Mainstream Incrementalists

The fourth group is the largest of all in the debate. Therefore, they are called mainstream incrementalists. In the economic domain, they think that China should take gradual steps towards a totally market economy. Based on this, they advanced models such as Incremental Democracy, gradual democratization.

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Industry), accessible by <http://www.rieti.go.jp/users/kan-si-yu/cn/c021213.html>

<sup>290</sup> See, for example, Hu Angang, *Shencun yu Fazhan*, (Survival and Development) 1988, in this book, he identified a unique path to modernization of China as distinctive to that of the West. This book was read by members of the Politburo.

<sup>291</sup> In 2000, Hu was appointed as the Director of the Centre for China Study, its publication, 'China Report' provides references to cadres of the provincial level exclusively.

Their ideas about an incremental model of democratization are based upon the critique towards that of the dissidents. Firstly, the radical model of political democratization before the establishment of a market economy and growth of a considerable middle class is not realistic which has been proved by the failure of the previous democratization movements. Secondly, radical political reforms as implemented in the former Soviet Union have resulted in economic stagnation and chaos and unrest in the society which proved to be a not so perfect model. Thirdly, the Asian models of economic development and gradual democratic transition are regarded as successful precedents. Their polity is a mixture with authoritarian and democracy, which is determined by the Confucian traditions and history. China shares these features with them therefore China should be taking the same path towards democratization. Last but not least, the only way to a democratic transition which the CCP and the elites would possibly agree on is this incremental model. Incremental means slow but progressively in this term; however, a few years of stagnation before a threshold is understandable and a sudden advancement towards democracy can also be expected after years of steady progress. The CCP has been taking the economic liberalization and started to implement democracy in grassroots such as the villages. Under the incrementalism, the process seems under control of the elites, they still possess the power to cease or intervene, therefore, they will not feel too threatened to tough it out.

This group consists of Chinese scholars and China specialists both inside and outside the system; they can be economists or political theorists. The thoughts of some domestic scholars can be influential as the authority often consulted them for advices.

Some of the representatives are:

Yu Keping and his incremental democracy conception. Yu, Deputy Director of the Bureau of Translate and Edit of CCP Central Committee (hereafter abbreviated as BTE), asserts that a stable economy is the base of democracy. The political reforms should be implemented gradually and steadily. Inner-party democracy and grassroots democracy are the present forms of Chinese democracy. Democracy should be built upon the base of legalization and institutionalization. The rule of law and democracy are the two sides of the same coin. He has spent years in research of Chinese civil society as the model of Chinese democracy. Democracy when implemented in different societies may take distinctive forms, and China will have its own way. His works include: *Ideological Innovation and Incremental Democracy in China (Zhongguo de Yishixingtai Chuanxin he Zengliang Minzhu de Fazhan)* (2007); *The Rise of Chinese Civil Society and Its Implications for Governance (Zhongguo Gongmin Shehui de Xingqi Jiqi dui Zhili de Yiyi)* (2006); *Chinese Civil Society: Concepts, Categories and Institutional Environment (Zhongguo Gongmin Shehui: Gainian, Fenlei yu Zhidu Huanjing)* (2006); and so on.

He Zengke, Deputy Director of the Research Centre of Comparative Politics and Economics in BTE, also is an expert in incremental political reforms and democratic transition. He termed it in progressive political reforms in his essay, ‘*Progressive Political Reforms and Democratic Transition*’ (*Jianjin Zhengzhi Gaige yu Minzhu de*

*Zhuanxing*)<sup>292</sup>; in which he compared China's political reform with economic reform and concluded that political reform is following the same progressive pattern. China is in the middle of the transition from totalitarianism to authoritarian and eventually towards a democratic polity. Therefore, his research is mainly focused on the features of the reform politics, which includes guidelines, approaches, dynamic mechanism, historical discourse and the development prospects.

Shao Daosheng, a researcher in Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and another advocate for incremental democracy. For instance, he talks about 'Internet-style democracy' in his article '*Internet-style Democracy: An Important Part of Incremental Democracy*' (*Hulianwang Shi de Minzhu: Shehui Minzhu Jianjin Shi Gaige de Zhongyao Yihuan*), published in the 6<sup>th</sup> issue of China Information Industry (*Zhongguo Xinxi Jie*) in 2004<sup>293</sup>.

Chen Sixi, in the article '*Incremental Reform of Electoral Institution in China*', (*Zhongguo Xuanju de Jianjinxing Gaige*)<sup>294</sup>, talks about the implementation of incremental model in the electoral institutions. Liu Yawei has also done researches into the competitive elections carried out in county and village levels, in which he examined the incremental democratic model at grassroots. His thoughts can be found in '*Incremental-style Democracy – Direct Elections in China's counties and*

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<sup>292</sup> He Zengke, 'Progressive Political Reforms and Democratic Transition' (*Jianjin Zhengzhi Gaige yu Minzhu de Zhuanxing*), *Beijing Administrative College Journal* (*Beijing Xingzheng Xueyuan Xuebao*), 2004, 3rd and 4th issues.

<sup>293</sup> Shao Dansheng, '*Internet-style Democracy: An Important Part of Incremental Democracy*' (*Hulianwang Shi de Minzhu: Shehui Minzhu Jianjin Shi Gaige de Zhongyao Yihuan*), *China Information Industry* (*Zhongguo Xinxi Jie*), issue 6, 2004

<sup>294</sup> Chen Sixi, '*Incremental Reform of Electoral Institution in China*' (*Zhongguo*

villages’ (*Jianjinshi Minzhu – Zhongguo Xianxiang de Zhijie Xuanju*)<sup>295</sup>. Ji Weidong, talks about the dynamics of incremental reforms in his article, ‘*New Dynamics of Incremental Reforms – From Breaking up the Whole into Parts to Combining Parts into Whole*’ (*Jianjin Gaige de Xindongli – cong Huazhengweiling dao Helingweizheng*)<sup>296</sup>.

There are also some economists such as Wu Jinlian, Fan Gang, Lin Yifu and so on who are not so interested in political reforms, they are advocates for Asian authoritarian style developmental path. They are influential experts who have been taking part in the establishment of the CCP’ s economic developmental strategy.

However, so far one of the most comprehensive researches on incremental model would be the work that has been done by Tang Liang whose major contribution is embodied in the book, *Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in Transition* (*Jianjin Minzhu: Biange Zhong de Zhongguo Zhengzhi*). His main ideas can be summarized in the following paragraphs<sup>297</sup>:

The complex and changing nature of Chinese politics required the academic researchers to rethink about the dualism verdicts of democracy and autarchy. Against

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Xuanju de Jianjinxing Gaige), *Social Sciences in China*, (2004: 01).

<sup>295</sup> Liu Yawei, ‘*Incremental-style Democracy – Direct Elections in China ’ s counties and villages*’ (*Jianjinshi Minzhu – Zhongguo Xianxiang de Zhijie Xuanju*), [www.Yannan.cn](http://www.Yannan.cn), <http://www.yannan.cn/data/detail.php?id=2975>

<sup>296</sup> Ji Weidong, ‘*New Dynamics of Incremental Reforms – From Breaking up the Whole into Parts to Combining Parts into Whole*’ (*Jianjin Gaige de Xindongli – cong Huazhengweiling dao Helingweizheng*), *Twenty-first Century* (online edition), Sep, 2002, Issue No. 6.

<sup>297</sup> Based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*

the yardstick of a liberal democratic model, Chinese regime falls into the category of autarchy. However, we are exploring a polity under transformation. The CCP rejects any political radicalism which could bring social unrest and thus threatens the regime, yet allows gradual reforms in the institutions which slowly create spaces for liberty and rights.

There have been some initial achievements under CCP's political reforms. Chinese regime is now much closer towards the direction of comprehensive democratization as compared to the situation before the Reform; although the fundamental breakthrough has not happened, one can find quantitative and qualitative changes in various areas of state and society relations. The crackdown towards dissidents occurs less frequently, and it never diverts Chinese reforms from the liberalization direction (for instance, after the 1989 crackdown, the economy quickly recovered during the early 90s). Compared to the poor record in political and civil rights, economic human rights have been improved significantly in terms of subsistence and development.

Tang offered an analysis into the existing political system and undergoing political reforms in order to evaluate the possibility of turning the initial achievements into full-scale democratization. Thus he examined the main dynamics of this political transition.

- The first dynamic is the interaction between economics and politics.

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(*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), 2004, Chinese version

<sup>298</sup> Based on Tang Liang, Jianjin, *Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*

Tang asserts that politics and economics, ideology and policy, state and society are connected and interacted. When Deng Xiaoping launched the reform and open-up policy decades ago, his initial intention was to realize the modernization of Chinese national economy. However, the further transformation in the economic domain and the improved efficiency require the corresponding institutionalization in governance and bureaucracy. Furthermore, the information from outside China increasingly flows into this once conservative state; along with the fundamental changes taking root in the state-society relations; and demands from grassroots asking for reforms; all resulted in the inconsistency between economic reforms and political reforms.

Tang discovered that in the reform era, there is a sequence that economic reforms always come before political reforms. The rapid economic reforms demand changes to the old inefficient bureaucracy and new laws and policies to guide economic activities. Once the political reform is initiated in terms of these demands, it can actually push economic liberalization to a deeper and more comprehensive stage.

What we can discover from the track of China's reforms is, as Tang pointed out, the interaction between economic and political reforms. Once freed economics ask for changes in politics, and the changes in politics in turn would set free more productivity from the once planned economy. To understand this discourse, one needs to extensively probe into Chinese domestic politics and economics. For instance, Chinese government encourages the development of private enterprises and corporations with foreign investment while in the mean time, carries out the

privatisation of state-owned companies. The privatisation of large state firms, creative innovation of the socialism orthodoxy, helps to create economic independency of a large number of people who were employed by the firms, thus they were released from the dependency upon the state which in turn, as Tang asserts, positively influences the political awakening of Chinese people.

- The second one is the impact of globalization.<sup>299</sup>

Tang finds out that although the original intention of the opening-up policy is to bring in foreign investment and advanced technologies, once this process expands, ideas, norms and thoughts that are from the Western liberal world were also received by Chinese which started to challenge the existing ideas, values and cultures. This in turn has changed Chinese people's old ideology and way of living.

China's international status as a rising power has been strengthened by these years of fast economic development. As China becomes more and more involved in the global economy, (especially after the accession to WTO), and China's active participation in other affairs of the international community, such as becoming the 2008 Olympic host country; more concerns and requests have been frequently expressed by the international community: if China wants to play a significant figure in the world politics, it should act like one, for instance, show respects for international norms such as human rights. Meanwhile, Chinese leaders, keen to build an image of an open, benign, responsible power, also are willing to socialize in the international community

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<sup>299</sup> Based on Tang Liang, Jianjin, *Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition), 2004, Chinese version



through introduction of international standards into domestic and foreign policy making processes. Under most situations, although the first intention was not political but mainly economical, the result turned out to be political as well. For instance, China's main aim is to gain the benefit of free-trade when it accessed into the WTO, however, later on they found that domestic laws and regulations have to be amended to make sure that they catch up with the international trading rules.

Tang further discovered that China's closer relationship with other states, especially western democratic states has led to greater pressures from the international context upon domestic policy making. Western states' condemnation of China's human rights profile was always confronted by Chinese government on the ground of non-intervention upon domestic issues; however, the statement of the government changed in a subtle way. The government becomes more willing to engage in 'human rights talks' with western states or international human rights regimes on an equal basis. In addition, the government would make some political gestures such as releasing a few imprisoned dissidents right before Chinese leaders' important visiting western countries. During the recent years, the government would keep quiet on some sensitive issues raised by domestic civil groups. In 2001, Chinese People's Congress passed the accession of China into the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights with the reservation to labour union articles. In 2003, the constitutional amendment about a new statement 'State respects and safeguards human rights' was confirmed, and later added into the Chinese Constitution.

- The third dynamic is the transformation of the CCP itself.<sup>300</sup>

Tang asserts that sticking to the leadership of CCP is not totally incompatible with the goal of democracy. From the Tiananmen Incident, one may conclude that when the mass democratic movement comes to a threshold of threatening the regime itself, the Party would have to take the ultimate actions to crackdown. This is just one side of the story. The other side is that CCP itself has been undergoing a series of transformation.

Party old leaders are being placed by younger leaders; former cadres are being taken over by new cadres. Compared to the previous generations, the current party leaders are much younger and much better educated. A large number of them are experts in science, technology, economy and all kinds of areas. They are less tied with the old ideology yet more open-minded, efficient and pragmatic. These positive transformations of CCP helped to promote the top-down political reforms and also, might give more space to the bottom-up democratic movement in the future.

During the years 1950s to 1970s, the triumph of the Chinese Revolution, the independence of the Chinese state, and the aim of building up socialism, guaranteed the legitimacy of the CCP regime. Also, the main characteristic of the socialist political system and socialism ideology is one party rule. Nevertheless, when the ideology itself has been weakened and the obligations are not as powerful as before, the CCP will have to find new bases for its ruling legitimation. The success of earlier economic reforms has legitimized the CCP regime since the late 1970s. In the new

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<sup>300</sup> Based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* 170

millennium, how to consolidate this legitimacy through deeper reforms has become the major task for CCP leaders and cadres. That's why Tang claimed that the third dynamic is one of the most promising factors for continuous reforms and opening up.

- The fourth dynamic is the development of civil society forces.<sup>301</sup>

Tang attributes it to the democratic awareness of people and the growth of civil groups. Since the foundation of the PRC, the CCP has controlled the most resources of the society, and is always very cautious about any radical political reforms, for instance, the 1989 student movement was taken as a threat to the regime itself.

It seems not possible to change the Party's domination in recent future. While words like democracy, political institutions and political reforms were seen as taboo and never appeared in state controlled media two or three decades ago; the situation has changed significantly. The CCP have expressed its determination to carry on with the institutionalization within the political system.

During the reform years, the control over the media has been loosened although not totally diminished. The development of media, especially the internet, has given people more space to have a say in public issues. The most significant structural change taking place in China's society today is the growth of the population which formed the so-called middle-class. It is regarded as the bases for transition to democratic politics.

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(Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition), 2004, Chinese version

<sup>301</sup> Based on Tang Liang, Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi

Tang concludes that we could become more optimistic about the future of a transition to democracy, as we broaden our research focus from the simple dualism of democracy and autarchy, to the larger scale of the interaction between economic reforms and the change of political superstructure, of the discourse between globalization and Chinese domestic society, of the transformation of CCP and the development of civil forces.

He also looked into the obstacles to this incremental model of transition, which he summarized as<sup>302</sup>:

The instinct of holding up to the power and regime of CCP and the conservative leaders and cadres who maintain the opposition of political reforms are the obstacles of democratization; however, these are not the supreme obstacles. The most important social and economic problems existing in China are poverty, poor performance of state-owned enterprises, region discrepancy, increasing wealth gap between rich and poor, great number of laid-offs<sup>303</sup> and educational problem. Tang further concerned that, should these problems remain unsolved, even the western style democracy has been realised in China, the normal functioning of political regime could still be at stake. One of the examples often cited nowadays is the former Soviet Union, in which case the adoption of multi-party free election has created a lot of problems and even brought crisis to the new regime. He also criticised the radical democrats because they have an illusion that once the democratic system is established, all the

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(Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition), 2004, Chinese version

<sup>302</sup> Based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition), 2004

social-economic problems could be solved immediately; this impression is gained from the developed world, where society is stable and the social-economic problems such as poverty, unemployment are not as serious as the ones in developing countries.

Tang believed that once China's economy comes onto the smooth track, there will be more space for the transition to democratic politics. The problems of politics corruption, social injustice and lack of protection for human rights are inter-connected with the inefficiency of current political and economic system; however, simply give democratization as the answer to all these questions is not a thoughtful answer. The concern about possible social unrest and economic stagnation caused by a radical democratic movement can only be released when all the major social-economic problems are not so severe. That is when, Tang believed, the democrats within the system will have gained more power and even more political space to realize democratization.

### **3.3 Incremental Democratization with Chinese Characteristics**

An incremental model of democratization that I have been trying to establish in this thesis is a model that has its cultural context and meanings. Firstly, the most important feature of this model is incrementalism. It means that it takes time to proceed. There can be a few years of consecutive liberalization followed by some years of stagnation or even a set back. For instance, during the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, which is the initiation period of the economic reforms, the centralized economic system was reformed and the private sector began to grow. After the 1989

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<sup>303</sup>173 People who are out of jobs

students' movement, there were a few years of set-back when the reform was suspended until 1992 after Deng's well-known Speech of the Southern Tour. However, a quick transformation could be expected in the future. The gradualism or the incrementalism of this model determined the discursiveness of this process.

Secondly, this model is established with Chinese characteristics. These characteristics include, China's unevenly developed local economy, unevenly distributed population, the uniqueness of Chinese traditional culture and its long history and so on. China has the third largest territory of the world which inhabits the world's largest population. Majority of the population live in or close to the south eastern coastal area where most of the urbanization and modernization projects and programmes take place. Fewer people live in the north western inland area where the local economy is underdeveloped. It is thus very difficult to find a standard parameter when investigating social economical processes in different parts of China. It does not indicate that with more well-educated people who belong to the middle income class as we can see in the big cities in the southeast, the pace of liberalization and democratization could be faster than the rural area where most of the peasantry live. However, the regional disparity increases the difficulty of an over-all evaluation and assessment in social, economic, and political studies.

China's long history of the domination of Confucianism in the political culture has its influence upon the present civil society development. The values and ethical of Confucianism have been long rooted in Chinese culture and tradition which are distinctive from the western values. For example, 'to build a harmonious society'

was brought up in the 16<sup>th</sup> Party' s Congress<sup>304</sup>. Although it was not explicitly referring to Confucianism, it seems that Confucius' s ideas about maintaining the harmony in the state and society are experiencing a renaissance. While in the western world, the civil society forces emerged as sometimes opposed to the authority and there is a long tradition of allowing politically independent and opposing parties against the ruling party, in Chinese society, it is consensus decision making and harmony.

It is not a cultural or structural determinism. The influence of the structure should not be exaggerated and should be balanced with the effects of the agency. In this incremental model, the influence of the agencies is also acknowledged. For example, in the following chapters, the influence of certain political figures will be discussed. The importance of the rival between the reformists and the conservative figure in the early reform period is investigated. A norm-based legitimacy has been replaced by a performance-based legitimated rule.

The structure and agency construct the whole model. A structure could be changed by the action of the agency, while any agency has to operate within the given structural restraints. However, it is not feasible to identify all the possible functioning structural and agent elements due to the complex and fluid nature of the object of the thesis. It is manageable to identify a few of them. In the following chapters, a discussion into three aspects of the incremental model will be presented.

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<sup>304</sup> It was firstly raised in the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Party's Congress which was held between 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, September, 2004

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have examined discourses of democracy in China from historical and cultural (mainly Confucianism and Socialism) perspectives, from which one can find how the liberal ideas of democracy after being introduced to China, have been reconstructed under specific circumstances; and how the ideas of liberal democracy have been replaced by more radical populist democracy during the New Cultural Movement which eventually led to the adoption of the Marxist socialist democracy through the founding of CCP. The recent democracy thoughts are explored through the debate about possibility and form of democratic transition in China; in which the dissidents inspired by this prospect, have launched several movements to realise a radical and quick democratization; the economists, both liberal and conservative, have tried to place their influence over the economic policy-making by the authority which have also brought some impact on the political; the mainstream incremental group, believe in a gradual but progressive transformation towards a more democratic polity, whose ideas are the closest to the authority and have become the most influential of all groups within the debate.

The three areas in which this incremental-style transition can be best illustrated are the evolution within the regime, the competitive election at the grassroots, and the growth of civil society forces (the press media, for instance). These subjects will be the themes of the following chapters through which the changing nature of China's state-society relations can be disclosed while a redefinition of state-society relations can be made and advanced.



In this thesis, a similar attempt to escape from the dualism of democracy/autarchy as claimed by Tang is made by analysing the impact of these reforms – changes in political superstructure, grassroots democratic practice and the growth of press autonomy and so on.

**CHAPTER FOUR**  
**INCREMENTAL REGIME EVOLUTION**

## 4.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters, we have extensively reviewed the literature on democracy, its specific discourse in China and the incremental model of transition presented by mainstream scholars. In Chapter 4, 5 and 6 three aspects of this model will be discussed respectively, the changes within the regime, the development of grassroots democratic practice and the growth of new press as one of the emerging civil society forces.

As discussed in the previous chapters, the debate on China's regime change almost covered every aspect of China's state-society relations; due to the length restrict of this thesis, it would be unmanageable to explore into detail of everything; thus, here, the research strategy will be focused on the gradual evolution of the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) and the strengthening of NPC (National People's Congress) in terms of the belief that more valuable insights could be obtained through a comparatively deep exploration on a small scale than a superficial research of everything.

During the last three decades of the Reform (since 1978), the Chinese communist regime has undergone a series of changes. Although the CCP still claims itself as a Marxism-Leninist party and PRC as a socialist state; the *de facto* ideology has evolved from original Marxism-Leninism-Maoism to a mixed doctrine of authoritarianism. In the first place, the CCP has abandoned the highly centralized planning economic system, and now aims at establishing a so-called socialist market economic system largely driven by spontaneously-formed markets; which was guided

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under the doctrine of ‘build up economy’ after giving up the doctrine of class struggle. Secondly, the CCP itself has evolved during the reforms to adapt to the changing internal and external environment; for example, the ‘three represents’<sup>305</sup> can be seen as a departure point from orthodox Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. The economic growth has bred a considerable middle class, which was regarded by the CCP as a new base of its rule; that is why the leaders threw out the ‘three represents’ to bring this new social force into the regime. Furthermore, the reforms have considerably strengthened political institutions such as the legislature (NPC), the judiciary (the rule of law) and the administration (State Council).

#### **4.1 The Incremental Development of CCP**

As we discussed before, in order to maintain its one-party rule, the CCP, together with mainstream incremental school of intellectuals, is against the ideas of dissidents about any radical democratization. Thus, the precondition for the CCP to launch any kind of political reforms is to make sure the leadership of CCP is unshakable which can be best illustrated in Deng’s ‘Four Cardinal Principles’ doctrine. Democratization is defined as a long-term process and any quick transition will result in chaos and unrest.

Although the radicals tried to realize their ideal liberal democratic model, so far the CCP has been playing the dominant role in the initiation of political reforms.

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<sup>305</sup> Three Represents, the Party should represent advanced productive forces, advanced culture, and the basic interests of all the Chinese working people, raised by Jiang Zemin, Zai Qingzhu Jiangdang Bashi Zhounian Dahui shang de Jianghua, (Speech on the Celebration for the Eightieth Anniversary of Establishment of CCP), *People’s Daily*, the front page, 02-07-2001

However, the process of reforms is not as smooth as assumed by some modernization theorists; there has always been dispute within the CCP leaders themselves on the pace of the liberalization or on whether to start liberalizing at all.

After the disastrous Cultural Revolution, the CCP was facing some severe economic crisis which was likely to threaten the survival of the regime if not tackled properly. Deng, who won the power battle with Hua Guofeng, realized that the best strategy should be economic liberalization. His view was supported by other leaders who also believed in reforms, such as Hu Yaobang, Zhao Ziyang and so on. However, a number of CCP leaders were more cautious about lose of control as the consequence of liberalization and on the contrary, asserted that the regime should seek to strengthen its control and the use of force to suppress the opposition. Chen Yun, was regarded as the representative of these conservatives or hardliners. Li Peng, who signed the martial law during the June Fourth Movement, (although authorized by Deng and other elders), was seen as the most conservative figure after Chen Yun retired.

Despite their divergence, the basic interests of the leaders are the same – to maintain one-party rule. That's why although they disagree on some issues such as the pace of the liberalization or the speed of opening-up, they all give priority to the economic growth: the conservatives criticise the reformers' policy when the liberalization goes too quick but never try to reverse it as they realized the need for economic development; even the most radical reformers can take the same line with the conservatives in the crackdown on the mass movement, coming out of people's demands for democracy and rights. (For instance, Deng, regarded as the initiator for

liberalization, took the hard-line towards the democratic movements.) The dispute between the reformers and hardliners<sup>306</sup>, though less obvious during the post-Deng era, to a large degree determined the incremental nature of the reforms.

The incremental evolution of the CCP can be summarized as<sup>307</sup>:

#### 4.1.1 CCP in Reform

During the Reforms year, new Party members and cadres have replaced the old ones; compared to their predecessors, they are less ideologically-bound (as the Party ideology weakens); better educated and younger in age. The Party has evolved in terms of the change in its membership, and become more inclusive than exclusive politically. ‘Three Represents’ gives middle class especially entrepreneurs the opportunity to get Party membership, which granted them political participation.

##### 4.1.1.1 From Revolutionary Regime to a Reformed Regime

In the Maoist period, the CCP was a pure ‘revolutionary regime’<sup>308</sup>, which means that the leaders and cadres of the revolution army (the PLA, People’s Liberation Army), mostly made up of peasants who had very little education or professional training, took various positions in party committees and governments of all level. The only

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<sup>306</sup> For detail of the political struggle between reformers and conservatives, see, for instance, Yang Jisheng, *Zhongguo Gaige Niandai de Zhengzhi Douzheng*, (*Political Battles during China’s Reform Age*), Hong Kong: ECP, 2004

<sup>307</sup> Some based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), 2004, p2-3

<sup>308</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*

strong belief amongst them is the belief in Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which helped them to win over Sino-Japanese War (1937-45) and civil war against KMD (1945-49) as they believed. By the time when PRC was founded, most of these soldiers and cadres have stepped into their mid-age or even older. Their age and strong ideological belief constrained their ability to learn new skills for state governance, new technologies or become professional bureaucrats. Mao himself came to the top position through numerous battles with his political opponents outside the Party and power struggles within the Party, have build up a strong belief in class struggle which has always been the creed of CCP before Mao' s death. The main feature of the Maoist regime was restless political mobilization and peoples' campaigns (always in a large national scale) initiated by Mao and his followers to purge his opponents and to eliminate any non-Maoist ideas which were always under the name of anti-rightists. For instance, the 1957-58 anti-rightists campaigns purged over 500,000 so-called rightists most of whom were not rehabilitated until the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Compared to the anti-rightist campaign, more people were persecuted and wrongly prosecuted during the Cultural Revolution which not only almost brought the national economic to collapse, also to a large extent undermined the legitimacy of the CCP through the original revolutionary victory and economic construction of the first decade after the founding of PRC.

Post-Mao leader Deng Xiaoping, who was purged during the Cultural Revolution under the name of 'taking the capitalist road' by Mao and later rehabilitated and recognized as the core of CCP' s second generation of leaders in the Third Plenum of

the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress<sup>309</sup>, has seen the disastrous effects of Mao's personality cult and the poor capability of the bureaucratic system consisting of elderly, non-professional cadres who are against it. Therefore, he launched reforms in the selection and promotion of younger and more specialized cadres. In 1980, Deng instructed senior Party leaders to undertake a 'four-way transformation' (*sihua*) of the cadre corps by finding and promoting cadres around the age of 40 who were 'revolutionary, younger, more educated, and more technically specialized' (*geminghua, nianqinghua, zhishihua, zhuankehua*)<sup>310</sup>, which accelerated the transition of power from the old generation to the new comers. Deng also set up the retirement system, thus the cadres who reached the age limit were advised to leave their positions which did not used to be so. After about two decades of the reforms, the members of the revolutionary regime, some died, more retired, finally were all replaced by younger, and better educated expert bureaucrats and meritoratic cadres. For instance, the cadres with a college diploma made up of a very small portion in the whole bureaucratic hierarchy in the Maoist regime. After the Twelfth Party Congress of 1982, the number of provincial-level cadres who had a college diploma rose up to 20%<sup>311</sup>. While in 1997 when the Fifteenth Party Congress was held, the rate went as high as over 90%<sup>312</sup>.

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<sup>309</sup> The Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress took place in December 1978.

<sup>310</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17

<sup>311</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p5

<sup>312</sup> 'Jianguo Yilai Dang de Zhishifenzi Zhengce de Bianhua he Lishi Jingyan' (The Change and Historical Experience of Party's Policy towards Intellectuals Since the Founding of PRC), *Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Chinese Politics)*, (Information Centre for Social Science, Renmin University of China), 1999, Issue No. 10; cited in Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p5



Compared with Mao Zedong, the leadership of Deng era depends more on the collective leadership than the cult of personality, because none of them has the monopoly authority as Mao had. Deng Xiaoping is regarded as the chief designer of China's reform and opening-up policy. As he put straight forward in his theory, 'be practical and realistic.' His policy is more pragmatic and less confined by the Marxism-Leninism-Maoism ideological orthodoxy. Deng and his colleagues have seen the failure of Soviet-style political and economic system; in political system, cult of personality would lead to the dictatorship of one man just like Stalin did in Soviet Communist Party, the class struggle and people's campaign are no longer the primary objects of CCP; in economic system, the central planning has restrained the productivity and the development of national economy. The difference between new meritoratic generation of leaders and cadres and their predecessors is that, most of the new generation have not taken part in the glorious revolution, but they have experienced the failure and frustration of socialist politics and economics during the 60s and 70s; thus they are less bound by the old ideology but tend to be more pragmatic and capable of dealing with problems that require specialized knowledge.

#### 4.1.1.2 Taking in New Members

Another important evolutionary change within the Party is it enlarged its membership to take in new private entrepreneurs. In the socialist orthodoxy, these people belong to the class of bourgeois as opposed to proletariat class of workers. CCP claimed itself to be the vanguard of Chinese proletariat and aimed to eliminate capitalism. The CCP, after the founding of PRC in 1949, started to nationalize all the private enterprises and

tried to transform the bourgeoisie into labourers. As Deng put it, ‘a Party member must be a person who engage in labour work and does not exploit others’ in his report as amendment to the Constitution of CCP submitted to the Eighth Party Congress<sup>313</sup>.

However, as the private economy reascendances and prospers ever since the 1980s after the Reform was launched, the number of private entrepreneurs grows and the status of the private economy rises in the whole national economy<sup>314</sup>. The authority now gives more space to the development of the private economy. As the Reform deepens, especially along with the privatization of the state-owned enterprises, more people who were themselves Party members started to join this new entrepreneur class. This new political force demands for recognition from the Party in order to raise its political status and enlarge its political participation.

At first, due to the objection from the conservatives within the Party, private entrepreneurs were not allowed to take the Party membership right away. However, they became active in all levels of People’ s Congress, Chinese People’ s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) and the Federation of Industry and Commerce (*gongshang lianhehui*), which was actually encouraged by the authority in order to give them certain social status and opportunity to express their views<sup>315</sup>. Gradually,

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<sup>313</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p10

<sup>314</sup> For example, in 1981, the Sixth Plenum of the 11th Party Congress stated that the private economy is the complementary part of the public economy; while in 1999, the tone has changed to recognize private economy as an important part that constitutes the socialist market economy in the modified Constitution.

<sup>315</sup> Cooptation and Corporatism in China, *Political Science Quarterly*, Volume 115, Number 4, 2000-01; cited by Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De* 186

more and more of these people were taken in as members by local party committees. That largely explains the increase in the number of party members amongst private entrepreneurs during recent years. It grows from 13.1% in 1993 to 17.1% in 1995, later in 2000, the figure grows to 19.8%; which means in 2000, amongst 100 private entrepreneurs<sup>316</sup>, about 20 have got CCP membership<sup>317</sup>.

In an important speech Jiang Zemin gave on the day of the Celebration of the Eightieth Anniversary of the Establishment of CCP, which was published in *People's Daily* the next day, Jiang pointed out that,

Since the Reform and Opening Up, new changes have occurred in China's social class structure, there have been private entrepreneurs and technical personnel in the private scientific and technological enterprises, managerial and technical staff employed by foreign-funded enterprises, self-employed (*getihu*), owners of private enterprises, practitioners working in the intermediary organizations, independent professionals, and so on...These people, together with workers, peasants, intellectuals, cadres and PLA officers, are also the builders for the cause of socialism with Chinese characteristics...(therefore we) should absorb the excellent people from other parts of the society into our party who accept the Party Creed and Constitution, consciously striving for the Party courses and Creed,

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*Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p10-11

<sup>316</sup> The term 'private entrepreneurs' is taken from Jiang Zemin's Speech on the Celebration for the Eightieth Anniversary of Establishment of CCP, published in *People's Daily*, 02-07-2001, translated by the author

<sup>317</sup> The figures were adopted from Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p11

passing through long-term test, and fulfilling the membership qualification.

(Author' s translation from Chinese) <sup>318</sup>

This expressed the recognition from the CCP for the new middle class majority of who are private entrepreneurs, managers, technicians and other professionals. Jiang' s speech marked an important amendment to CCP' s orthodox ideology, which also demonstrated the desire of CCP to enlarge its bases of rule by bringing new class force into its organization. This is the core of the 'three represents' doctrine which was designated by Jiang as a progressive innovation on Dengism. A year later, in November 2002, on the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, the 'three represents' <sup>319</sup> were officially written into the Party Constitution.

#### 4.1.2 Deng and After

The political reforms initiated from the top and the democratic demands from the dissidents were regarded as contradictory ideologically, however, in fact, these two processes were clashing with each other and sometimes intertwined. The actual political reforms were pushed forward by intellectuals and political elites that were close to the camp of the reformers within the Party and guided by pragmatic incrementalism. On the other hand, the Party has always tried to seek support for its

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<sup>318</sup> Jiang Zemin, *Zai Qingzhu Jiangdang Bashi Zhounian Dahui shang de Jianghua*, (Speech on the Celebration for the Eightieth Anniversary of Establishment of CCP), *People' s Daily*, the front page, 02-07-2001;

<sup>319</sup> Three Represents, the Party should represent advanced productive forces, advanced culture, and the basic interests of all the Chinese working people, raised by Jiang Zemin, *Zai Qingzhu Jiangdang Bashi Zhounian Dahui shang de Jianghua*, (Speech on the Celebration for the Eightieth Anniversary of Establishment of CCP),

reformist path from intellectuals. The Party, especially the conservative wing within the Party, is vigilant about any radical democratic movements which were often associated with liberalization moves by the reformers, and always, (together with the reformers within the Party), suppress these activities by the radical intellectuals, however, more tolerance of such kind of democratic demands have been shown, and some of the demands were actually taken by the Party and implemented through the reforms. In terms of CCP' s positive evolution, this political tolerance will possibly grow.

#### 4.1.2.1 Reformers, Conservatives and the Liberals

Since the beginning of the Reform in early 1980s, there have always been two different or sometimes contradictory opinions with the Party itself. The reformers who are keen to push the economic liberalization to set up a market economy in nature (perhaps) mixed with some elements of the old planned system; and the conservatives who are against the idea but willing to maintain the planned economy system mixed with some (limited) features of the market economy. Is it market or planned economy in nature becomes the departing point for these two groups. As we mentioned before, Deng was regarded as the head of the reformers and Chenyun was the most influential conservative figure.

The liberals are mainly liberal radical intellectuals, young students who are out of the Party; and some of the liberals within the Party. These people are inspired by democracy, liberty and human rights, asking for accelerating marketization in the

economics and democratization in the politics. They welcomed the ideas of the reformers to liberalize the economy, and stood with the reformers against the conservatives when they were obstructing the Reform. The conservatives are the defenders for the orthodox communism; they assert tight control over all aspects of people's life, for instance, to impose control on the social, economical, political and cultural activities; some even want to resume the old planned system prior to the Cultural Revolution. Their views can be explained in two aspects: firstly, these people, mostly bureaucrats, were close to the authorities, and they had strong belief in Marxism-Leninism; secondly, these people received most profits under the old system, the Reform thus constituted a threat to their vested interests. They did not totally agree with the reformers, however, they were totally against the liberals. For the reforms who wanted to release the productivity without changing the one-party rule, they relied on the liberals, especially the liberal economists to develop the strategy for the national economic growth. While on the other hand, they can not tolerate liberal ideas on the demands for fully democracy and liberty. At this time, the conservatives, as a balancing force to the liberals, were encouraged by Deng.

Between the late 1970s and the late 1980s, the interaction and contradiction of these three forces mapped out the political discourse in China. As Xiao Gongqin asserted, the necessity of this kind of confronting and clashing is determined by the nature of the transition of totalitarian regimes<sup>320</sup>. In his article, he offered an analysis for the complex interaction between Deng (core of power), liberals (intellectual and students

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<sup>320</sup> Xiao Gong qin, a professor of history in Shanghai Normal University, 'Zhongguo Gaige Kaifang yilai Zhengzhi zhong de Ziyoupai yu Baoshoupai – Liangji Chongtu jiqi Lishi Houguo' (Liberals and Conservatives in Politics since China's Reform and Opening-up – Bipolar Conflict and Its Historical Consequences);

as the majority) and the conservatives in the Party (bureaucrats who are advocates for orthodox ideology).

In 1978, the discussion on the ‘criterion of truth’ was initiated by Deng and his followers, by which the ‘two whatever’ doctrine was overthrown together with the fall of the conservative figure Hua Guofeng. As mentioned in Chapter Three, the Third Session of the Eleventh Party Congress recognized the rise of Deng as the core of power and his ideas on the Reform. During this time, the ongoing Democracy Wall movement initiated by liberal intellectual such as Wei Jingsheng provided supports for the reformers from outside the system.

In the next year, Deng, believed that the movement was out of control, and threw out the ‘four Cardinal Principles’ as the guideline. However, later Wei and a number of other liberal intellectuals were arrested and the movement was cracked down. In 1980, Hu Yaobang, regarded as a reformer figure, was appointed by Deng as the General Secretary of CCP. Deng, despite the announcement of ‘four Cardinal Principles’ in the former year; gave an important speech on the institutional reforms which contained some rather radical ideas. In this speech, titled ‘*The Institutional Reforms of the Party and State Leadership*’ (*Dang he Guojia Lingdao Zhidu de Gaige*), was given at an enlarged meeting of the Politburo on 18<sup>th</sup> of August, 1980<sup>321</sup>. In this speech, Deng talked about the over-centralization of power, in which he says, the over-centralization of power will impede the implementation of socialist

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*Modern China Studies*, 2003: 2, Issue No. 81.,

<sup>321</sup> ‘Dang he Guojia Lingdao Zhidu de Gaige’ (The Institutional Reforms of the Party and State Leadership), *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan (Selected Works of Deng* 191

democratic system and the Party' s Democratic Centralism. He called for a solution for the problems of the interference of the Party in the work of the government, the Party and the government being inseparable. He pointed out that there was a need for a political reform at the institutional level, which should be initiated progressively, continuously and step by step from centre to local. In addition, he mentioned the need for the changes in the promotion and life tenure of the cadres – the Party needs more cadres with younger age, better education and more professional skills while the life tenure for cadres should be abolished, the old cadres should retire according to their age and let the younger, able ones take over the jobs.

Encouraged by Deng' s speech on political reform, some radical intellectual started to become active, for example, the 'Luminary Daily' (*Guangming Ribao*) started to release many articles written by these intellectuals. However, the conservatives were not happy about this. Chen Yun and his followers brought forward an 'anti-bourgeoisie-liberalization' discuss into political domain. They expressed their dissatisfaction towards inflation which they believed resulted from the Reform. Chen asked for a slowing down for the reforms, focusing on the readjustment of the economic system. 'Abandon the development, seek for stability' was advocated by Chen and other conservatives. The 'anti-bourgeoisie-liberalization' movement initiated by conservatives was actually supported by Deng, which soon spread to the cultural terrain. For instance, in 1981, the film 'Bitter Love' (*Ku Lian*) which expressed the discontent towards the current political reality was harshly criticized by the authority. The New China News Agency broadcasted the commentator article,



*‘The Four Cardinal Principles Must Not Be Violated – Review Screenplay ‘Bitter Love’’ (Sixiang Jiben Yuanze Burong Weifan – Ping Dianying Wenxue Juben Kulian)* in which the author of the screenplay was regarded as acting against the Four Cardinal Principles.

However, conservatives’ intention to slow down the Reform cannot be tolerated by Deng and other reformers; indeed, they could hardly find support from inside or outside the system. In 1982, on the Twelfth Party Congress, a number of reformers were elected to the Central Party Committee while some conservatives lost their positions. Together with this political atmosphere, intellectuals found more hopes in a reform of the politics. Wang Ruoshui, the deputy Editor-in-Chief of the People’s Daily, published articles criticizing the leftist in China and asks for humanitarianism to become an element for the socialist democracy<sup>322</sup>. Wang’s ideas were strongly attacked by Hu Qiaomu, the ideological conservative. He denounced Wang as vilifying the Party and Socialism which later resulted in Wang’s dismissal in 1983. A movement to ‘Eliminate Spiritual Pollution’ (*Qingchu Jingshen Wuran*) was launched by conservatives in 1983 to criticize Wang and other intellectuals inspired by humanitarianism.

In 1984, Deng’s decision to open up 14 coastal cities was approved by the Party centre and the State Council in March. This was not processed without objection from the conservatives. Chen soon expressed his concerns over the establishment of the

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<sup>322</sup> For instance, Wang’s articles ‘*Shehuizhuyi Yihualun*’ (*Socialism Dissimilation Theory*) and ‘*Chouxiang de Rendaozhuyi*’ (*Abstract Humanitarianism*) and so on.

commodity economy. He emphasized the importance of planning in the socialist economy, he believed that planning should be the chief while market as the subordinate<sup>323</sup>. Some reformers were purged, for instance, Xiang Nan and Lei Yu.

In 1986, Deng gave another important speech on political reforms. Intellectuals and students were greatly encouraged and in the end of the year, students' demonstrations broke out all over the country. However, the next year saw the dismissal of Hu Yaobang as the General Secretary and a number of liberals were expelled such as Fang Lizhi, Wang Ruowang, and Liu Binyan. Fang did not stop criticising the authority. In 1988, he together with others, continued to give speeches and lectures on campus in Beijing. Students of the universities and colleges, received new ideas and thoughts, became active in various seminars, colloquiums and salons.

The year 1989 marked the peak of the liberal movement and also saw the down fall of it. 'Anti Peaceful-Evolution' became the slogan for conservatives and the reformers, such as Deng, also started to tighten the control over the society. Some of the radical reformers who showed sympathy to the liberals were purged. Zhao Ziyang, regarded as another reformer General Secretary (as Hu Yaobang) was removed from power and under home arrest for the rest of his life.

However, during 1989 to 1992, the conservatives were able to take control of the politics and economics; the repressive strategy resulted in abandonment of some of the former liberalization policies and economic stagnation. Deng's visit to the South

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<sup>323</sup> Chen's speech on the CCP's National Congress, in Beijing, 18th -23rd , September, 1985;

re-emphasized the importance of economic reform and later in the Fourteenth Party Congress the project of building a socialist market economy was finally established.

#### 4.1.2.2 The Post-Deng Era

Actually, the interaction between these three forces was over after the death of Chen<sup>324</sup>. Chen and Deng were the two most influential figures in the Party centre whose status was established by taking important positions for a very long-time. Because of their long-time authority in the Party, they have a lot of followers who were old comrades in arms, colleagues, friends, relatives, or people who were promoted or appointed by them. Chen believed in the old planning system while Deng favoured the market economy. Because of the important powers they possess respectively, none could impose his will on the other. Deng and his followers, on the one hand, wanted to change the laggard economic system, which would obviously be objected by Chen, thus they have to make some concessions such as slowing down the opening-up process; on the other hand, when the demands for democracy coming from outside the system became too strong, the reformers will need the strength of the conservatives to put it under control. This explains why the course of the Reform was unevenly developed in different years, and so incrementally progressing during the Dengist period.

After Deng and Chen, the new leaders, such as the so-called third generation leader Jiang Zemin and the fourth generation Hu Jintao, did not have the same power as their predecessors; also, they did not have an opponent who possesses the same status as

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<sup>324</sup> Yang Jisheng, *Zhongguo Gaige Niandai de Zhengzhi Douzheng*, (Political 195

Chen. As discussed before, although there is still conservative-and-reform divergence, the conservatives are not strong enough to pull the Reform back as Chen did. Since the 1992 speech of the South Visit, Deng' s ideas were followed by Jiang and Hu; after 1994, Deng' s health was deteriorating and he seldom came out in public. The post-Deng era came during which time the development was even faster than Deng' s period; more fundamental social, economic changes have taken place since then.

The features of the Post-Deng era are explained and identified as follows,

Deng' s doctrine was largely carried on by his successors: economic liberalization (to establish a market economy) with political repression (the Four Cardinal Principles as the ideological boundary). However, the 'three represents' modified the four Cardinal Principles, which marked an even weakened ideology. The Reform since 1978 has resulted in deep social change, for instance, the new classes of the middle level. Therefore, the dynamics of the Reforms now come from various social forces, which consequently increased the strands of discursive positions and the uncertainty of the course of the Reform. The Party leaders are not strongmen as Mao and Deng; they have to follow the doctrines and are unable to mobilize the party members and masses as Mao or Deng did; therefore, what they are capable of is grasping opportunities to utilize the new social forces; which in turn added more uncertainty to the future politics.

The economic development has improved people' s living standards; however, the consensus upon the Reform has split, especially amongst the intellectuals. The

problems, such as corruption, inequality and social injustice, which were deeply rooted within the authoritarian system, have triggered people's concern over the prospect of the Reform. The debate that took place in the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century between liberals and the New Left, which drew little attention from the ordinary Chinese, demonstrated the split amongst intellectuals.

The stagnation in political reform has resulted in an apparently prosperous market economy and a seemingly stabilized authoritarian regime. Deng's Speech of South Visit asked for the continuing reform and the tightening of the ideology control at the same time. This liberalization on pure economic side has bred the so-called 'Crony Capitalism'<sup>325</sup>, in which the handful of political elites and the business elites possess the advantageous positions in the state and society while the majority of people have very few resources and wealth.

China becomes more involved in the world especially after the accession to WTO. The 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing obviously gives China another opportunity to get to be known by the world. CCP has changed its strategies and metaphors to conform to the international standards. For instance, the discussion about human rights used to be considered as forbidden zone of the politics. The discussion on dissimulation and humanitarianism was raised by Zhou Yang and Wang Ruoshui during the early 1980s which was originated from criticizing and rethinking about the Cultural Revolution<sup>326</sup>. As mentioned before, the conservatives within the Party, led by Hu Qiaomu, launched a so-called 'Eliminate Spiritual Pollution' to suppress the radical intellectuals. However, after 1980s, especially after 1992, the authority, facing

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<sup>325</sup> Minxin Pei, 'How Will China Democratize?', *Journal of Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 53-57

<sup>326</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*

the pressure from the international community, had to make some concessions to improve China's image of a state with poor human rights record. Ratification of human rights conventions and constitutional protection to human rights are regarded as positive and progressive. However, as some commentators pointed out, the real breakthrough in the large improvement of human rights conditions would be a long-term process<sup>327</sup>.

The suppression upon dissidents has given more credits to the dissidents. The CCP ideology has been amended and lost its sanctity. Its credibility has been undermined at the same time. While on the other hand, the dissident intellectuals, who were subjected to oppression from the authority, are regarded as the conscience of the society. For instance, Fang Lizhi, who was dismissed from party and his office after 1986 student movement, continued to play a significant role in the 1989 democratic movement. Jiang Yanyong, a doctor who firstly reported the truth of SARS in Beijing to the international community, received much support from the people.

#### 4.1.3 Conclusion

Democratic consciousness was strengthened both inside and outside the system due to the economic and social changes of the society and the extensive opening-up. As discussed before, the revolutionary victory, socialism and the coercive power of the regime used to provide the bases of rule by the Party; however, as the ideology withers, CCP has to legitimize its rule by performance in the reforms. The challenge to this legitimacy will continue to push forward the reforms within the Party along

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(*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), 2004, p13

<sup>327</sup> For instance, see Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p14

with the political reforms. Meanwhile, the growth of the democratic forces both inside and outside the Party system may possibly eventually change the equilibrium and guide the liberalization process to an irreversible direction, which finally may lead to a fully democratization.

After examining the incremental evolution of the CCP, the recent political development in the legislature institution-National People's Congress also needs to be explored.

## **4.2 The Strengthening of NPC**

According to China's Constitution, National People's Congress is the highest organ of state power; its permanent body is the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (abbreviated as NPC); NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power of the state.<sup>328</sup> Local people's congresses are also the highest organs of the same level, in terms of the Constitution. Other powers of NPC include electing, recalling or removing the most important personnel in government such as President, Vice-President, Premier, Vice-Premiers, State Councillors, Ministers, Chairman of the Central Military Commission and others on the commission, President of the Supreme People's Court and the Procurator-General of the Supreme People's Procuratorate; examining and approving the plan for national economic and social development and the state budget, and the reports on their implementation

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<sup>328</sup> Articles 57 and 58, *Constitution of the People's Republic of China*, adopted in 1982.

respectively; deciding on questions of war and peace and so on<sup>329</sup>.

From the articles of the Constitution, the NPC and its Standing Committee exercised the most power. However, the Constitution also mentioned ‘under the leadership of CCP’ in its Preamble. In fact, the most powerful organ is the Politburo of CCP, and the General-Secretary of CCP as the top leader; which are not elected or decided by NPC. During the Maoist year, the Party Committee of central and local levels, exercise the decision power of personnel and other aspects. The one-party controls all is realized through its appointments of government officers and delegates to people’ s congress of all levels. The governments and councils carry out the decisions made by the Party committees and make policies and lodge bills; people’ s congress then agrees with any proposals the party committee and government bring forward. Its constitutional-designed power cannot be exercise, that’ s why the people’ s congress is called a ‘rubber stamp’ .

Especially during the Maoist years, Mao exercised the supreme power; all the other members of Politburo could do is to go along with Mao. The NPC and local people’ s congresses were playing the insignificant role in Chinese politics. After the Reform and Opening-up, the Chinese politics have undergone some positive changes in which the strengthened status of people’ s congress was also included. This process can be summarized as follows: <sup>330</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> Articles 62 and 63, *Constitution of the People’ s Republic of China*, adopted in 1982.

<sup>330</sup> Based on Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* 200



#### 4.2.1 Rule of Law

Before the Reform, decisions on important issues were always made by the Party committees and governments which were not through legislative means. Political leaders, especially the top leader, have the most decisive votes. During the Reform years, these decision-makings were increasingly codified as laws and regulations. People's congress as the legislative organ, thus becomes more and more involved in the decision-making process which in turn made it an important platform for policy-making.

As required by the constitution, the plans for economic and social development, mainly the work reports of State Council, the Supreme Court and the Supreme Procuratorate, together with the state budget, are submitted to the NPC for examination and approval. After the initiation of the Reform, more and more other plans, reports and decisions have been submitted to the legislature, due to a number of reasons. Firstly, the Party drew upon the lesson of the Cultural Revolution, begins to push the legal reforms to institutionalize within the regime. Secondly, the new market economy needs corresponding laws and regulations to regularize the activities<sup>331</sup>. Consequentially, there was an increase in the number of new laws and regulations.

The increased lawmaking can be shown in the number of new laws that have been codified by the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth NPC and its Standing Committees respectively. The numbers are, 60 by the Fifth, 63 by the Sixth, 86 by the

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(*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), Chapter 6, 2004;

<sup>331</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), 2004, p245;

Seventh and 116 by the Eighth NPC. There has been a significant and gradual increase in the number. However, during the tenure of the Ninth NPC and its Standing Committee (1998-2003), 74 laws were made. Although it decreased in quantity, lawmaking has been improved qualitatively.

In 1999, approved by NPC, one section was added to Article Five of the Constitution as the first section, ‘The People’ s Republic of China practices ruling the country in accordance with the law and building a socialist country of law’ . The rule of law has been raised to a higher status, which required higher standards in lawmaking. The Ninth NPC and its Standing Committee has completed a number of legislations regarding international trade and intellectual property rights according to the WTO regulations before and after China’ s accession which were welcomed by other WTO member states. Another improvement occurred in the deliberation process of the law drafts; law drafts which were more controversial are subjected to three or four times reconsideration (used to be twice examined); the contract law was eventually passed until the fifth time.

In 2006, the Tenth NPC and its Standing Committee established the law on supervision, which indicates a significant move in the institutional reform of people’ s congress. Another important law is the one regarding property rights. The basic principle of this law is to give protections to the state-owned, collective-owned and private-owned real properties.

#### 4.2.2 Institutionalization

The system of people's congress has been reformed; new professional staff increased; the efficacy and efficiency of the institution have been improved. These changes come along with the increased autonomy and independence. People's congress started to exercise its substantial power, for instance, examine the bills and acts, use its power to revise and even overrule some of the decisions. Meanwhile, it started to supervise the work of the Council, the court and the procuratorate, acting as checks and balances.

The Party Committee's leadership and control over NPC is carried out through the following ways<sup>332</sup>: 1. make sure that party members take over more than half of the seats in NPC, in every NPC and its Standing Committee, the number of party members has been always over 50%; 2. control its operation through establishing party groups. The party committees above the county level set up party groups in standing committees. The party groups are actually the highest leading organ in standing committees of people's congress; 3. control of the personnel, constitution guarantees NPC and its Standing Committee the power to elect some of the most important positions in government, however, the Chairman, Deputy Chair, Secretary, Vice Secretary, Directors, Deputy Directors, and other members of the Standing Committee are all decided by the Central Party Committee. Party Committee exercise the power to appoint or remove personnel of these positions.

After the Reform, the leadership of CCP in people's congress has not been

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<sup>332</sup> Tang Liang, Geige Shiqi Zhongguo Renmin Daibiao Dahui de Zhidu Gaige he Zuoyong Qianghua, (Institutional Reforms and Functional Strengthening of People's Congress in the Reform Era), *Asian Economy*, 1999:6, pp. 3-4;

fundamentally changed; however, the autonomy of people's congress has been enhanced during the political reforms. For instance, CCP leaders such as Deng realized that political power has been over-centralized in the party committees; therefore, they asserted that the party should be separated from the legislative and administrative organs. On the Thirteenth Party Congress, there was a call for the 'separation of the Party and government', which stressed that the party's leadership should be political, and the party's guideline should be carried out through legislative means. In terms of this change, people's congress now has more autonomy in lawmaking process.

Another positive progress is the enforcement of the Legislation Law, which was established by the Ninth NPC in the year 2000. In Article Eight, it lists a number of issues that should be regulated by legislation, in Article Nine, it authorizes the State Council to make administrative laws according to some of the issues listed in Article Eight, however, it further excludes issue about crime and penalty, deprive of citizen's political rights, imprisonment and so on.

The NPC was the exclusive lawmaking organ, while its Standing Committee only had the power to make byelaws according to the constitution prior to 1982. The constitutional amendment of 1982 authorized the Standing Committee the legislative power to establish, amend laws, examine and approve the economic plans and state budget, supervise the State Council, Supreme Court and Supreme Procuratorate. This enlargement of legislative power of Standing Committee has resulted in more improvement in the lawmaking. The members of the Standing Committee meet more

frequently than that of the NPC. All delegates of the NPC (around 3000 people from all over the country) only meet annually for one week; considering the large number and the limited time of the meeting, it is not possible to satisfy the requirement of lawmaking. While the members of the Standing Committee meet every two month, under specific circumstances, special meetings can also be convened when necessary. Generally speaking, delegates of people' s congress have their own full-time careers apart from the duty of attending the Congress; while amongst the members of the Standing Committee, there are more experts in politics, laws and policies, who are more capable of exercising the legislative power. Therefore, since 1982, over 80% laws have been deliberated and passed by the Standing Committee, and most of the law drafts that were presented to NPC for approval have also been previously examined by the Standing Committee<sup>333</sup>.

New staff has been trained and new offices have been established in all levels of people' s congress since the Reform. This is largely due to the increasing demand for lawmaking in the marketization which consequentially strengthened the institution of people' s congress. Especially after 1982, standing committees with enlarged legislation power expand the number of staff and offices. A significant institutional change is the establishment of special committees within the Standing Committees. In 1982, NPC set up 6 new special committees. The special committees were formed to make laws for one specific area, for instance, the Environment and Resource Committee (founded in 1993), and the Agriculture and Rural Committee (set up in 1998).

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<sup>333</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p253

Some substantial powers such as examining the performance of councils, courts and procuratorates have been practised by the people's congress. In 2001, delegates of the Shenyang People's Congress (a city in north China) made inquiries into the corruption within the City Council, the Court and the Procuratorate. The Congress then vetoed the work report of the People's Court by less than half of the approval votes. This is the first case in history that the work report from 'Yifu Liangyuan' (One government-the council; two offices-the court and procuratorate) is disapproved by people's congress<sup>334</sup>.

#### 4.2.3 Appointment of Cadres

People's congress also started to influence the appointment and removal of personnel by the party committees. Theoretically, people's congresses have the power to elect, decide, recall or remove the officers of the most important positions of the same level. However, the party committee was the organ that actually exercises this power. It produces the list of the names to the positions waiting for people's congress's approval. The nominees of the party committee lose to the candidates nominated by people's delegates, or people's congress rejects the officer in charge, have taken place since the Reforms.

As I mentioned before, the control of CCP over NPC is mainly through the way of

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<sup>334</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p262;  
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taking over majority seats in the Congress. However, after 1980s, a call for enlarging inner-party democracy from the Party centre gave party members more autonomy in voting as delegates<sup>335</sup>. It indicates that the party members do not have to approve the nominees recommended by the party committees which in turn give the congress more independence and freedom in the appointment of personnel.

Theoretically, chief executives of the centre government organs and local councils are decided by people's congress of the same level. In the past, the party committee used to produce the list of names for each position and the congress functioned as a rubber stamp. There was always one candidate for each office, which meant the congress had no right to nominate but to approve the one and only candidate. After the 1982 constitution, delegates now have the right to nominate. (Over 30 delegates to the NPC and provincial people's congress, or over 20 delegates to city level people's congress, or over 10 delegates to town and county level people's congress can raise a proposal collectively.) The principle of competitive election is also recognized, which requires at least two candidates for the same position. Secret ballot and change in other facilities also signalled a positive evolution in the institution.

For instance, in 1993, general election was taking place amongst the provincial level governments. The position of Governor of the Zhejiang Province was taken by Wan Xueyuan the nominee of the congress, while the party candidate Ge Hongsheng lost in the election. This is the first time the nomination of party committee was disapproved by the congress at the provincial level. The highest ranked officer who

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<sup>335</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p273;  
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was recalled by the congress was Yang Huiquan, at the time the Vice-Governor of Hunan Province<sup>336</sup>. The substantial power of recalling and removing officers has been exercised more often after that<sup>337</sup>.

There have also been calls for adoption of some of the functions of the Western parliamentary system, such as administrative investigation, making inquiries, impeachment and so on, in order to strengthen the role of NPC in supervision.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have examined the incremental evolution within the regime, focusing on the leading party and the legislature-NPC. The Chinese regime has evolved from a revolutionary one to a reformed one. The process was driven by the interaction between reformers, conservatives within the system and liberal intellectuals both within and outside the system. New members are absorbed by the Party, such as younger, better educated cadres and members from the new middle class. After Deng's death, there is no supreme leader as Deng or Mao. Their successors do not enjoy the authority as they did. Therefore, a collective leadership of decision-making gradually replaces the pattern of one man decides all.

The legislature has been strengthened which is demonstrated through various aspects, it has become more autonomous and independent. The rule of law has been recognized and established to place the rule by law. The NPC also starts to exercise

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<sup>336</sup> *Minzhu yu Fazhi (Democracy and the Legal System)*, 1989:6, p16;

<sup>337</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*



its constitutionally based substantial rights of supervising and reviewing the works of the government. With more professional staff and improved efficiency, the legislature also starts to show its influence in the appointment and removal of high ranked cadres.

However, the nature of the incremental model determined the limited scale and limited degree of these changes. The one-party rule has not been changed. What one may anticipate from the future would be, for liberals, the growth of the middle class as the pillar for a democratic transition; or, for incremental theorists, the gradual change that's taking place within the state and society, which might eventually alter the state-society relations and bring about not only quantitative but also qualitative transitions. One example that has been most frequently explored and cited is the democratic practice in China's numerous villages which will be discussed in the following chapter.

**CHAPTER FIVE**  
**GRASSROOTS DEMOCRATIC PRACTICE**

## 5.0 Introduction

Amongst the rich literature of comparative democratization studies, there are very few theories on the relationship between democracy and peasantry<sup>338</sup>. When talking about China' s political development, this topic is unavoidable. What role the peasants play in the democratization process differs in different countries. In the case of China, the emergence of the village committees as the self-governments in rural China has raise the questions on the relations between peasantry and democratization; such as asking about whether there is any democratic implications brought by the village self-government.

As one theorist pointed out, the Chinese scholars doing research on the 'Village Committee Autonomy' always offer a description of the phenomenon which is not always supported by a theory framework<sup>339</sup>. Despite the large amount of substantial research done in different villages, the scholars diverge into two camps: the ones believe that it is empowering the peasantry and the state which would eventually bring about democratization<sup>340</sup>; and the ones that are sceptical about this.

For example, Xu Wang' s book *'Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry:*

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<sup>338</sup> Zheng Yongnian, Xiangcun Minzhu he Zhongguo Zhengzhi Jincheng (Village Democracy and the Course of Chinese Politics), *21st Century*, 1996:6, Issue No. 35, p.26;

<sup>339</sup> Hu Rong, Village Committee Autonomy and Its Relationship to the 'Xiangzhen' Government, *21st Century*, No. 50, Dec 1998, p.133;

<sup>340</sup> For the empowerment, see Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), pp.648-662; for the claim of village democracy promotes the democratization of China, see Zheng Yongnian, Xiangcun Minzhu he Zhongguo Zhengzhi Jincheng (Village Democracy

*Village Self-Government in Rural China*<sup>341</sup>, presented his belief that as the villagers and the reformers at the centres both become empowered, the two sides are joining together to resist the antidemocratic forces (the conservatives) and realize the democratic transition. His optimism was criticized by Edward Friedman, who asserted that the authoritarian regime is solidly in place; only a major struggle from the centre and not from the lowest level of the hierarchy could possibly bring about a successful democratization<sup>342</sup>.

The major empirical work has been focused on three aspects.<sup>343</sup> Firstly, how village elections may contribute to the regime change, for instance, the research done by Minxin Pei<sup>344</sup> and Sylvia Chan<sup>345</sup> are amongst those most fruitful. Secondly, what role that elections play in raising popular rights consciousness, Tianjian Shi<sup>346</sup> has done some important work for this aspect. Last but not least, how village elections affect rural governance and the village power structure, a close reading into Allen

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and the Course of Chinese Politics), *21st Century*, 1996:6, Issue No. 35, pp. 24-33;

<sup>341</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003;

<sup>342</sup> Edward Friedman, Reviews, *China Review International*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 2004, pp.498-504;

<sup>343</sup> Based on Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), pp. 648-650;

<sup>344</sup> Minxin Pei, ‘Creeping Democratization in China,’ *Journal of Democracy* 6:4 (October 1995), pp. 65-79;

<sup>345</sup> Sylvia Chan, ‘Research Notes on Villagers’ Committee Election: Chinese Style Democracy’, *Journal of Contemporary China* 7:19 (1998), pp. 507-21; cited by Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), p. 649

<sup>346</sup> Tianjian Shi, ‘Village Committee Elections in China: Institutional Tactics for Democracy’, *World Politics* 51:3 (April 1999), pp.385-412; cited in Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), p. 649

Choate's work offers some thoughtful insights.<sup>347</sup>

In this chapter, an analysis of the growth of the grassroots democracy will be presented in terms of the incremental model; it will include, the evolutionary change that has taken place in the village electoral system; the strengthening of the village self-government and its autonomy; what implications the rural democratic practice has for China's political development and the state and society relations.

## 5.1 The Evolution of the Village Electoral System

The villagers' committees were firstly created by peasants in rural China. In early 1980s, peasants of Yishan County and Luocheng County of Guangxi Province spontaneously organized villagers' committees to fill in the vacuum that was created after the collapse of the people's communes<sup>348</sup>. The villagers' committees were self-government in nature, which provided functions as maintenance of the public security, settlements to local disputes, managing public facilities and providing social welfare. This system was copied by many other places all over the country to improve the anarchies in rural area.

The 1982 constitution confirmed the legal status of villagers' committees as self-governments in villages. However, there was no mention about the electoral

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<sup>347</sup> Allen C. Choate, *Local Governance in China: An Assessment of Villager's Committees*, Working Paper no.1 (San Francisco: Asia Foundation, 1997); cited by Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), p. 649

<sup>348</sup> Wang Xu, *Grassroots Democracy in Rural Areas of China: Mutual*  
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system through which the committees should be formed.

The 1988 ‘Organic Law of Villagers’ Committees (Trial)’ firstly gave the opportunity for Chinese villagers to practice direct election. Although unevenly distributed, in some places, the villagers started to participate in the competitive mechanism introduced recently through which the wills of the electorates can be expressed. Since then, the truly democratic practice has been implemented in numerous villages in rural China.

In the 1988 organic law (trial), it prescribed the principle of direct election for village committees; however, there were no concrete regulations or rules on how to practice the direct election which was actually decided locally. Generally speaking, before the 1990s, the most popular way of election is to nominate through recommendation and arrangements.

It followed the way of how the delegates to the people’s congress are elected and was adopted by most of the villages. At the beginning of each election, there will be candidates recommended by the party and candidates that are nominated by ordinary villagers. However, at this stage, the list of candidates is not the final list. The official candidates are to be chosen amongst these names by the electorates. It used to be only one candidate for each position. The situation has been changed after the initiation of the Reform. Normally, the number of candidates should be more than the number of positions (later, this principle of contested election – *cha’ e* is codified into the Organic Law of Villagers’ Committees in 1998). During this process, the party

authority will try to impose influence upon villagers' decision in order to keep the candidates recommended by the party on the list; or to persuade candidates recommended by other ordinary villagers to give up and quit the election. Once the official list of candidates is completed, the voters may start to vote. Principally the candidate who receives the majority votes wins. However, the authority can intervene or revise the unfavourable result through many ways, one of which was mentioned before (to impose influence upon villagers to keep the party's candidates), or they can simply appoint the committee members and claim it to be the will of majority electorates.

The flaws of this type are obvious – the authority can easily influence the process and revise the result of the election – which means the democratic principle designed to protect villagers' right to vote is always violated. After years of practice, firstly in a small number of villages, new ways of election were invented by villagers and later gradually adopted by more and more places. In 1998, the Standing Committee of NPC modified the 'Organic Law of Villager' s Committees' to replace the trial version. In the 13<sup>th</sup> provision, it states that the election of villagers' committee should be run by the villagers' election committee whose members are chosen by all villagers. In the 14<sup>th</sup> provision, it confirms that candidates of villagers' committee should be nominated directly by villagers, and the number of candidates should be more than the number of positions available; election with over half of the votes of all villagers can be seen as valid; candidates who have received over half of the votes become members of the committee; the balloting be secret. In fact, before the enforcement of organic law, there have already been a number of similar practices; the way through

recommendation to nominate candidates has been gradually abandoned by local villages; new mechanisms which ensure more open and fair elections have already been adopted by a few villages.

New inventions include the ‘sea election’, which means that the electorates are free to choose their own candidates. Each electorate is given one ticket to fill the names chosen by him; later all the tickets are collected to call out the names voted; the official candidates are the ones who have received the most votes. During this process, it is very difficult for the authority to intervene (secret ballot and openly singing names); also it would be more difficult to alter the result of the voting as it represents the will of most electorates. It was firstly invented by Lishu County in Jilin Province in 1993<sup>349</sup>. Villagers in the first round directly elected candidates for villagers’ committee and in the second round voting for members of the committee and the director and deputy director of the committee. In 1995 general election, sea election was implemented in all villages of Lishu County. While during 1998 general election, the first round of voting to choose candidates was abandoned, the committee members were voted directly by all electorates. The nominees who received over half of the votes in the first round win out and become committee members directly. Encouraged by this new incentive, in the 1998 general election, 98% of the villagers (village population over 400,000) attended the balloting, about one third of the present village committee directors (*Cunweihui Zhuren*) lost in the election<sup>350</sup>.

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<sup>349</sup> Li Lianjiang and Hung King-ming, From Supervised Autonomy to Democratic Election in the Village, *21<sup>st</sup> Century*, No. 50, Dec, 1998, p.151;

<sup>350</sup> Lianjiang and Hung King-ming, From Supervised Autonomy to Democratic Election in the Village, *21<sup>st</sup> Century*, No. 50, Dec, 1998, p.151;



Competitive elections are also encouraged. The candidates, who are keen to get the support from the electorates, use many ways to express their policy objectives. They give speeches to convince electorates, talk with villagers, answer questions and criticize their opponents. For instance, in the Lishu County which we mentioned before, all candidates for committee directors delivered a speech in the 1998 general election. In Zhejiang Province, the 16<sup>th</sup> provision of the ‘Electoral Method of Villagers’ Committees in Zhejiang Province’ of 1999 reads, ‘the village election committee should introduce the candidates to the electorates based on the principles of equality, impersonality, and impartiality; the official candidates may give speeches on village governance and answer questions raised by villagers’. The electoral speeches are very important in communicating with electorates, which has become a battle field for candidates. For instance, in the first round of the 1995 general election in Wangjiayuanzi Village(of Lishu County), Liu Shifeng received 550 votes and Wang Hongshan received 464 votes respectively in the competition for the position of committee director; both of them became the official candidates and delivered a speech; Wang’ s speech was well-prepared and pragmatic which impressed the electorates, therefore in the second round of voting, Wang, defeated in the first round, turned out to be the winner of this round with 751 votes, which was much higher than the votes Liu received<sup>351</sup>.

In the Organic Law of the Villagers’ Committees, the party organization stays at the leading position in villages, which means the status of village party branch is higher

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<sup>351</sup> Bai Yihua et al. eds. *Zhongguo Dalu Jiceng de Minzhu Gaige (Democratic Reform in Mainland China)*, Taiwan: Guiguan Tushu (Crown Books), 1998, p. 303; cited by Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p209

than the village committee, albeit the latter was elected democratically<sup>352</sup>. The secretary of the party branch has more power than the committee director. The secretary is always appointed by higher levels party committee. Although nominally elected by party members, the final decision is made by higher level party committee as to choose the members of the party branch and appoint the secretary. Along with the reform in the electoral system of villagers' committees, there have been some incremental changes taking place in the voting process for party branches.

'Two Votes' was produced by Hequ County in Shanxi Province, which aimed at transforming the electoral system of the village party branches. Firstly all villagers give a vote of confidence for all party members to elect candidates for party branch members and the party secretary<sup>353</sup>; in the second round, all party members vote for party branch members and secretary. Despite the unofficial nature of the vote of confidence, the result is open which also has some sort of power as to impose some restricting influence on the deed of the party members.

The new electoral systems are more open and fair than the previous type; however, as many observers pointed out, it is very limited improvement because. Firstly, the village committee places at the lowest level of the hierarchy which is of little political influence to the higher levels especially to influence the power centre, even at this lowest level, the party branch has more power over the village committee, and the party secretary has more authority than the committee director. Secondly, as some

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<sup>352</sup> See for instance, Shazhou Bai, Re-evaluate the Rural Election and Grassroots Democracy, *Modern China Studies*, 2000: 4, No.71, p107;

<sup>353</sup> A vote of confidence stands for villagers' trust on the party members

theorists stated, this autonomy is given by the authority<sup>354</sup>, which can easily be deprived of, it took a long course for the legal recognition of village committees to be settled which demonstrated the vulnerability of this autonomy. Thirdly, the democratic practice itself is unevenly carried out by the large number of China's rural villages. For instance, in some places, villagers are not interested in participating in the election, while in other places, the candidates buy votes from villagers to win the position as the director. Also, clans and lineage groups would grab the authority positions as to protect their vested interests.

## **5.2 The Village Committee as Self-government**

The reports of the Fifteenth Party Congress called for the enlargement of grassroots democracy. The Organic Law of Villagers' Committees, passed by the Fifth Standing Committee of NPC, also reads that the villagers' committee is mass self-government organization in rural China. As defined by law, the relationship between villagers' committees and the higher level town and county governments is not the relationship of superiors and subordinates. The committee does not take orders from the county government, or under the command of it. The county government gives guidelines and committee cooperates. However, in practice, the village autonomy was not realized from the very beginning. Before the implementation of the democratic election, the county government exercises the *de facto* power to appoint or recall members of the party branches and the villagers' committees. Moreover, the county government always regarded the villagers' committees as its subordinates and

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<sup>354</sup> See, for instance, Shazhou Bai, Re-evaluate the Rural Election and Grassroots  
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intervened into the operation of committees.

After the change in the electoral system, especially the provision of the Organic Law about the non-interference of county government in the affairs which belong to the autonomy of villagers' committees, the villagers started to resist the wrongful policies that were imposed by county governments. The village committee is in charge of the public affairs, commonweal affairs, settling local disputes, maintaining social security, and administrating the use of land and other property that belongs to the village; which means it can exercise autonomy within these issues.

As mentioned earlier, the village party branch is appointed by higher level party committee, while the village committee is elected directly after the electoral reform. As the autonomy of the village committee is strengthened, the status of the party branch at village level is becoming increasingly important because of the need of the higher authority to continue its control and influence at the grassroots. Theoretically, the party secretary stands for the highest authority in the village, when there is divergence between party branch and the committee, the decision of the party secretary can always find supports from the higher authority while the committee director always has to concede.

After the democratic elections were launched, the committee director, whose power is legitimated by majority votes, actually enjoys more legitimacy than the party secretary. More incidents occurred as the villagers become more consciously in safeguarding their rights of self-government. For instance, in 1999, the committee

director of Jinzhai village, Li Huanming was dismissed by the party committee of Dingjunshan County due to the conflicts of the villager' s committee with the village party branch. The villagers of Jinzhai village became outraged and appealed to the Standing Committee of the People' s Congress (of Hanzhong City) citing the provision of the Organic Law. They asserted that, the power of appointing and recalling members of the village committees should be exercised by all villagers, and the Party committee' s decision to replace Li Huanming with another person is exceeding its authority and should be regarded as illegitimate. Their appeal was supported by the Standing Committee of the People' s Congress, and the party committee of Dingjunshan County had to declare the decision of the appointment and removal as null and void<sup>355</sup>.

At least one theorist has noticed this so-called 'legitimacy downwards' phenomenon<sup>356</sup>. In the traditional system, the village officers are the instruments for implementing the orders from the superiors who are chosen by the superior authority. Because the members of the villagers' committees are elected by villagers themselves and this process is carried out regularly (every three years), they stand for the will of the majority. The higher authority, such as the Party committees at the county level, finds it more difficult to replace the members of the villagers' committee who are chosen through the direct election process, which would always result in the resistance from the villagers. As mentioned in the case of Jinzhai village.

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<sup>355</sup> 'Yifa Weiquan Dikang Cuowu, Cunmin Weiyuanhui Zuzhifa zai Jinzhai' (Protecting Rights According to the Law and Resisting the Mistake, Organic Law of Villagers' Committee in Jinzhai), *People' s Daily*, 26-05-1999;

<sup>356</sup> Zheng Yongnian, *Xiangcun Minzhu he Zhongguo Zhengzhi Jincheng* (Village Democracy and the Course of Chinese Politics), *21st Century*, 1996:6, Issue No. 35, 221

Despite the highly hierarchical regime system, the organization of the lowest level now has more legitimacy than the higher levels which has brought in tension within the hierarchical structure. For instance, the decision of the higher county authority was revised by the struggle of the lower level villagers in the case of Jinzhai.

The democratically elected villagers' committee also tend to be more careful about protecting the rights and interests of electorates, because according to the Organic Law, the general election is carried out every three years. In order to win votes from the electorates and not to be voted out in the next election, villagers' committees are more concerned about protecting the rights of regular villagers other than following the orders from the above. This has also provided incentives for the villagers to take part in the voting. After two rounds of the general election, in a survey of 1994 about the attitude towards election, villagers gave more positive answers<sup>357</sup>.

When asked whether the villagers' committees should be elected through direct election, 80.4% answered yes; 10.8% answered, 'no need, they can be appointed by the county party committee or village Party branches'; 6.7% answered, 'indifferent, it is none of my business'. When asked about whether the election is just a procedure or it really works, 62.6% answered, 'it is not just a procedure, it is very effective'; 22.3% answered, 'although it is just a procedure, it still works'; 11% answered, 'it

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p.32

<sup>357</sup> *Zhongguo Nongcun Cunmin Weiyuanhui Huanjie Xuanju Zhidu, (General Election System of Villagers' Committees in Rural China)*, Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Chubanshe, 1994, pp. 9-10; cited in Zheng Yongnian, *Xiangcun Minzhu he Zhongguo Zhengzhi Jincheng (Village Democracy and the Course of Chinese Politics)*, *21st Century*, 1996:6, Issue No. 35, p.31;

is just a procedure and it doesn't work at all'. These figures showed that majority of the villagers realized the necessity of election to the legitimacy of villagers' committees and the positive effects of the election.

The self-government system is different from the previous people's commune system. Through the people's commune, which is part of the state administrative hierarchy, the state and society become one organization with each cell of the society is under the control of the state. The village self-government system redefined the state and society relations. The administrative power pulled back to the town and county level (*xiangzhen*), which left some space for village autonomy and self-governing. The villagers' committee, which filled within the vacuum left by the collapsed people's communes, is in charge of the public governance of the village. These committees are elected by villagers and run by villagers. This new system draws a clear line between state and rural society, in which the villagers now enjoy certain autonomy.

The town and county local governments have in fact become the administrative branches through which the policies of the central government are carried out and through in rural areas. These policies were used to be realized by people's communes. Due to the large population of each town and county, it is unmanageable for the local government to fulfil the tasks alone. They have to rely on the organizations in the villages to accomplish the centre's agenda for grain deliveries, population control, and tax collection. The Organic Law also stated in its provisions that the villager's committees should assist local government in their work.

As defined by the Organic Law, the villagers' committees are self-government organizations which are not part of the state organ; members of the committee work for the community and are not civil servants paid by the state. As one observer pointed out, villagers' committees are playing the role of agents for government to handle the tasks assigned by the town and county governments<sup>358</sup>.

'Transferring power to a lower level'<sup>359</sup> is to give some incentives to the villagers. The villagers' committee system is a demonstration of this principle. On the one hand, the committee plays the agency role for local governments and in charge of grain collection, tax collection, and birth control (the family-planning policy) of the village. On the other hand, the committee members' allowance is from the village; they are elected by villagers and their authority also comes from the service they provide to the villagers. Thus, they also play the role of masters in the village as an integrated community<sup>360</sup>.

Here, as Xu Yong observes, the village committee plays the double roles of state agent and village master due to the changing status of village in the state-society relations; the powers of the two roles come from different sources, (one is official authority, the other is grassroots democratic power); therefore, the committee receives different (sometimes contradictory) expectations as it plays the double roles.

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<sup>358</sup> Xu Yong, *The Double Role of the Village Cadre: Agent and Master, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, No. 42, Aug 1997, p152;

<sup>359</sup> Deng Xiaoping, when talking about rural reforms, said, the reason why rural reforms are effective is because more autonomy is given to the peasants, *Deng Xiaoping Wenxuan (Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping)* Beijing: People's Publishing Company, Volume 3, 1993, p 242;

<sup>360</sup> Xu Yong, *The Double Role of the Village Cadre: Agent and Master, 21<sup>st</sup> Century*,



Firstly, the government places more and more pressure upon the committee system as agents. One of the CCP leaders, Peng Zhen, had warned that there would be two risks in implementing the village autonomy, one of them is that the government would assign too many tasks to village self-government organization. He used the metaphor of ‘thousands of thread above one single needle’ to describe the danger of this situation; the committees (the needle carrying too much thread) will be crushed under such pressure<sup>361</sup>. As Shen Yansheng pointed out, the tasks of collecting grains, collecting tax and carrying out family planning<sup>362</sup>, obviously are not the self-governing affairs. At the beginning of the implementation of self-government (during 1980s), the situation was not too bad. There were fewer government assignments and the village self-governments enjoyed more independence. However, as Xu Yong and others have noticed, during the eco-social transformation, there has been a dramatic increase in the tasks assigned by the local government. For example, more strict policies on family planning, which asked for a tighter control of the rural population; more taxes set up for various items which the committees have to collect from peasants. These tasks added more burden to the self-government organization while no supports, either financial or personnel, were received from the local government<sup>363</sup>.

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No. 42, Aug 1997, p152;

<sup>361</sup> Peng Zhen, ‘Tongguo Qunzhong Zizhi Shixing Jiceng Zhijie Minzhu’ (Implementing Grassroots Direct Democracy through Mass Autonomy), *Peng Zhen Wenxuan (Selected Works of Peng Zhen)*, Beijing: People’s Publishing Company, 1996, p 611; cited by Shen Yansheng, Review and Comments on Village Autonomy and Studies of Village Autonomy, *Modern China Studies*, 2003:2, Issue No. 81, p110;

<sup>362</sup> Family Planning is recognized as one of the basic state policy of China, since the early 1970s, it is implemented to control the growth of population

<sup>363</sup> Xu Yong, The Double Role of the Village Cadre: Agent and Master, *21<sup>st</sup> Century*, No. 42, Aug 1997, p153;

Other pressures come from the huge changes taking place in the economy and society. The urbanization of big cities attracted a great number of peasants, some of them have lost the farm land due to the expansion of urban construction, and others have come to cities to seek their fortune as they used to live in poor rural villages. Most of the young people went out to work in the cities, only old ones and children were left in the village. In some parts of rural China, especially those that are closed to the big cities, the village population has become less and less. For instance, in a town with a population of 24,000 in Zhejiang Province, over 6,000 were registered as working or doing business outside, in many villages, only the old, the weak, the disabled, the females and young children were left, and the committee members had to be chosen amongst these people<sup>364</sup>.

Meanwhile, village committees are expected by the peasants of the village to provide good service and improve public welfare. Especially after the Reform, more villagers desire to enrich themselves with the help of the master-villagers' committee. How to keep the balance between 'agent' and 'master' is the major question for villagers' committee system.

### **5.3 Incremental Mutual-Empowerment**

The debate on the influence of village autonomy in state-society relations covered a

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<sup>364</sup> Wang Zhongren et al. 'Lilun Xuzhijia: Cunmin Zizhi Shenhua de Beihou' (Void Theory: Behind the Apotheosis of Villagers' Autonomy), *Shehui Kexue Luntan (Forum of Social Science)*, 2002:3, pp. 57-60; cited in Shen Yansheng, Review and Comments on Village Autonomy and Studies of Village Autonomy, 226

lot of questions and involved many scholars, Chinese researchers within China and the Western experts. A lot of empirical field work has been done, in some villages where the election was more democratic in nature, and in places where it was not so successful. This unevenly distributed and developed feature of the electoral practice seems to be agreed by all theorists working in the field. The support from the local government in the implementation of the direct election is very important. In places where the experiment is regarded as comparatively more successful, the recognition and supports of local (party) leaders played a significant role<sup>365</sup>. On the contrary, places that have failed to establish the electoral system, the negative attitude of local authority toward the grassroots autonomy can always be found.

Because of this uneven development, it is actually very difficult to evaluate the whole implementation. The data of the year 1997 described 740,000 villages, 55,000 towns (*xiangzhen*) and 2,135 counties all over China. Other researchers have also realized that a lack of access to information makes impossible any realistic assessment of the conditions of village elections today.<sup>366</sup>

However, a few insights can still be gained through researches done on a small scale. Some positive (probably democratic) influence of the village autonomy in transforming the state-society relationships can still be verified despite its problems and limits. A summarization of these insights is presented in the following paragraphs.

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*Modern China Studies*, 2003:2, Issue No. 81, pp.118-9;

<sup>365</sup> Wang Xu, *Grassroots Democracy in Rural Areas of China: Mutual Empowerment of State and Society*, *21<sup>st</sup> Century*, No. 40, April 1997, p152;

<sup>366</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, p94;

Firstly, the grassroots democracy is regarded as the first step of initiating a democratic transition from bottom up.<sup>367</sup> The villagers' committees were spontaneously formed by peasants and later recognized by the authority. After the makings of Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees, this system is encouraged by the centre government and pushed by the state to be implemented nationwide. The direct electoral principles and process are legalized by law; committee's activities and the rights of villagers' are protected; self-government and autonomy is realized in rural villages.

The higher level – township level direct elections have already taken place in a number of places. Since 1998, electoral reforms have been experimented within some township governments and county governments in Sichuan, Shanxi, Guangdong, and Henan provinces. These experimental reforms were reported by the media, for instance, the direct election of the township Mayor in Suining was reported by Chengdu Shangbao (Chengdu Business Newspaper of Sichuan Province) on 29<sup>th</sup>, December, 1998; Nanfang Zhoumo (Southern Weekend of Guangdong Province) of 15<sup>th</sup> January, 1999, reported on direct election for township Mayor; Yangchen Evening News reported the first direct election of County Mayor in Dapeng County on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1999; Xinhua Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2000 also reported the election reform in Henan Province<sup>368</sup>.

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<sup>367</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition)*, 2004, p230;

<sup>368</sup> Huang Weiping et.al, the Reform of Township Mayor Election in China, *Modern China Studies*, 2001:4, No.75, p.46-64; footnote 3;

As mentioned before, the ‘legitimacy downwards’ means that the direct elected village committees have more legitimacy than the township and county level government. This has resulted in tension in the structure. As exposed in the media, the corrupted township and county governments and party committees continually undermine this reform initiative at the grassroots level, various forms of resistance (violent as the extreme form) from the peasants happens now and then in order to counter the corrupted powers. This also demonstrates the urgent need for accelerating the reforms<sup>369</sup>.

In Huang Weiping et al’ s research paper, five different models of direct election for township mayor were investigated in comparison. The first such election took place in Buyun Town of Sichuan Province in 1998. According to the rules that have been announced before the voting, recommendation by any 30 electorates collectively is enough for nominating a candidate for township mayor. A list of 15 candidates was confirmed at this stage. At the second stage, first round voting was taken by a group of 162 people consisted of village cadres, villagers’ representatives, delegates to township people’ s congress and cadres of township party committee and council. Two official candidates were confirmed (Zhou Xingyi and Cai Ronghui) together with another one recommended by the Party (Tang Xiaoqiu); these three candidates were taking part in the final round of voting. 6,236 electorates voted and Tang won with 50.19% of the votes. During the time, three candidates delivered altogether 13 policy speeches, to talk about their political ambitions and answer questions. This

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<sup>369</sup> Huang Weiping et.al, the Reform of Township Mayor Election in China, *Modern China Studies*, 2001:4, No.75, p.47;

showed the principle of the competitive election<sup>370</sup>.

Although there have been some experimental reforms at the higher level, it is declared by the centre that township election is illegal, as according to the laws that are relevant, the township electorates can only vote for delegates to the township people's congress, and the people's congress elect township mayors. Thus it is not legally recognized under the present institution.

Secondly, some theorists asserted that this initiative to improve administration in the countryside has realized a mutual empowerment of state and village<sup>371</sup>. The new institutional incentives of the village committee system have succeeded in strengthening the capacity of the state and empowering the villagers at the same time. Village autonomy is totally different from the political mobilization under the previous totalitarian regime. Some theorists have optimistically declared that, it is contradictory to the highly undemocratic politics of the state, and may facilitate China's democratization in the long run.

Local elections as 'seeds of democracy'<sup>372</sup> and grassroots reform as 'a democratic breakthrough'<sup>373</sup> are advocated by some optimists. However, for some researchers

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<sup>370</sup> The details of the election, see Nanfang Zhoumo (Southern Weekend), 15th of January, 1999;

<sup>371</sup> see for instance, Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003; Lianjiang Li, the Empowering Effect of Village Elections in China, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (Jul. – Aug., 2003), pp.648-662;

<sup>372</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, p4;

<sup>373</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village*

who are more realistic, they regarded village autonomy as the growth point of socialist democracy which is not a form of full modern democracy but may create an atmosphere for democracy<sup>374</sup>. However, the intention of the party centre to create these new institutional incentives is to achieve an effective compliance with its policies. It remains entrenched in its position of control which would not tolerate any kind of challenge, as the sceptics claim. They are more concerned about the efficiency of the authoritarian rule other than local democratic experiments.

Other sceptics have come back to the meaning of democracy. The holding of elections alone can not be regarded as an indicator of democracy. It requires more institutions and restraints on ruling elites. As one sceptic stated, 'if an election does not give to the popularly chosen leaders the power over taxes, budgets, appointments and general policy, it is not really part of a democratic process'<sup>375</sup>.

Other problems include: first, most villages have not yet had free and fair elections, although the experiments have been carried out for over a decade. Second, in areas where elections have been regarded as relatively fair and successful, various forms of election irregularities still exist at almost every stage of the electoral process. Third, the challenge of the party apparatus in the village, as mentioned before, the village committee is the secondary authority in village, the state still invariably privileges its local party bases when there is conflict between committee and party apparatus. It is

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*Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, p5;

<sup>374</sup> Yongjia Hu, Rural Democracy and China's Political Development, *Modern China Studies*, 2000:4, No.71, p99;

<sup>375</sup> Edward Friedman, Reviews, *China Review International*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Fall 2004, pp.498-504;

the party organ and party-state being empowered other than the villagers<sup>376</sup>. Fourth, the intervention of the higher township and county party committees and councils, the empowerment of peasants was seen as threat to their vested interests and authority. Fifth, the burden of tax collection, grain delivery and population control could be too much for the committees. Last but not least, the clashing role of the village committees as state agency and village master stays unsolved.

## 5.4 Conclusion

The reform taking place in 80s and 90s in Chinese rural villages has attracted many China specialist and scholars to investigate, discuss and debate. Most of these researchers have tried to put this topic in the democratic literature. The optimists were encouraged by its democratic implications. The autonomous villager's committee is a self-government organization which stands for the part of society as opposed to the state; while the sceptics emphasized the irregularities of the elections and challenges to this new born autonomy. However, after a careful comparison between the situations a decade ago and the present, a number of incremental progressive developments can be found.

The spontaneously formed organization of peasants has provided a buffering zone between state and village community which may help to smooth the conflicts between state and society. The decentralization reform has increased the autonomy of peasants as a class, enhanced its organizational capacity, which resulted in the class solidarity.

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<sup>376</sup> See, for instance Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003,



These build the bases for collective action of the class.<sup>377</sup> Therefore, the priority of the democratic practice in rural China will deeply influence the future prospects of China's political development.

The village elections are also seen as 'seeds of democracy'<sup>378</sup>, which stand for 'a democratic breakthrough'<sup>379</sup>. Despite its limits and problems, it increases the possibility of a democratized future for china.

So far, we have investigated the two levels of the incremental model, the next chapter will be focused on the changes that have been taken place at the society level, the rising civil forces, especially press media. And a case study into the most authoritative newspaper—People's Daily will be presented.

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<sup>377</sup> Based on Zheng Yongnian, *Xiangcun Minzhu he Zhongguo Zhengzhi Jincheng* (Village Democracy and the Course of Chinese Politics), *21st Century*, 1996:6, Issue No. 35, pp. 24-33

<sup>378</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village Self-Government in Rural China*; New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003, p4;

<sup>379</sup> Xu Wang, *Mutual Empowerment of State and Peasantry: Village*  
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## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **THE PRESS MEDIA AS AN EMERGING CIVIL FORCE**

## 6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapters, the incremental regime change and the grassroots democratic practice have been explored as part of the incremental model which is useful in understanding the changing nature of China's state-society relationships. The regime has changed from a totalitarian Leninist party-state to a mixed (post-) authoritarian regime, ideologically still claimed to be communist, which has been modified by new slogans such as 'three represents'; while economically developing capitalism (market economy in name) mixed with some remains of the old planned system. The domination of one party-the CCP is still unchallenged and entrenched; nonetheless three decades of reforms and opening up have brought some significant changes such as the strengthening of peasantry autonomy and the emerging civil society forces. Some China specialists have shown enthusiasm in investigating these trends in transforming the state and society relations and analysing the possible prospects for democracy and democratization in China. While according to some critics, the process of democratization is far from beginning, only a fundamental regime transformation (for instance, the party voluntarily gives up its power and allows for multi-party competitive elections), can be regarded as the starting of such a process.

In this chapter, we will be looking into the literature concerning civil society and democracy. The press media as the one of the civil society forces in China will be fully investigated. The recent decade saw the emergence and expansion of Shiminbaos (civil newspaper), which provide abundant information to the ordinary Chinese, in turn, enlarged their right to know. While the authoritative newspapers, such as the newspapers issued by the Party and local government, have decreased in

terms of circulation and influence. Meanwhile, these newspapers started to change from a purely propaganda tool to more professionalized media. In the second part of this chapter, a case study in People's Daily will demonstrate these changes over the last three decades.

A lot of discussion has been taken on the debate about Chinese democratization in chapter 2 and 3. Amongst the democracy schools, there is one rich literature which can not be ignored when talking about democratization as a process; that is the literature on civil society.

## **6.1 On Civil Society**

The concept of civil society can be traced to Aristotle and includes the contributions of such diverse political philosophers as Paine, Hegel, Ferguson, Marx, de Tocqueville and Gramsci. As one scholar concludes:

Since the seventeenth century, the notion of civil society has evolved, migrated, been submerged, and re-emerged in diverse guises. The Anglo-Saxon tradition associated it with contract theory and individualism. The Scottish Enlightenment linked it to the rise of commercial society. In the German tradition, it was historicized and raised to a higher level of abstraction by Hegel and Marx. For Hobbes, civil society is the response to the perils of the state of nature, and for Hegel it reflects the growth of commerce as a sphere supposedly independent of politics. In Tocqueville, it fills the void left by the absence of an aristocracy. For Hegel, religion pertained to the higher

realm of state action, while for Tocqueville it was the voluntary expression of local self-organization. For Marx the association of workers into unions was a fundamental reality, while for Tocqueville it was the local newspaper which brought scattered American settlers into closer association with each other<sup>380</sup>.

This huge diversity embodied in the literature of civil society presents researchers with difficulties in conceptualizing the term. Broadly speaking, civil society refers to the space between the individual and the state and consists of various organizations and institutions (independent and parastatal). Its definition could be:

The aggregate of networks and institutions that either exist and act independently of the state or are official organizations capable of developing their own spontaneous views on national or local issues and then impressing these views on their members, on small groups and, finally, on the authorities<sup>381</sup>.

For Michael Walzer, civil society is ‘the space of uncovered human association’<sup>382</sup>; whose members are free to enter or leave, to engage with or remain passive, as they please. This definition excludes such primary associations as the household or (in traditional societies) the church, whose membership is predetermined; also excludes

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<sup>380</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.70-1

<sup>381</sup> Moshe Lewin, *The Gorbachev Phenomenon: A Historical Interpretation*, 1988, p.80; cited in John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.64

<sup>382</sup> Michael Walzer, ‘The Idea of Civil Society’, *Dissent* (Spring 1991), p.293; quoted in Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.68

hierarchical institutions, such as conscripted armies and state bureaucracies, which impose vertical discipline on their members. Between these extremes, there may be an independent sphere of voluntary association where interactions are governed by some minimum principles of autonomy and mutual respect (civility).<sup>383</sup>

However, the definition of civil society is still ambiguous on the issues of whether trade unions occupy a central or a marginal role, or whether the media are to be viewed as internal or external<sup>384</sup>.

In this thesis, the media is regarded as part of the civil society forces because: media plays an irreplaceable role in the formation of a modern society; media as forming public sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organises itself as the bearer of public opinion<sup>385</sup>.

## **6.2 China' s Emerging Civil Society**

A great volume of discussion has been done on this topic. Generally speaking, researchers who believe that a civil society is gradually forming in China point to the phenomena such as the growth of the new middle class, the proliferation of NGOs and various social organizations, and the increased autonomy of the media.

One of the main features of civil society is that there must be a considerable middle

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<sup>383</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.68-9

<sup>384</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p.71

<sup>385</sup> [Jürgen Habermas](#), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, translated by Thomas Burger and 238

class which is thought to be the bases of the democratic politics. This middle class or middle ranking of society is supposed to provide dynamics for democratization of domestic politics and foundations for implementation and consolidation of the democratic politics afterwards. Members of this middle class should have received high education, possess professional skills in their speciality, and should be economically independent. By virtue of the development of the Chinese economy, the China' s middle class has undergone significant growth in the recent years.

One of the most important conditions for the growth of middle class is the increase of earnings of the people. The higher level of income can provide people with the opportunities to improve their status in society, change to a better way of living and therefore change their perceptions about individual self and the society, the viewpoint about what' s valuable, etc. Since the Chinese government launched the economic reform, China' s national economy has been under high development. This high speed of economic growth is demonstrated mostly by the growth rate of GDP.

During 1978-2000, the annual growth rate of GDP averaged as high as 9.51%, the GDP growth rate per person is about 8.13%. In 2000, China' s GDP is 7220 *yuan* per person, which is 4 times more than that of the year 1978 before the reform. The growth of wealth gives rise to a middle level class of people, who have received higher education, work in professional careers and have an annual income of above the middle level of the average Chinese families in urban cities. Along with the Reform and Opening-up, people have more liberty and they take part in forming numerous non-governmental organizations, guilds, and social associations. These organizations are providing some of the functions that used to be offered by the totalitarian party-state. The party-state has pulled back from some of the domains of

the society, a lot more in the economic activities, less in the political domain; which left some space for the operation of newly emerging civil society forces.

### **6.3 The Press Media – Fourth Estate<sup>386</sup> or Not?**

In the civil society literature, the media is one of the subjects which researchers are very keen to investigate. Therefore, when talking about the democratization process in China, it is a subject which can not easily be overlooked. As discussed in the introductory chapter, the starting point of my empirical research is the initiation of the Reform (around the late 1970s), in the following chapter, we will be looking into the evolution of China's media during the reform era – how the media has changed from the pure 'mouthpiece' into taking some supervision responsibility as the 'fourth power' .

China's mass media belongs to the category of Public Service Institutions (*shiyed danwei*), which is different from the other category of Enterprises (*qiye danwei*).

'*Shiyed danwei*' and '*qiye danwei*' both are units in the socialist system. The former is non-profit while the latter can be state-own, collective-own or private. Along with the other Public Service Institutions, the press, radio and TV stations receive subsidies from the central or corresponding local council. These subsidies were used for the everyday operation of the media and to pay the staffs who work in the press, radio and TV stations. Local media were under the supervision of the Propaganda Department of the local Party Committee. Not only the finance, the

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<sup>386</sup> Media as the fourth estate or the fourth 'power', which checks and



personnel were controlled by the organs of the Party Committee; what issue can or cannot be covered in the report, who can or cannot be interviewed, all are decided according to the rules set up by the Party. As the same as in other Socialist states, the media serves as the ‘mouthpiece’, merely an instrument for political propaganda.

After 1970s, the Reform gradually wave to mass media. In the 1980s, it took place firstly in the financial management in the press, radio stations and TV stations. The principle is to run a public service institution as a private enterprise, using business management as guidance for media management. This is the beginning of media marketization. Later in the 1990s, as the government keeps reducing the subsidies and allowances to the media, more fundamental change has occurred in this terrain as a large number of newspapers, magazines and broadcasting stations now have their own independent accounting system and have to assume sole responsibility for its profits or losses (*zi fu ying kui*).

It would be unmanageable to investigate all the mass media, which consists of the press, radio stations, TV stations and the Internet. I will choose newspaper as the illustrative instance to demonstrate what effect the reform has had upon the mass media; and what implications one can draw from the trends that are taking place in China’s media.

Generally speaking, there are changes from the following aspects,

As the newspaper becomes more and more financially independent, the control of the

Propaganda Department over the personnel and the reporting activities is not as strong and direct as before.

Independent accounting system means that the newspaper has to make profit in order to survive in the market; therefore, the consumers – readers' demand becomes more important as it affects the circulation of the newspaper, which in turn affects the profits made mainly from advertising.

Meanwhile, the major group of consumers – readers have changed. Before the 1980s, the majority of the readers are from organs of government, public service units, schools, etc; most of them are cadres or intellectuals; most of them have the privilege of free subscription. However, this has been changed and ordinary citizens now become the major consumers. Newspapers have to adapt to the changing needs of its new targeted market and compete fiercely with other newspapers in the market.

Readers from various backgrounds created demands for various types of information, which stimulated the growth of the market. Not only had the circulation of the existing newspaper grown significantly, the number of the types of newspaper also increased considerably.

During this process, newspapers which are adaptable and successful in attracting ordinary urban citizens grow tremendously quantitatively; while those which are run by organs of the Party Committees – those have not been quite reformed – have suffered steep decrease in circulation.

The Press Industry in China has grown significantly.

The marketization of the press does not necessarily mean that there has been more freedom in the press. However, to satisfy the demand of their readers, amongst whom there are more and more better-educated, and relatively wealthier people (middle class), newspapers have tried to provide the information that these people are

interested in, such as reporting some controversial/sensitive issues which were used to be tabooed topics, initiating investigative journalism, etc.

### 6.3.1 The Reduction of Dangbaos and the Increase of Shiminbaos

The types of newspapers have increased considerably since the late 1970s. In terms of the different issuer, it can be divided into two categories, the papers that are issued by organs of the Party and government, and ones that are not.

#### 6.3.1.1 Dangbaos

Newspapers issued by organs of the Party and government. Generally people call them *dangbao* (party newspaper).

This category includes newspapers that are issued and published by central or local Party Committees, local councils, other administrative organs, research institutions, and community groups. Most of these newspapers are sold to the lower levels down the power structure through free subscription. For example, *People's Daily* (renmin ribao), issued by the Central Party; *Liberation Daily* (jiefang ribao), issued by the Shanghai City Council; belong to this category. The readers of free subscription account for 90% and 83.3% of all circulation respectively<sup>387</sup>.

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<sup>387</sup> 'Touguo Yanwu Kan Shizhi' (To See the Substance Through the Smoke), *Zhong Guo Ji Zhe* (Chinese Journalist), 1997, 4th issue; cited by Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Gradual democracy: Chinese Politics in transformation), 2004, p114

Dangbaos, especially those are issued by the Central or local Party Committees, are supposed to be the ‘mouthpiece’ of the Party. The circulation of dangbaos, therefore, depends upon the Party committees of all levels. Party organs and governments of all levels are required to subscribe to dangbaos as a political task; also party members are requested to subscribe, in order to ‘get informed of the party routes, guidelines and policies<sup>388</sup>’, and to carry them through the daily practice and work. This principle is to guarantee the circulation and the influence of dangbaos in party cells and all level administrative organs.

However, during the Reform period, dangbaos have suffered a big decrease. For example, the circulation of Beijing Daily, issued by Party Committee of Beijing Municipality, has been cut down from 730,000 in 1981, a less of 558,000 in 1995, to a even less circulation of 360,000 in 1998; its circulation shrink more than half with less than two decades. Sichuan Daily, dangbao of Sichuan Province, also reduced from 780,000 in 1981 to less than 400,000 in 1998; also a reduction of more than 50%. Dangbaos of other provinces, such as Zhejiang and Guangdong, have not been influenced so dramatically by the market. The following table shows how the provincial-level party newspapers have decreased between 1981 and 1998.

**Table1 1: the Circulation Figures of Party Newspapers in Some Provinces and Municipalities (10,000)<sup>389</sup>**

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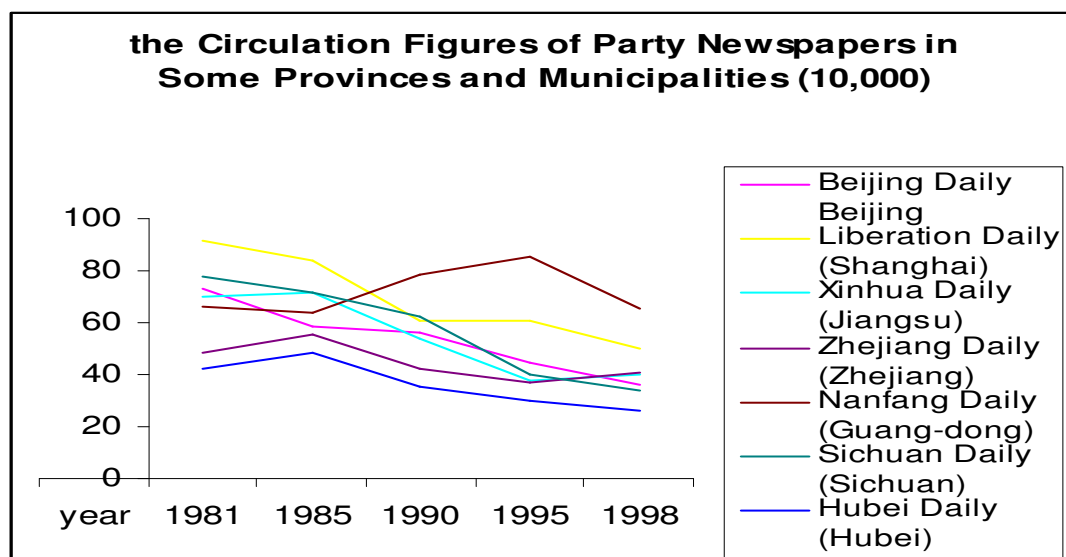
<sup>388</sup> Li Liangrong, Lin Hui, *Shixi Shuangchong Yali Xia Dangbao Mianlin De Kunnan Jiqi Duice*(Under the Double Pressures, the Difficulties that Party Newspapers are Facing and the Countermeasures), [http://academic\\_old.mediachina.net/academic\\_zjlt\\_lw\\_view.jsp?id=3958](http://academic_old.mediachina.net/academic_zjlt_lw_view.jsp?id=3958), 31st, Dec. 2005; translated by author herself.

<sup>389</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Gradual 244

Year	Beijing Daily (Beijing)	Liberation Daily (Shanghai)	Xinhua Daily (Jiangsu)	Zhejiang Daily (Zhejiang)	Nanfang Daily (Guangdong)	Sichuan Daily (Sichuan)	Hubei Daily (Hubei)
1981	73.1	91.9	70.0	48.6	66.0	78.0	42.0
1985	58.6	84.1	71.9	55.4	63.6	71.71	48.5
1990	55.8	60.7	53.6	42.5	78.1	62.6	35.6
1995	44.3	60.9	38.0	37.0	85.1	40.3	30.0
1998	36.0	49.7	40.1	40.8	65.4	33.9	26.1

Or as shown in the graph below,

Graph 1:



Along with the provincial-level party newspapers, the central party newspapers are also downsizing. The following table demonstrates the circulation figures of some of the major central party newspapers during the period of 1981 and 2001, from which one can easily find the evidence of reduction.

**Table1 2: the Circulation Figures of Major Central Party Newspapers (10,000)<sup>390</sup>**

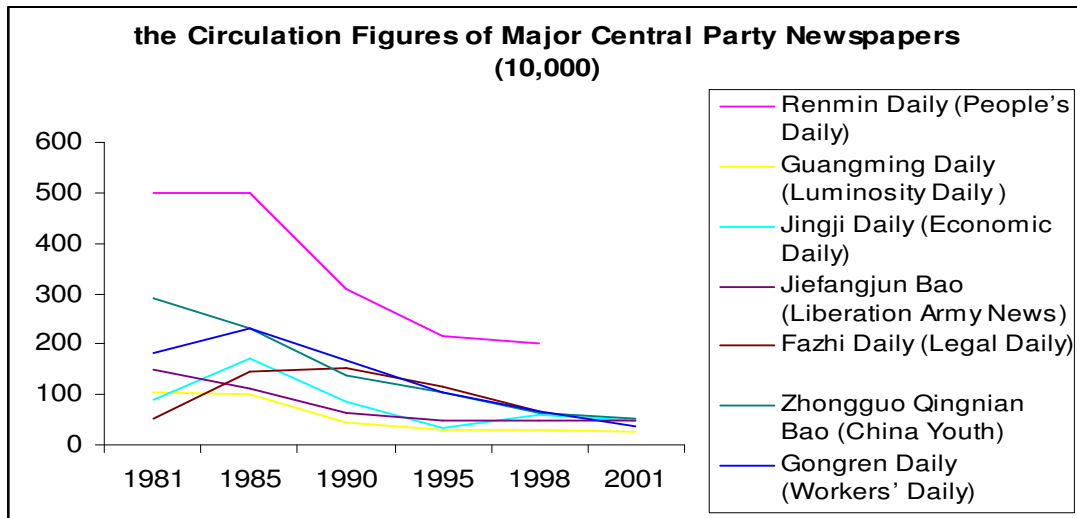
Year	Renmin Daily (People's Daily)	Guang ming Daily (Luminosity Daily )	Jingji Daily (Economic Daily)	Jiefangjun Bao (Liberation Army News)	Fazhi Daily (Legal Daily)	Zhong guo Qing nian Bao (China Youth)	Gongren Daily (Worker s' Daily)
1981	500.0	105.7	90.0	150.0	53.0	290.0	182.1
1985	500.0	101.2	170.0	110.0	143.6	230.9	229.9
1990	309.0	43.5	84.3	62.1	151.0	138.7	169.0
1995	217.1	31.2	35.0	49.5	115.0	103.0	106.0
1998	200.1	30.3	57.8	47.0	68.4	64.3	68.5
2001		27.6	50.0	47.3		54.0	39.0

Graph 2:

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herself

<sup>390</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition), 2004, p132; translated by author herself



The People's Daily, issued by the CPC Central Committee, is the most authoritative, influential daily newspaper of China, also, the daily with the largest circulation. It reduced significantly from 5000,000 in 1981 to only 2,001,000 in 1998, accounted for only 40% of the circulation figure two decades ago. Guangming Daily, the national Party Newspaper, has decreased almost 3 quarters during the two decades. Jingji Daily (Economic Daily), issued by the State Council, although had been increased from 900,000 in 1981 to 1,700,000 in 1985, later was reduced notably to as less as 350,000 in the middle 1990s; it recovered a bit in the next 6 years but the newest figure still shows reduction of more than two thirds of the peak. Fazhi Daily (Legal Daily), as the same as Economic Daily, firstly increased from 530,000 in 1981 to 1,510,000 in 1990, but later decreased dramatically to 684,000 in 1998. Fazhi Daily is the only central party newspaper, whose circulation figure has actually grown after the Reform as compared to 1981, all of the others' circulation declined steeply.

The reduction in circulation of the party newspapers is due to various reasons, which can be concluded in the follows,

- The change of the readership.

The majority of party newspaper readers are party members in all levels of party organs, cadres of the state council and local councils, officials in the state and government organs, intellectuals in universities and other academic institutions, management in all levels of enterprises. These people belong to the elite rank in China society. What these readers are interested is to capture the policy and guideline change of the Party, to get access to the information about the influential events both internationally and domestically.

With the Reform and Opening-up, the ordinary urban citizens now make up the majority of the readership. These people are from different backgrounds and may have different demands for the news. Not only news in politics or the changing lines in the Party, but also local and community news, entertainment news, news about the dark side such as corruption and environmental pollutions; would be the pursuit of these new urban middle class. They do not enjoy free subscription by administrative provision, but spontaneously purchase the newspapers that they would like to read. The various evening news, metros and other city newspaper therefore provide these people with more choices.

- The competition in the press market

Between the mid-1950s to the late 1970s, China's press system followed those in former Soviet Union and Eastern European states, which were set up in terms of Leninist theory on freedom of the press. Press is regarded as a tool of political



expression and education in socialist state system. After the planned economic system has been established nationwide, the press was operated under the model of planned economy. Like other Public Service institutions (*shiye danwei*), the outlay of the press was from the budget of the department in charge; often local councils. The cost of operation, staff salaries and equipment expenses are all included in the budget; while the post offices took the responsibility for subscription and circulation. Thus the press had no need to worry about financial profits or losses. The only income the press made was through the issuance as there was basically no advertisement. The press was financially dependent on the state.

In the late 1970s, with the launch of the Reform, there was huge financial pressure upon the state, which called for an urgent transformation in the press system. In 1978, Ministry of Finance approved a report on implementation of enterprise management in People' s Daily and other seven press units, according to which, these newspapers could take a certain portion from the profits they make, and use it to improve staff salaries and welfare, or to reinvest in the newspaper. This is a big step from previous planned-operation into press marketization. On the 28<sup>th</sup> of January, 1979, Jiefang Daily (Liberation Daily) of Shanghai published two advertisements at the first time, which signalled the beginning of press market.

Since then, the competition on the press market has become fiercer, which can be shown in the following aspects:

The number of new press is growing.

Before the Reform, the major issuers of party newspapers are central and provincial-level party committees. After the Reform, most municipal-level and some county-level party committees started to issue party newspapers; the government of all levels also started to issue government news; the organs of central and local governments, especially those in charge of economy-related management, began to issue their own specialized newspapers; however, the most quantity of the type are the series newspapers that are created by the large and influential newspaper offices; for instance, People’ s Daily created *Huanqiu Shibao* (Global Times), *Jinghua Shibao* (Beijing Times), *Guojijinrong Bao* (International Finance News), *Jiangnan Shibao* (Jiangnan Times), *Shichang Bao* (Market Report), *Jiangkang Shibao* (Health Times), *Huadong Xinwen* (Huadong News), *Huanan Xinwen* (Huanan News), etc.

The table below shows how many new types of newspapers have come out during the years between 1970 and 1998.

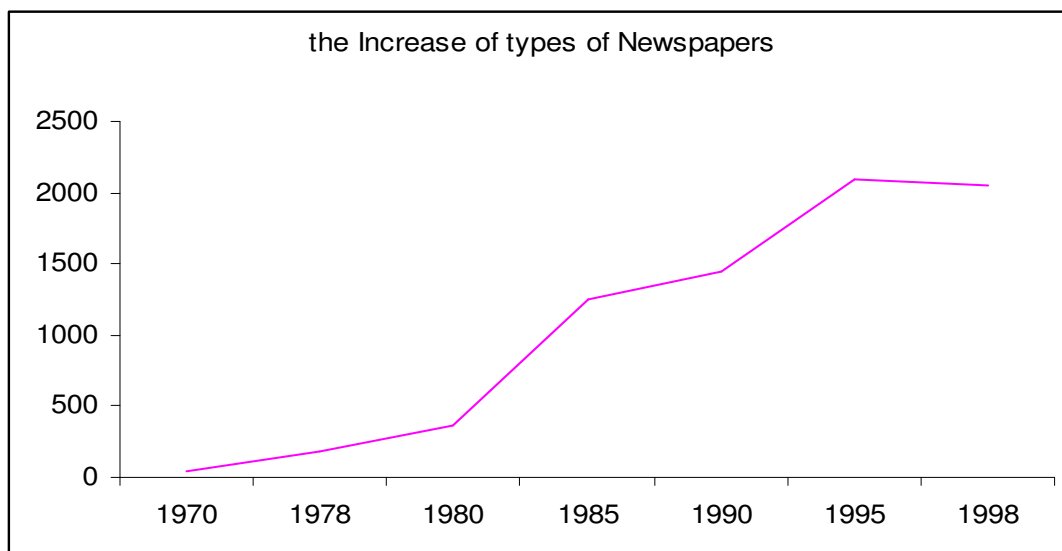
**Table 3: the Increase of types of Newspapers** <sup>391</sup>

Year	1970	1978	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998
Types	42	186	361	1,246	1,446	2,089	2,053

Graph 3:

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<sup>391</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Gradual democracy: Chinese Politics in transformation), 2004, p107; translated by author herself



Comparing the figure of 1970 with that of 1998, we can see a tremendous increase of 50 times and more, which demonstrates how much the press market has grown during these years.

The number of the circulation of the whole press is increasing.

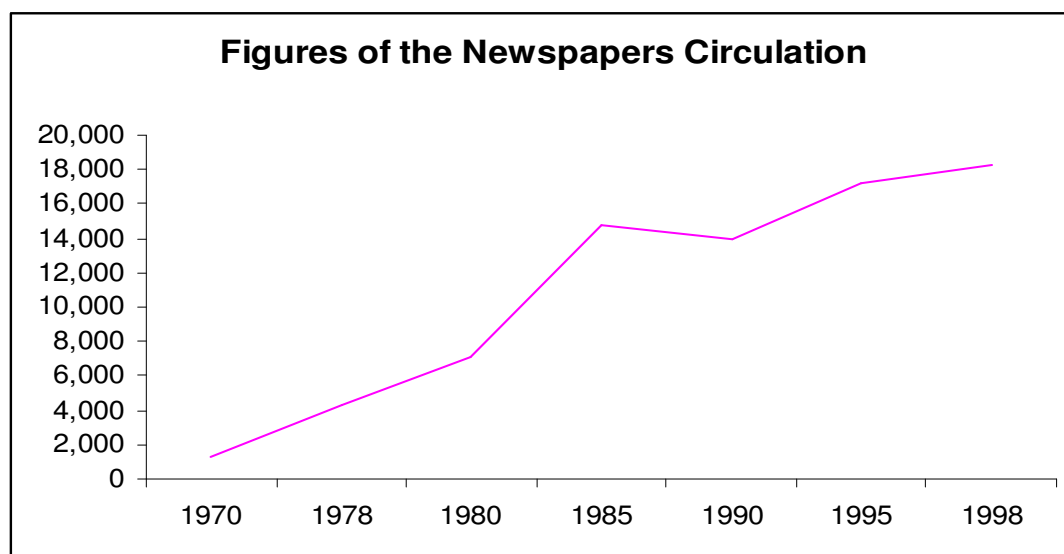
Along with the increase in the number of new papers, the circulation of the press as a whole has increased as well. The table below listed out the figures of the circulation between 1970 and 1998.

**Table 4: Figures of the Newspapers Circulation (10,000)<sup>392</sup>**

Year	1970	1978	1980	1985	1990	1995	1998
Circulation	1,301	4,280	7,050	14,811	13,986	17,230	18,211

<sup>392</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Gradual democracy: Chinese Politics in transformation), 2004, p121; translated by author

Graph 4:



As we can see in Table 1 and 2, the party newspapers have suffered major reduction during the same period of time; but the whole circulation has been increasing. One may easily draw a conclusion that, although the whole press market has grown bigger, but the share of party newspapers has shrank a lot, while the share of the new *Shimin Bao* (including evening news, metro and other city newspapers) has been enlarging along with the growth of the market cake.

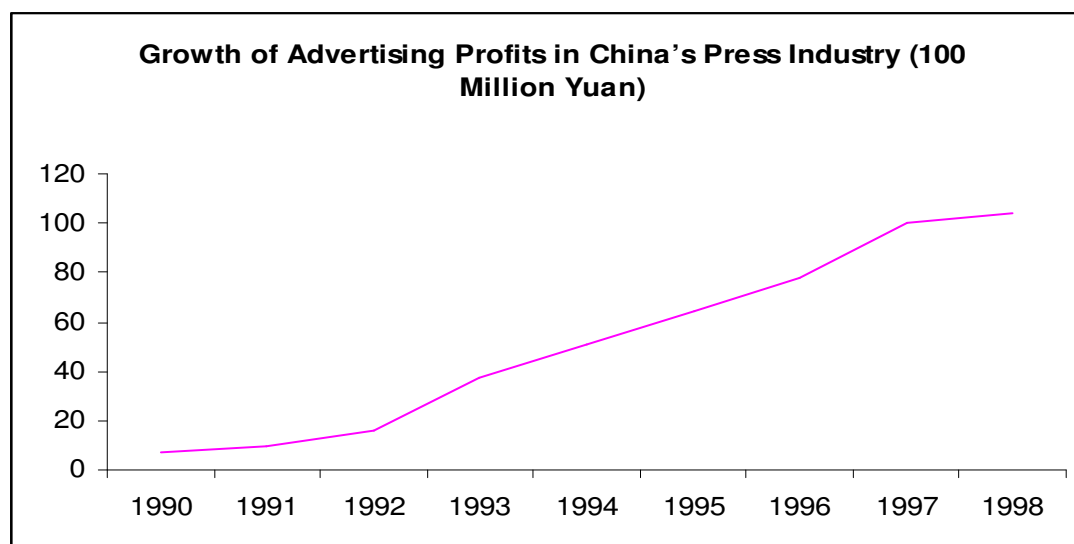
The revenue of advertising is increasing.

Before the Reform, the major income of the press is from the subscription and from the administrative subsidies. However, as the market was introduced into the planned system, the newspapers started to rely on advertising revenue in order to survive in the competition. Nowadays, the advertising has become the major source of profits of most press, and also a driving force for the press marketization and industrialization. The table below shows the increase in the profits made from newspaper advertising.

**Table 5: Growth of Advertising Profits in China's Press Industry (100 Million Yuan)<sup>393</sup>**

Year	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Sum	6.80	9.60	16.20	37.70	50.50	64.70	77.69	99.83	104.35

Graph 5:



The profits of newspapers advertising was only 680 million Yuan in 1990, eight years later, it increased to 10,435 million Yuan, nearly 15 times as much as that of the 1990. As the press industry become more market-oriented, newspapers compete with one another with the advertising market. In order to make more profits, the newspapers are trying to attract more readers the majority of whom are now the ordinary urban

<sup>393</sup> Cheng Hongmei, 'Wo Guo Baozhi Guanggao Jingying Xianzhuang Fenxi' (The Analysis of the Current Situation of Domestic Newspapers Advertising Management), *Xinwen Zhanxian* (News Battlefront), the 11th issue, 1999; cited in Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi* (Gradual democracy: Chinese Politics in transformation), 2004, p121; translated by author herself

people instead of the political and economic elites. The party newspapers, because of the political guidelines they have to obey, have less space for innovation and transformation. While the other newspapers, which are not so ideology-binding, such as those run by the large newspaper offices, are able to seize the opportunity of the Reform and adapt to the changing taste of targeted readership, which in turn bring incremental evolution into the reporting and journalism.

#### 6.3.1.2 Shiminbaos

Evening News, Metros, and other urban newspapers. Generally, these newspapers as a whole are called *shimin bao* (civil newspapers).

One of the most significant changes that have been taking place in the China's press media since the Reform is the prevalence of various evening news, metros, and other urban newspapers which are providing ordinary urban dwellers information of all kinds:

- The legal news;
- The market and investment news;
- The culture and entertainment news;
- The sports news;
- The local social and community news.

Most of these newspapers were originally created by large newspaper offices which are main-stream party newspapers. These main-stream party newspapers are regarded

as the ‘mouthpiece’ and under the direct leadership and control of Propaganda Department of Party Committee. Their function is to guide the public opinion in political mobilization. When these newspaper offices started to issue *shimin baos*, the original intention was to make *shimin baos* the complementary part of party newspapers; in a word, to provide readers with other information and service which the party newspaper was unable to supply, such as entertainment and financial news. The control over *shimin baos* was therefore not as strict as that upon the party newspapers in the first place, which in fact created a relatively more open space for the reporters and journalists.

During these years of continuous reform, there is significant revolution taking place in press industry, these changes at the same time have influence in the state-society relations of China, and push the Reform into a more deep and irreversible degree. These changes are:

Firstly, the press provides more information to ordinary people, which enlarges people’s right to know.

The news about the international community increased accompanies the embedded opening up. Before the Reform, the information from outside China is blocked by the CCP propaganda apparatus. Only the information such as the success of international proletariat movements would be broadcast as to glorify the great Marxism-Leninism. After the opening-up, the readers of the press media require more information from the outside world, and the integration of China’s economy into the world also demands for information from all over the globe.

People's Daily, the largest Party newspaper outlet, started to increase the amount of international reports. One page is used to report some of the most influential international events, and the space of another two pages is used to cover other news of the international community. However, it still cannot fulfil the increase of the demands for information. Thus in 1993, the Global Times is issued by People's Daily (out on Tuesdays and Fridays) to meet the growing desire for international news. Other newspaper offices, seen the success of Global Times, started to launch their own newspapers on international reports. Twenty-First Century Global Reports (21 Shiji Huanqiu Baodao) was created by the Southern Daily News Group (Nanfang Baoye Jituan) in 2002.

Since the Reform, the content of the international reports has been enlarged to cover many issues such as international political economy, information of other countries on political, economical, social and cultural aspects. The party newspapers are more focused on China's diplomatic events and are more ideologically sensitive in the reports; while *shiminbaos* (citizen newspapers) covers more information and can be more flexible in its reporting style to attract readers. These newspapers sometimes cover events that could be politically sensitive. For instance, the Twenty-First Century Global Reports used space of two pages to report in detail the divergence on the issue of human rights between China and the US in 2002 after the 13<sup>th</sup> round of Sino-US human rights dialogue<sup>394</sup>.

Secondly, the press becomes more professional in its reporting. The investigative



journalism is practised, which act as the surveillance of the authority. Its reports on the dark side, such as issues of corruption and environmental degradation; sometimes are allowed or even encouraged by the central or local authority. As we discussed before, the problems that the government have to tackle with are so difficult that the decentralized central government can not solve. The exposure of these problems may help the authority to deal with them; at the same time, these reports provoked discussion between specialists and experts as well as between ordinary people. In this sense, it enlarged people' s political participation.

All newspapers were required to release the news provided by the New China News Agency before the Reform. After decades of Reform, especially after the press marketization, newspaper outlets started to produce exclusive reports on some important events. They would send out own report team to the spots of events. Also, critical reports towards the corrupted party carders and leaders and reports on disclosure of the dark side of the society are now taking more space on the pages. For instance, the Xinkuaibao (News Express) reported exclusively on the frauds of the College Entrance Examination in Guangdong Province, which resulted in considerable social uproars<sup>395</sup>.

Last but not least, the press reports can create and guide the public opinion on the Reform. For example, before the Reforms, the newspapers report emphasize the benefits of the Reforms, which can help with the smooth implementation of the Reforms.

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<sup>394</sup> 21 *Shiji Huanqiu Baodao* (Twenty-First Century Global Reports), 23-12-2002; 257

As we discussed before, the figures demonstrated in the tables also provide evidence that, *shimin baos* are taking the place of party newspapers as the main-stream paper both in their influence and popularity. Once the freedom of press is enlarged, it seems impossible to reverse the trend. Although there is still a long way to reach the complete freedom of press, Chinese journalists will be inspired by the prospect of rights of free reporting and investigation, at the moment, they will keep pushing the borderline within the existing system in order to get more freedom. This will add to the incremental democratization that is taking place in China.

Due to the censorship by the authority, Chinese media did not provide sufficient information about the spreading of SARS before 20<sup>th</sup> April, 2003. International criticism towards China's blocking information raised a new round of debate on the relationship between autonomous media and authoritarian party-state. In fact, some newspapers did report on SARS according to the clue provided by readers<sup>396</sup>.

As discussed in this chapter, the changes taking place in press media can be regarded as a good sign for the growth of a more autonomous press. Although the changes are very limited and the counter-force (from the authoritarian state) is very powerful. The discourse is following the incremental and progressive model.

#### **6.4 Case study: the incremental evolution in People's Daily**

After examining the change of the whole press media in the past 30 years, it is

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<sup>395</sup> Xinkuaibao (News Express) reports, from 9th July to 17th July in 2000;  
<sup>396</sup> For instance, Yangcheng Evening News, (electronic edition), 3-1-2003;

necessary to do a case study into one specific newspaper which can better illustrate the theme of this thesis. People's Daily, which was established on 15, June, 1948, is one of the prime print media in China; it is the most important *Dangbao* (Party newspaper). It has status as separate government ministry and its director is member of the party's Central Committee.

The People's Daily is a daily newspaper; it is the organ of the Central Committee of the CCP. It has a circulation of 2,053,100 in 2007 domestically, together with its overseas edition of 165,000; altogether its circulation in 2007 is 2,218,100<sup>397</sup>. In addition to the Chinese edition, it has editions in other languages such as English, French, Spanish, Japanese, Russian and Arabic.

People's Daily provides information on points of views of the Party. The editorials of People's Daily publicize the decisions and guidance in the policies made by the Party. Its legitimacy is not challenged as it expresses the views of the highest level. Some of the editorials even in some way influenced or changed the history. Especially after 1949, the beginning of an era is often marked by the publication of editorial articles from People's Daily, such as Cultural Revolution, the Reform and Opening-up. These editorials are considered as the authoritative statement of the government, and they are always accompanied by a series of political changes later in the nationwide. Apart from propaganda on government policy, the rising or falling of a political figure, always the most paramount ones, is clearly shown in People's Daily, especially on the front page. The name of a new political figure appears in the title of the first

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<sup>397</sup> *China Journalism Yearbook* (2008), p 600; ISSN1002-0012  
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article on the front page always means this person is becoming the leader or one of the leaders; while the sudden disappearance of the name of a person, who used to have a high coverage in People' s Daily shows that this politician either died or has fallen from his paramount position, in most situations, purged by other power. The appraisal towards a passed political leader is also publicized by People' s Daily and other newspaper has to follow its tone. People' s Daily provides one of the few windows through which others could make conjectures about the internal power struggles of the Party. There are also commentaries engaged by a special arrangement, which transfer the viewpoints of the officials towards domestic or international affairs. Commentaries are different from editorials as the later contains more authoritative statement, however, they all must be approved by the officials. Political observers, both domestically or internationally, try to find the real significations of the Party through the words of the articles on People' s Daily.

The placement of an article is usually more important than the content of it. Especially on the front page, most of the articles are devoted to government activities, such as Party conference, official visits from another country, or leader' s speeches. The content is considered as authoritative and dry, while the placement of the articles indicates more information.<sup>398</sup> The activities of the paramount leader always take the most noticeable places on the front page.

As discussed in the previous chapters, since mid 1990s, the government has reduce the subsidies to Dangbaos, People' s Daily is also facing this financial difficulty along

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<sup>398</sup> will be elaborated in the following content

with the fierce competition with other international press and domestic newspaper. It created an online edition and web bulletin forums in 1997; the most well-known forum is Strong Nation Forum. These progressive changes demonstrate the effort of People' s Daily to maintain its paramount status in China' s media in the internet era.

During the trip of the author to China, she visited Shanxi Provincial Library, where she was able to get access to the copies of People' s Daily published in former years. The original issues of People' s Daily, especially those before 2000, are kept as archives in the library. The original issues are not allowed to be removed from the library and there is also a fee to pay to have a view. The procedure is like this, one tells one of the staff which issue he/she needs to read, after the payment, this staff will go in and take that issue out, and then one can read it in the special reading room of the library under the supervision of the staff, when finish, the staff will take the issue back to the archive room immediately. Normally, photocopy is not allowed. However, after the author explained that it is for research use, the staff agreed to photocopy the front page only. The front page of randomly picked 32 issues, one from each year (1976 – 2008), was photocopies. These randomly picked 32 front pages are all in Chinese. A study into these copies will better illustrate the reforms and evolution in China' s press media.

#### 6.4.1 Diversified Content

One of the most significant progresses in the media reform is that the content of the newspaper has become more and more diverse and autonomous. The content of the articles of People' s Daily covers more aspects of the society than before. Issues such

as ideological propaganda, government policies, official activities, progress on reforms in agriculture, industry, coal supply, are the most frequently reported content. However, stories of regular people, debates on some social or political issues which are not yet settled by the authority, can also be found in the front page in the recent years. Instead of one whole front page devoted to one huge article about some ideological discussions, which are more commonly found in the issues of 1970s and the early 1980s; more articles, short commentaries, photo news, critical reports, make the front page more interesting and more readable in the 1990s and after 2000. Commercial advertisement also appears on the Front page, which is not imaginable just a decade ago. From the following discussions, we can see how much the front page of People's Daily has evolved from a pure ideological platform to a more diversified and professionalized newspaper.

Table 6: Content

Date	Number of articles <sup>399</sup>	Editorials/ Commentaries	Political articles <sup>400</sup>	Economic articles <sup>401</sup>	Photo news <sup>402</sup>	Name of the leader(s)
1-11-1976	3 <sup>403</sup>	2	0	1	0	Mao Zedong Hua Guofeng
1-11-1977	1 <sup>404</sup>	1	0	0	0	Mao Zedong Hua Guofeng
1-11-1978	7	1	0	6	0	
3-10-1979	4	1	3	0	2	Hua Guofeng Ye Jianying Deng Xiaoping Li Xiannian
1-11-1980	11	1	4	6	2	Li Xiannian

<sup>399</sup> Including all articles on the front page, however, slogans, advertisement, or index are not included

<sup>400</sup> Including all articles on political events, such as Party conferences, government policies, official's activities, foreign visits, etc

<sup>401</sup> Including all articles on economic reforms, agricultural and industrial progress, stories of regular people, sports news and so on

<sup>402</sup> Articles with photos

<sup>403</sup> Plus one slogan box on the upper right, which contains Mao's words

<sup>404</sup> Plus one slogan box on the upper right, which contains some words from Hua's Political Report to the 11<sup>th</sup> Party's Congress

1-10-1981	5	0	4	1	1	Ye Jianying Zhao Ziyang
1-11-1982	6 <sup>405</sup>	1	2	3	1	Hu Yaobang Wan Li
1-9-1983	12	1	5	6 <sup>406</sup>	3	Chen Pixian Deng Xiaoping
7-9-1984	8	1	3	4	1	Li Xiannian Peng Zhen
1-10-1985	10	1	6	3	1	Zhao Ziyang Wang Zhen Peng Zhen
2-11-1986	12	2	5	5	1	Deng Xiaoping Hu Yaobang Zhao Ziyang
1-11-1987	9 <sup>407</sup>	1	4	4	1	Zhao Ziyang
2-2-1988	15 <sup>408</sup>	1	8	6	2	Zhao Ziyang
3-1-1989	12	2	0	10 <sup>409</sup>	2	
2-4-1990	8	1	6	1	1	Jiang Zemin Yang Shangkun Li Peng Wan Li
2-5-1991	8	2	5	1	1	Jiang Zemin Li Peng Wang Zhen
2-1-1992	10	1	1	8	2	Jiang Zemin Li Peng Qiao Shi
1-1-1993	12	2	2	8	2	Jiang Zemin Yang Shangkun
2-2-1994	7	2	5	0	1	Hu Jintao
4-2-1995	13	1	1	11	2	Jiang Zemin
5-1-1996	14	1	5	8	1	Jiang Zemin
2-7-1997 410	4	0	4	0	3	Jiang Zemin Li Peng
18-1-1998	11	1	5	5	2	Li Lanqing
18-1-2000	9 <sup>411</sup>	1	6	2	1	Jiang Zemin Li Peng Zhu Rongji
3-1-2001	8	2	5	1	1	

<sup>405</sup> There is an index box on the lower left, which contains the headlines of the Capital newspapers on that day

<sup>406</sup> One of the 6 articles is sports news, this is the first time sports news has appeared on the front page in the samples collected

<sup>407</sup> Including 2 articles on international news

<sup>408</sup> Including 1 articles on international news

<sup>409</sup> Including one report on accident

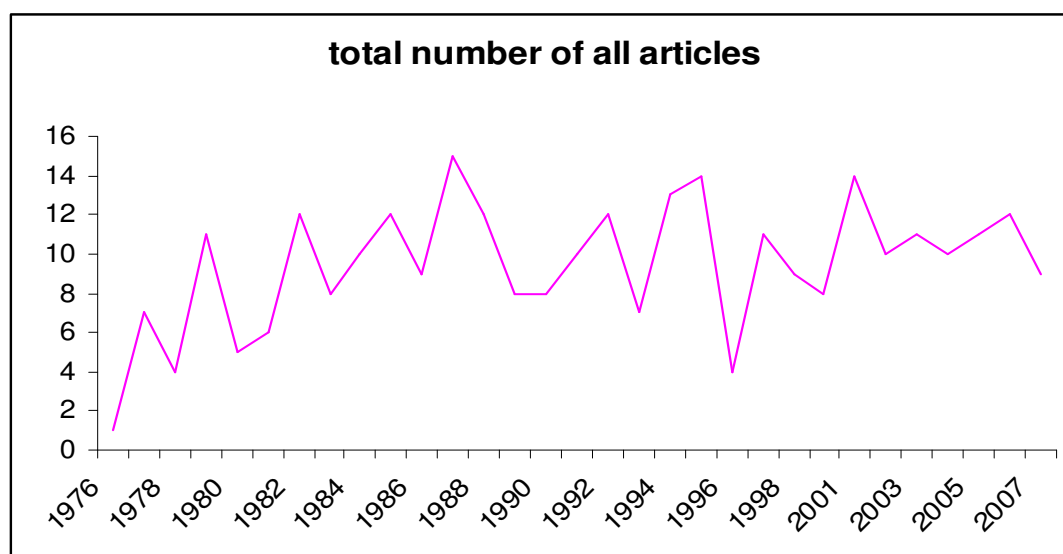
<sup>410</sup> The first day after Hong Kong came back to China's sovereignty

<sup>411</sup> Plus one small piece of advertisement

17-1-2002	14 <sup>412</sup>	0	5	9	2	Jiang Zemin Li Peng Zhu Rongji
17-1-2003	10	1	0	9	4	
2-7-2004	11 <sup>413</sup>	0	5	6	2	Zeng Qinghong
6-4-2005	10 <sup>414</sup>	0	6	4	3	Wen Jiabao Huang Ju Jia Qinglin
9-1-2006	11 <sup>415</sup>	3	6	2	1	Wen Jiabao
27-1-2007	12 <sup>416</sup>	1	8	3	1	Wu Bangguo Wen Jiabao
7-1-2008	9 <sup>417</sup>	0	0	9	3	

For the change of the total number of articles on the front page can be seen from the following graph,

Graph 6



#### 6.4.2 Figures of the articles

<sup>412</sup> Plus one small piece of advertisement and Index  
<sup>413</sup> Plus one small piece of advertisement and Index  
<sup>414</sup> Plus one small piece of advertisement and Index  
<sup>415</sup> Plus one small piece of advertisement and Index  
<sup>416</sup> Plus two small pieces of advertisement and Index  
<sup>417</sup> Plus two small pieces of advertisement and Index



Generally speaking, there is an increase in the figure of the total amount of the articles through these decades. The line fluctuates more in the years before mid 1990s. During which years, People' s Daily is very much closed to the core of the power struggling between the Reformers and the Conservatives; which group is taking the lead can also be shown from the names that appeared on the front page. While noticeably after the year 2000, the figures become more stabilized, which shows the page settings have followed one style which is a more fragmented style compared to before.

From Table 6 and Graph 6, the lowest figure is 1, which is in the year 1977, while the highest figure is 15, which is in the year 1988. This has to be explained with the events of the year. 1977 marked an ideological peak and 1988 sees the rising of the democratic movements.

Mao Zedong died on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September, 1976. The Cultural Revolution, which was initiated by him, was brought to an end after his death. The Gang of Four<sup>418</sup> were arrested. Hua Guofeng became the Chairman of CCP. However, he stands for the people in the Party who want to stick to Mao' s doctrine of class struggle and proletarian revolution. In 1977, he asked people to continue to study Mao' s theories. On the front page of People' s Daily on the 1<sup>st</sup>, November, 1977, the whole page was devoted to one huge article. The title is *Chairman Mao' s Theory on the Division of*

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<sup>418</sup> The Gang of Four refers to a political group formed during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), they are Jiang Qing (Mao's wife), Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyan and Wang Hongwen.

*Three Worlds is the Great Contribution to Marx-Leninism*<sup>419</sup>, and the author is the Newsroom of People's Daily. On the right, next to the masthead, there is a box which contains quotation from Chairman Hua's political report submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> National Congress of CCP. It says, Mao's theory of the division of three worlds points to the great direction of the current international battle, as it tells us who is the main revolutionary force, who is the main enemy, who is the middle force that can become alignment; therefore the international proletariats can form the more extensive unified battlefield to oppose its main enemy. The whole front page of this newspaper thus becomes the platform for pure ideological propaganda.

1988 is the year before 1989, when the student movements rose and cracked down. As discussed in the previous chapters, the dissents such as Fang Lizhi and others who were inspired by the Beijing Spring Liberalization movement of late 1970s, and the student movements of 1986<sup>420</sup>, became more active in 1988. Their criticism and dissatisfaction toward the government was expressed implicitly or boldly in their speeches, seminars and colloquiums in the universities of Beijing. Most of them are well-known intellectuals. For instance, Fang Lizhi, the former vice president of Chinese Science and Technology University, he was removed from office in the name of 'bourgeoisie liberalization' in 1987. However, the dismissal did not make him less well-known. He, together with other intellectuals who were purged in the anti-bourgeoisie liberation movement, were considered as the conscience of the society. At that time, Zhao Ziyang, who is considered as a reform figure, was the general secretary of CCP, (although Deng was the de facto head), whilst Li Peng,

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<sup>419</sup> Mao Zhuxi Guangyu San Ge Shijie Huafen de Lilun shi dui Makesi Lienin Zhuyi de Zhongda Gongxian; 1th of November, 1977, People's Daily, issue no. 10707

together with other seniors are seen as the opposing conservative figures. The intellectuals criticize the existing economic system, which is supported by the conservatives. The reformers also want to change the existing system; therefore, in the sense, the intellectual movements helped the reformers to gain power over the conservatives. The reformers easily become the sympathizers of the movements. However, the reformers would not agree much with the ideas of a pure liberal democracy raised by the dissidents. When it is considered as going too far over the boundary, the authority will take actions, which resulted in the 1989 incidents.

On the front page of People's Daily of February the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1988, there are 15 articles, including 1 piece of commentary, 8 pieces on political news, 6 on economical news, and two photos. Compared to the front page of 1<sup>st</sup>, November, 1977, the content on this front page is more diversified and the set up is more fragmented. The place where the quotation box used to be is used for a small piece of news, which is about the head of the State Bureau of Statistics asking the statisticians to dedicate to their profession, not according to the wills of their superiors, and the violation of Statistic Law will not be tolerated. After the revelation of the falsification in the statistics of Yan Chuan County's annual report, the head of the State Bureau of Statistics gave this speech, as he has noticed that in some other places, the local authority interferes in the work of the statisticians and asks them to make reports not according to the facts. He considers this as the deviation from the rules of 'seek truth from facts'<sup>420</sup> and violation of the Statistic Law. 'Seek truth from facts' is the Party slogan supported by Deng and his

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<sup>420</sup> See Chapter 3

<sup>421</sup> In the discussion of 'the criterion of truth' initiated by Hu Yaobang as to oppose to Hua Guofeng's two whatever doctrine, 'free the thought and seek truth

followers. After the discussion of ‘the criterion of truth’ in which Deng successfully purged Hua Guofeng, ‘free the thought’ and ‘seek truth from facts’ appears more and more frequently on newspapers replacing Chairman Mao’s words. The first two reports are about Zhao Ziyang’s activities. The first one is him praising Zhang Xingrang’s creation of ‘Work Full Load’ Method, which Zhao thinks should be recommended to other factories and enterprises. At the time, Zhao was in name the highest figure in CCP although de facto Deng was the most powerful leader. Deng’s name is not appearing on the front page of this issue whilst Zhao’s name takes the most important positions of this page, however, it doesn’t mean that Zhao is taking place of Deng. Because in the coming year, when the student movement arise, Zhao was quickly removed by the elders of the party, and his name never appears in the front page until his death<sup>422</sup>.

There is a noticeable sudden drop in the year 1997 from the above graph. The front page of People’s Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, 1997 contains only 4 articles and all of them are political. This is because it is the day after 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1997, on which day the sovereignty of Hong Kong was transferred from the United Kingdom to the PRC and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region was established. All the articles on the front page are to celebrate the returning of Hong Kong and the establishment of the Special Administrative Region. No other news is more important and that’s why the whole front page is devoted to this event. The names of Jiang Zemin and Li Peng appear in all the titles of the articles. Deng died on 19<sup>th</sup> February, 1997. His passing

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from facts’ later became the doctrine of the Party

<sup>422</sup> When Zhao died in 2005, his death was reported by the Xinhua News Agency

away has made Jiang and Li, two of the most powerful political figures. Jiang Zemin's titles include, the General Secretary of the CCP, the President of the PRC and the Chairman of the Central Military Commission, he was appointed by Deng as the General Secretary in 1989, replacing Zhao Ziyang. However, Deng's death has finally made him the real leader of the Party.

From the graph that's above, it is also noticeable that the after 1997, the fluctuation is less than those years before, which means the page settings on the front page has become more of a stabilised style with a certain quantity of articles. The time when a huge ideological thesis dominates the whole front page has become history and once the evolution takes place and becomes more stabilized, it is impossible to reverse the direction.

#### 6.4.3 Editorials and commentaries

The editorials and commentaries of People's Daily, especially those on the front page have always been of great importance both politically and economically. Some of the editorials are so important that they were recorded as the division of a new era, or beginning of a major political/economical event, or a change of ideological stands of the Party. It is worth investigating into each important editorial to see what change has taken place in People's Daily.

There are quite a few types of commentaries with different names of the columns. An

editorial is usually the formal statement or the official stand of People's Daily and the Party. There are other commentaries or pieces of viewpoints which are not so formal but also influential. In the years before the Reform, the commentaries are always published for propaganda use, for instance, to initiate people's movement and to mobilize some social groups; they can also be used in the power struggle between different political groups, for instance, as discussed in the previous chapters, between the reformers and the conservatives. It is noticeable that there is fierce debate in the early stage of the Reform era between more conservative ideas and the new, reforming ones which can be found in the commentaries of People's Daily. However, after the initiation of the Reform, especially after the late 1990s, the importance of editorials or commentaries is not seen as the same as before. That explains why on the front pages of People's Daily after late 1990s which are collected for this research, one can not always find a place for formal editorials or not-so-formal commentaries<sup>423</sup>.

In the issues before the Reform (starting in 1978), one can easily find that the editorials or commentaries are full of ideological slogans and expressions. For example, the title of the short commentary on the front page of People's Daily, 1<sup>st</sup>, 11, 1976, is *to Grab back the Loss in Production Caused by the Gang of Four (Ba Sirenbang Pohuai Shengchang de Sunshi Duo Huilai)*. As discussed before, 1976 saw the death of Mao and the end of the Cultural Revolution. This issue was published after the Gang of Four were arrested and Hua Guofeng became the Chairman of the Party. The whole front page contains two pieces of news, one commentary, one index

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<sup>423</sup> As shown in Table 6, for the issues collected from the years 1997, 2002, 2004,

box of the Red Flag Magazine, and one quotation box with Mao's words. At the time when this paper was issued, Hua Guofeng was seen as the supreme leader replacing Mao, thus all three articles were praising his victory and criticizing the Gang of Four. Words with strong ideological colour appear the most, such as, revolution, people's army, socialism, proletariat, and bourgeois, and so on. It is interesting that in the second article, it reports the productivity of the Chemical Industry Bureau of Beijing has been improved, and this is all due to the break of the plot of Gang of Four. For instance, a deputy chief, who is over 60 years old, was about to get retirement, however, upon hearing the good news (arrest of the Gang of Four), he changed his decision and was willing to 'work hard for another one or two decades'. Mao's words are also quoted several times in the articles.

Another feature for the issues before the Reform years is that the editorials are always longer than those issued after 1978. For example, as discussed previously, the People's Daily on 1<sup>st</sup>, 11, 1977, the whole front page was occupied by one huge editorial, *Chairman Mao's Theory on the Division of Three Worlds is the Great Contribution to Marx-Leninism*<sup>424</sup>. At the end of this page, it says, continues in Page 2, which means even the whole page is not enough for this lengthy article written by the Newsroom of the People's Daily. In this article, Mao is called as the great leader and guide; and armed with his thought, Chinese people can overcome any difficulty and reach the victory of the great revolution. Although Hua's name is not mentioned anywhere in the whole article, his words appear in the quotation box where Mao's

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2005 and 2008, there are no editorials or commentaries on the front page.

<sup>424</sup> Mao Zhuxi Guangyu San Ge Shijie Huafen de Lilun shi dui Makesi Lenin Zhuyi de Zhongda Gongxian; 1th of November, 1977, People's Daily, issue no. 10707

words used to be<sup>425</sup>. Hua was appointed as the successor by Mao when he was alive. By showing his loyalty to Mao's doctrine in some way justifies Hua's status as the supreme leader. That's why Hua threw out Two Whatever's as opposed to the ideas of reform by Deng and others. However, in 1978, at the Third Plenum of the Eleventh Party Congress, CCP has changed its goal from class struggle to economic construction. Change can also be found in the Party's newspaper, for example, in the commentary of People's Daily on 1, 11, 1978, the economic construction and modernization become the theme of this article. Its title is '*to eliminate the tailed project*' (*Xiaomie Weiba Gongcheng*). Weiba Gongcheng is an expression in Chinese, which means the projects which are not completed within the planned time and delayed for a few years. This article is written by the commentator of the People's Daily. It criticises the slow construction in the New Huangpu Port (in Guangzhou), and asks for support from both the central and local authorities to speed up the construction. It says that infrastructure construction is crucial in the task of modernization and asks for effective and efficient solutions to these projects.

The commentaries and the editorials on the People's Daily also indicate the power struggle between different groups within the Party. From 1978 to 1981, the battle is between the reformers (Deng and his followers Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang) and the Two Whateverers (Hua Guofeng and others known as whatever faction). Hu initiated the discussion of 'the criterion of truth' in 1978, which aims to criticize the Two Whatever's doctrine. As the Party newspaper, People's Daily was one of the main battlefields where the articles involved in the discussion of the 'criterion of

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<sup>425</sup>  
272 As seen on the front page of People's Daily on 1, 11, 1976



truth’ were published. For example, on the front page of People’ s Daily, on 3<sup>rd</sup> October, 1979<sup>426</sup>, the first article is a commentary written by the commentator of People’ s Daily. The title is ‘*Duanzheng dui Makesi Zhuyi de Taidu*’ (to Treat Marxism with a Right Attitude). It says that the discussion of practise as the sole criterion of truth has been on for over a year, and it is going deeply in a wider scale. It asks what the right attitude towards Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought should be, or AKA, how to continue to stick to Marxism and Mao Zedong Thought. It asks for freeing the thought. It says that Mao Zedong himself is a believer in the principle of ‘seeking truth from facts’ . It also makes an important judgement which seems bold in the years when Mao’ s influence still hugely exists that, Mao is a great Marxist but he is not a ‘prophet’ , or ‘god’ . Here, it makes a wise division between Mao’ s Thought and Mao himself, as opposed to Hua’ s ‘whatever policy decisions Chairman Mao made we will resolutely uphold, whatever instructions Chairman Mao gave we will unswervingly follow’ <sup>427</sup>. It demonstrates that to stick to Two Whatever doctrine is against Mao himself as Mao is a believer in ‘seeking truth from facts’ . In the commentary, any name of whatever faction is not mentioned at all. It is because, at that time, Hua is still in name the supreme leader of the Party. It also explains why in the other two articles below the commentary on the same page, Hua’ s name appears before Deng and others. After the success of the discussion of the ‘criterion of truth’ , Hua was denounced for promoting the Two Whatever policy, and Deng’ s supporters, Zhao Ziyang took his place as Premier in 1980, Hu Yaobang as Party

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<sup>426</sup> Issue no, 11408

<sup>427</sup> This statement appears in a editorial, entitled ‘Study the Documents Well and Grasp the Key Link’ , on 7th February, 1977 on People’ s Daily

Chairman in 1981; that explains why Hua' s name was replaced by Zhao and Hu in the issues collected in 1980 and 1981.

The editorial on the front page of People' s Daily of 1<sup>st</sup>, November, 1980, is about how to strengthen the production responsibility system in agriculture. It is one of the most important editorials in the Reform era with regard to the agricultural reform. It praised one form of agricultural production created by the farmers themselves. The farmland, which is owned by the state, is divided into portions and each farmer is responsible for their own piece of land. Farmland is not their property, but they have the right to use and cultivate. Their earnings from the land is divided into three parts, one for the state, one for the collectivity, the rest belongs to individuals. In the editorial, it confirms that this new system helps to increase their enthusiasm, and improves the productivity, because the portions to be given to the state and the collectivity are more or less fixed, the more they harvest from the farmland, the more the farmers can take home and save. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, due to the devastating effect of the Cultural Revolution, the national economy worsened, as the editorial says, nearly 100 million people are living in a very poor state, most of them are farmers who live in remote rural area. This new system is spontaneously supported by some of these farmers. However, it also says that this new form of production responsibility system in agriculture is different from capitalism and it is dependent upon the socialist economy. Here, it makes clear that reform is not the abandonment of socialism and embrace of capitalism. This is to verify the correct political stand which would avoid some criticism from the people who want to stick to the old system (planned economy), and to pave the way to wider and deeper reforms in other areas as well. This kind of statements (put on socialist label) appear

all the time at the early stage of the Reform, however, it gradually becomes less in the late 1990s as the debate over the path of socialism and capitalism becomes less intensive.

The commentaries and editorials I collected between 1982 to the early 1989 have the similar tone set by the editorial on the front page of People's Daily of 1<sup>st</sup>, November, 1980, which is reforming the old system. That would involve, advocating the Reform, setting out the goals and the principles, criticizing the old mechanism together with the old bureaucratic effects and deficiency, pointing out the advantages of the new ones and its improved productivity and efficiency, etc. It also involves criticizing the conservative political figures but certainly without telling the names. However, as mentioned in the previous chapters, during these years, there is a rival between the reformers and conservatives. When the conservatives think the reform is happening too quickly, they would be against the pace of the Reform using slogans such as 'anti-bourgeoisie-liberalization' (1981), 'eliminate spiritual pollution' (1983), 'building a socialist spiritual civilization' (1985-1986) and 'anti peaceful-evolution' (1988).

For example, the commentary written by Hu Yaobang, one of the Reform figures, entitled *Jianchi Liangfen Fa Geng Shang Yiceng Lou* (adhere to the dichotomy method and reach a higher level), is published on the front page of People's Daily on 1<sup>st</sup>, November, 1982. It takes over half of the front page and continues on Page 4 of the issue. Hu mentioned the criticism towards Bai Hua's film '*Bitter Love*' (*Ku Lian*), which was back in 1981. The film expressed the discontent towards the

current political reality. The New China News Agency broadcasted the commentator article, *‘The Four Cardinal Principles Must Not Be Violated – Review Screenplay ‘Bitter Love’ ’* (*Sixiang Jiben Yuanze Burong Weifan – Ping Dianying Wenxue Juben Kulian*) in which the author of the screenplay was regarded as acting against the Four Cardinal Principles. Here, Hu agrees with the critics towards Bai Hua, however, he further pointed out that Bai Hua is a member of the CCP, and he has already made self-criticism. Hu encouraged Bai Hua to write more good works in the future. Hu’s real purpose is to push reform forward as he asks party members to strive harder to improve people’s living standards.

The column of *‘Today’s Talk’* on the front page of *People’s Daily* on the 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1984 is about something else. It is not about a political issue, it is about how a hotel in Beijing changed its registered phone number to an easy memorable number in order to help provide better service to its customers. It puts forward a point of view that in modern life, information and service become increasingly important, therefore, to attract more customers, small things such as change of a phone number can be necessary for modern service providers or retailers. This small piece of viewpoint shows that *People’s Daily’s* evolution begins as it also tries to attract more readers and provide more information for the new coming market economy.

The editorial on the front page of *People’s Daily* on the 1<sup>st</sup> October, 1985 is about *‘building a socialist spiritual civilization’*, entitled *‘the Advantages of China’* (*Zhongguo de Youshi*). 1<sup>st</sup> of October is the National Day of PRC, therefore, the editorial is dedicated to this special occasion. It reviews the history of the foundation

of PRC and especially how CCP has strived to build a new independent country. It also mentioned the contribution of the Reform of the recent years as it helped to improve Chinese people's living standards. However, it says, the 'major task we are facing now is to build and strengthen a socialist spiritual civilization'. Words of Chen Yun, one of the conservative figures, are quoted here. The 'advantages of China' refer to this socialist spiritual civilization.

There are two commentaries on the front page of People's Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1986. One is written by the commentator of People's Daily, continues to emphasize the importance of two civilizations (the socialist material and spiritual civilizations). As the Reform is focused on the economic area, the material civilization is being constructed. The spiritual civilization is equally important to the material civilization, thus it should be paid attention to as well. The other piece is in the Weekly Forum column, entitled *Chuli he Yuwei* (contributing and offside). This is an interesting piece of commentator article. Yuwei (offside) is a word used in football game, which means a break of the game rule (illegally ahead of the ball); even the ball is kicked into the goal eventually, it would be called invalid. The commentator writes in his article, some old comrades, after they are retired (due to their age), they are still trying to play in the game, and it can be 'a break of the rule'. Their position has transformed from the front line to the back line, according to the author, there is a huge change in the way how they should continue to do their work. It would result in chaos should the retired comrade continue to give orders. The leading role should be played by the new successor. The role the elders would play is a consultant and adviser. Basically, to provide information to the new leaders and not to make

decisions by themselves; to respect and stick to the decisions of the new leaders. However, criticising new leaders in lack of experience or lack of respect for the elders should be avoided. After all, new cadres can not grow up into experienced cadres if their jobs are taken cared of by the old cadres. The background of this commentary piece is the reform Deng launched in order to select and promote younger and more specialized cadres. After the Third Plenum of the 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress in 1978, there is an increasing recognition of the poor capability of the bureaucratic system consists of elderly, non-professional cadres. Thus since the early 1980s, Deng has instructed senior Party leaders to undertake a ‘four-way transformation’ (*sihua*) of the cadre corps by finding and promoting cadres around the age of 40 who were ‘revolutionary, younger, more educated, and more technically specialized’ (*geminghua, nianqinghua, zhishihua, zhuanqihua*)<sup>428</sup>. At the same time, the retirement system has been set up requiring cadres who reached a certain age to leave their positions which was not used to be so. At the time when this article is published, it is the first time in the history of CCP and PRC, old cadres are advised to retire and give positions to the new and younger one. It is almost certain that this process would take some time as some old cadres, who are used to the decision-makers, have to (reluctantly) leave the power and follow the command of the new cadres, who used to be their subordinates. In the article, the author required the old retired cadres to play the role of a consultant and an adviser. In one of the other articles on the same page, which is about Deng talking about the goal of the political reform when meeting the Premier of Italy, Deng is referred to as the Director of the Central Consultation Committee of CCP. It offers another explanation, which means Deng himself should also stick to his consultation

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<sup>428</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, ‘Authoritarian Resilience’, *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) 6-17  
278

role as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang are the new leaders at that time<sup>429</sup>.

The commentary on the front page of People's Daily on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1987 is a more encouraging article, as it praised the live TV broadcasting on the opening of the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress. It is also in the Weekly Forum column; entitled *Lingdao Jiguan Huodong Kaifang Hao* (Opening-up of the activities of the leading department is good). In the article, it says that not only the opening ceremony is shown on TV live, but also sees over 400 journalists or reporters, both domestically and from abroad coming to the meetings to interview and report. A large quantity of news and messages are being sent out everyday. It is the first time in the history of CCP that a Party Congress of such a high level is reported to the public and to the whole world. Media conferences are held during the period of the Congress, in which some directors are invited to answer questions raised by both national and foreign journalists. It says this new way – a more open way of dealing with the media, is praised nationwide and worldwide. It is conformed with the request put forward by Zhao Ziyang in his report submitted to the 13<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, which is ‘the activities of the leading institutions should be more open’. The commentator further pointed out that the more opening-up of the leading institutions is included in the socialist democratic politics. He also criticized two different points of view. One is that the activities of the leaders should be confidential as the top secret; the other is that the opening-up of institutions will result in the decay of their authority. However, the author asks for a change in these old, conservative views, and points out that this change takes time and the importance of the institutionalisation of the opening-up of

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<sup>429</sup> Whilst in fact, Deng, although not entitled as the supreme leader, was actually the paramount leader before his death in 1997.

the leaders activities. There are one commentary article on the front page of People' s Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup>, February, 1988 and two on the front page of People' s Daily on 3<sup>rd</sup>, March 1989, all in the 'Today' s Talk' column. All these three are dealing with the issues in the Reform. However, the one in 1988 is about problems in the economic reform, and the two of 1989 are about political issues, honouring ceremony (biaozhanghui) and corruption in a city of Hubei Province. As discussed before, these articles were published right before the Tiananmen Incidence of June, 1989. At this time, after over a decade of reform, the national economy has recovered and the living of the nationals improved; but also, the problems with the economic reform and the neglected political transformation, such as corruption, social injustice, gap between poor and rich, are gradually emerging. However, it is difficult for the reformers to tackle these problems. The student movement of the 1989 can be seen as a response to these problems.

To conclude, what I can see from examining these commentary articles collected between 1982 and 1989 is a clear debate over the reform issue. They can be divided into pro-reform and anti-reform commentary article. In the pro-reform commentary articles, there are more reformist ideas on the necessity of change and how the reform should proceed, whilst in the other pieces, the conservatives try to put an end to the reform by initiating ideological campaigns just as those took place in Maoist years. In general, the articles of the pro-reform category are more than those in the anti-category. However, right after the 1989 student movements, especially after the death of Hu Yaobang and the dismissal of Zhao Ziyang, Jiang Zeming was chosen by Deng as the new leader of the CCP, and the conservatives became more active than before. Their activities, ideas and comments were recorded and published by the People' s



Daily. More ideological slogans, such as propaganda, socialist revolution, spiritual civilization, working class, and so on, have re-emerged and been repeated in the commentary articles collected from this time.

For example, in the commentary article on the front page of People's Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> of April, entitled *Duo Xuanchuan Women de Minzhu Tizhi* (to propagandize our democratic system), the author criticised the *zichang jieji Ziyouhua* (bourgeois liberalization), which refers to the ideas of adopting western democracy, the separation of three powers and the multiparty system. These are the requests by the students and intellectuals who are involved in the democratic movement. The author claims that socialist democratic system, which includes the system of the multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by CCP, and the people's congress system, has its own advantages as it is rooted in Chinese revolutions compared to the western democracy. He admits that this socialist democratic system is not perfect and needs to be advanced; however, it is still more suitable for China. The youth of today are not familiar with this system, thus, we should promote it and let people, especially the young people to know what its advantages are. This article is published almost a year after the Tiananmen Square Incident, although the incident is not mentioned in the content, the standpoint of the author is quite clear.

In another commentary article published on the front page of People's Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> May, 1991, entitled 'The Role Model of the Intellectuals' (*Zhishi Fenzi de Bangyang*), the author also asserts that the only way for the intellectuals, especially the young ones, to make use of their knowledge, is to unite with the working class and the peasantry and to devote to the construction of socialism. At the end of the article,

the author further claims that, the deeds of the role models proves once again that, Chinese intellectuals, as the important consisting part of the working class, can be totally trusted. As discussed in the previous chapters, during the 1989 democratic movement, some well-known intellectuals, such as Fang Lizhi, were seen as playing the leading role, and the students who are involved in the demonstrations, are students from the universities of Beijing. In Chinese political term, they all belong to the intellectual group which is part of the working class. After the crackdown, some intellectuals and students are arrested, some are removed from their posts. It is under this background, the author would reaffirm that the intellectuals can be politically trusted.

The commentaries collected from these two years also demonstrated that there was a growing conservative faction opposed to Deng' s reforms within the Party. To change this situation and resume the economic agenda, Deng made a visit to the southern area of China, including Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Shanghai, which is known as the Southern Tour in the spring of 1992. At that time, Deng has officially retired, but his influence still exists as paramount. During the Southern Tour, he made speeches which were about the importance of continuing the economic reform policy, and received local supports from the places he visited. He also made criticism to those who are against the further reform and opening-up in his speeches. Jiang Zemin, although officially the paramount leader, was also criticized as not pushing forward the economic reform agenda. The national media started to report on Deng' s Southern Tour a few months later. And in the 14<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress, Deng' s idea of establishing a socialist market economy has been recognized and the adherence to the so-call 'basic route' (Jiben Luxian) will last for one hundred years.

The commentary articles collected from 1992 and 1993 demonstrate these changes. The commentary article on the front page of People's Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1992, is the speech of Jiang Zemin in the New Year meeting with the members of the National Committee of CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference). He mentioned that in the coming New Year (1992), the goal of the economic reform is to establish the planned commodity economy (Shangpin Jingji), which combines the planned economy and market regulations. The term of 'planned economy' comes before 'market regulation', which means the former is more important than the latter. While in the other two commentaries articles published on the front page of the People's Daily on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1993, the terms of planned economy or planned product economy totally disappeared. These two articles, one is the editorial, the other is the New Year speech given by Chairman Yang Shangkun. In Yang's speech, Deng was referred to as 'The chief architect of China's economic reforms and China's socialist modernisation', the title officially recognized after Deng's resignation<sup>430</sup>. Yang also mentioned Deng's famous Southern Tour and his speeches on 'deepening the reform, broadening the opening-up and accelerating the economic development'<sup>431</sup>. In both articles, the 14<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress in the last year was mentioned, in which the goal of the economic reform was established. In the editorial, it says that on the 14<sup>th</sup> National Party Congress, the theory of 'building socialism with Chinese

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<sup>430</sup> Officially, Deng stepped down as Chairman of the Central Military Commission in 1989 which is his last post and he is referred to as Comrade Deng Xiaopin. However, China is still in Deng's era until his death in 1997

<sup>431</sup> From Yang's speech published in People's Daily, 1st of January, 1993, issue no. 16246

characteristics' by Deng has been recognized, the goal of the economic reform as to

'build a socialist market economy' has been verified, and a new core of the CCP with Jiang Zemin as the leader has been elected. As Jiang showed his support to Deng's carrying on reform agenda, his status as the successor has been consolidated.

'In this year, China's reform and opening-up enters a new era'<sup>432</sup>. This sentence from this editorial piece asserted that after the 1989 incidence, the liberalization of the economy resumed and is carried on into a new era, which means reform and opening-up at an even faster pace than the years before 1989.

From the figures in Graph 6, it is noticeable that the quantity of the commentary articles are not evenly distributed on the front page of People's Daily in the issues collected from 1994 to 2008 as those collected from 1978 to 1993. In some years between 1994 and 2008, there are one or two commentary articles, while in the others, there are none. For those issues published in the years of 1978 to 1993, commentary piece is seldom missing from the front page. Also the lengthy commentary and editorials are always found in the earlier year category. For example, the commentary article on the front page of the 1977 issue takes up the whole page and the other commentary on the front page of the 1979 issue also covers up almost two thirds of the page.

In the later years, these long commentaries or editorial have disappeared. The commentary articles are becoming shorter and the content has also changed from sole ideological propaganda to problems or ideas that people really care about. From the

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<sup>432</sup> From the editorial, entitled '*Tuanjie Fenjing*' (To unite and strive forward), on

issues of People' s Daily collected from 1994 to 2008, there are still a few commentary articles that are of great importance which should not be ignored. The commentary on the front page of People' s Daily on 18<sup>th</sup> January, 2000, which is written by its own commentator, is about reporting the products with quality problems and helping the consumers to identify good from bad. The commentator mentioned that the list of the products that failed to pass the national test will be exposed every Tuesday on People' s Daily, urging the producers to improve their production.

To sum up, the author asserts that through these reports and listings, the rights of the consumers and the service users can be protected, creating a market economy with the principle of 'fair competition, survival of the fittest'. This shows People' s Daily has evolved from a pure ideological platform into a monitoring role in the market economy.

Another commentary piece that is worth noticing is the one on the front page of People' s Daily on 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2006, entitled *Zhuoli Tigao Yufang he Chuzhi Tufa Gonggong Shijian de Nengli* (to improve the capability of preventing and handling sudden public emergency) and written by its own commentator. It is about the publication of the 'Guojia Tufa Gonggong Shijian Zongti Yingji Yu' an' (Master State Plan for Rapid Response to Public Emergencies) on the 8<sup>th</sup> January, 2006 by Chinese State Council. Chinese government was criticised as incompetent in the SARS epidemic emerged in China in November 2002 and spread to 26 countries. This Master State Plan for Rapid Response to Public Emergencies is made as to help the

government to tackle all major public emergencies in the future. It also helps to improve the capability of the government to prevent and deal with all major public incidences such as natural disaster, public health accidents and social security incidence; it is supposed to prevent and reduce these incidences and their loss. Thus, the author asserts that it is very important in protection of the public lives and property, in social security and in promoting the sustainable development of the economy and society.

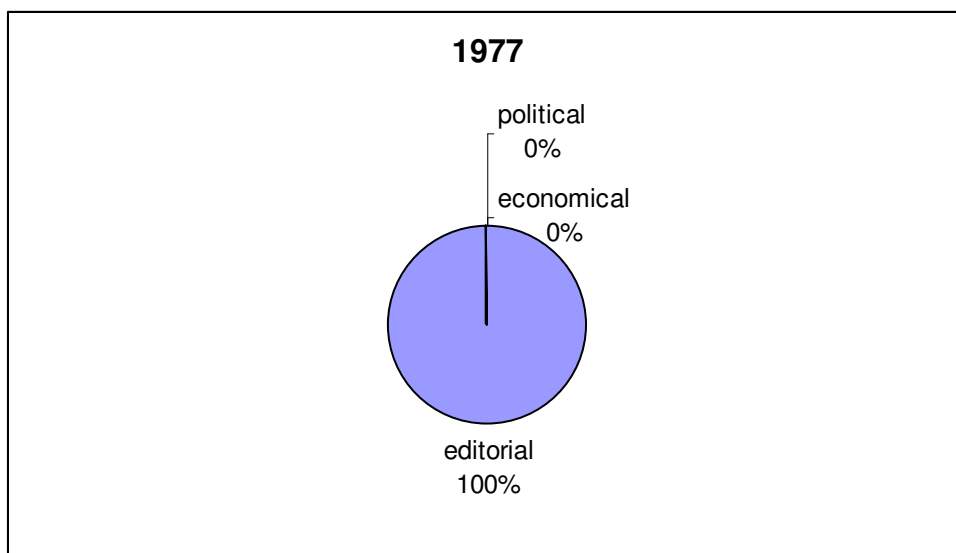
After examining all the commentary articles on the front pages of the collected issues, I will continue to explore how much the content on the front page has changed and evolved during the last three decades.

#### 6.4.4 The change of content

All the articles on the front page are divided into three categories, the commentary articles, the political and the economical. The political articles are those written about a political event, such as the official visits, party conferences, activities of the leaders, exposure of the political corruptions, etc. The economical category includes articles about economy, such as reports on agriculture, progress in industry, supplement of coal and other energy, stories of regular people who take part in the economic reform, industrial accidents, etc. In the examination of the category of commentary articles, it is noticeable that the commentary articles are becoming less in the content of the newer issues and also getting shorter in length. From Graph 6, we can find that not only the number of all the articles is changing, but also the percentages of the different categories are also changing.

For instance, from the issues collected in late 1970s and early 1980s, commentary articles are always taking up most of the space on the front page. There are a couple pieces of political news and economical news in some issues, but they can be all removed from the front page when a huge editorial article is published. On the front page of the People' s Daily, published on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1977, there is only one editorial article, as shown in the following pie chart,

Chart 1-11-1977



For the issues collected from the middle 1980s to 1990s, which is the Reform era, the page set of People' s Daily is more or less in a stable style. On the front page, there is always one piece of commentary article (sometimes two), and a few pieces of political news and economical news. The coverage on political news and economical news is always the same. In another word, they are evenly reported and published on the front page of People' s Daily, which can be shown in the following two pie charts, the

issues collected on 1<sup>st</sup> November, 1987<sup>433</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> January, 1998<sup>434</sup>.

Chart 1-11-1987

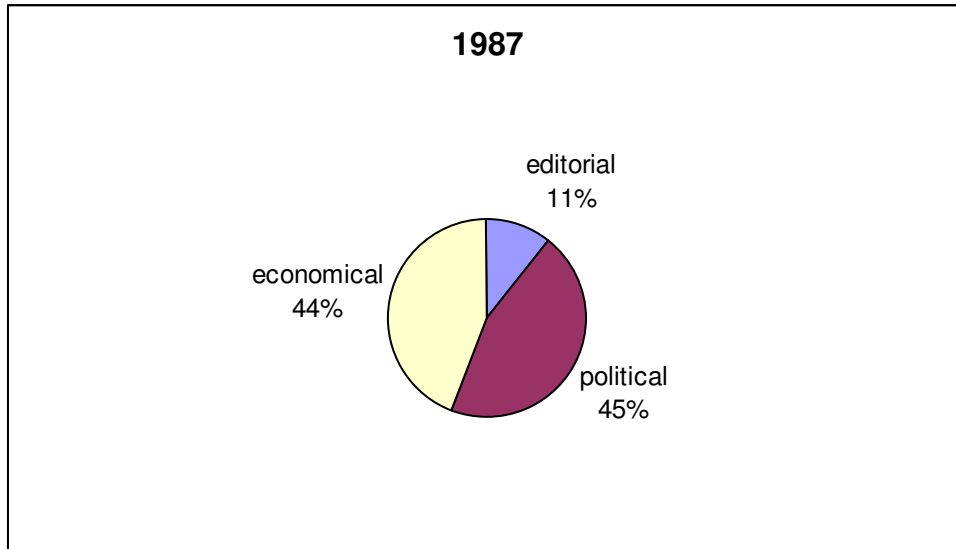
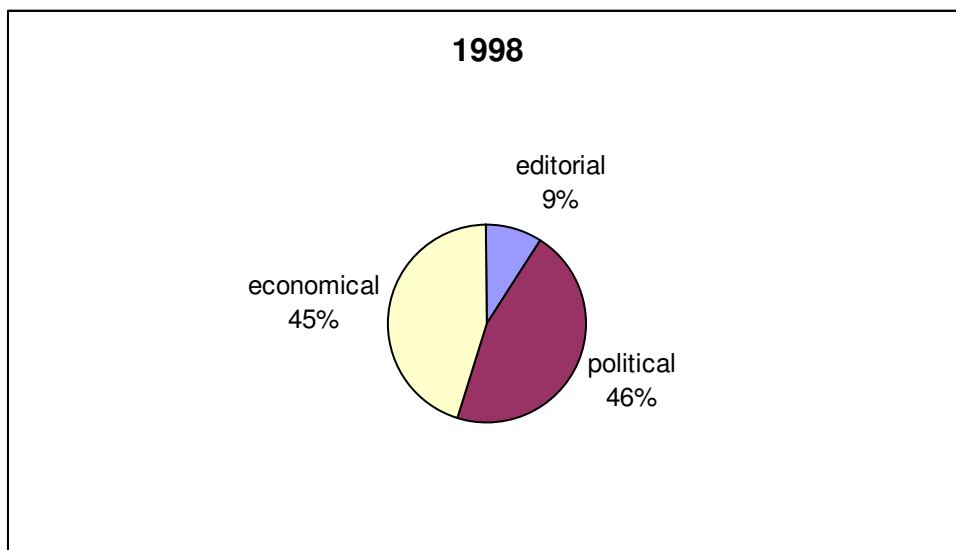


Chart 18-1-1998



As discussed previously, from late 1990s into the new millennium, editorials or

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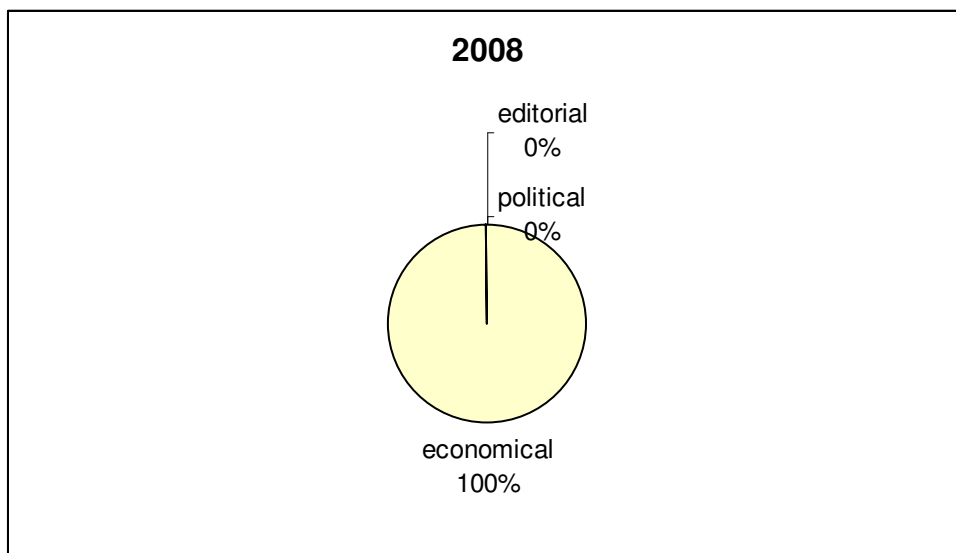
<sup>433</sup> There is 1 commentary article, 4 pieces of political news and 4 articles on economy, on the front page of the Peoples' Daily of 1st November, 1987

<sup>434</sup> There is 1 commentary article, 5 articles on political news and 5 articles on economical news, on the front page of People's Daily of 18th January, 1998, issue no. 288



commentary articles are gradually losing their predominant status on the front page of People’ s Daily. More spaces are devoted to domestic news and international news, and to the news photos and even advertisement. News on economy, marketing are reported more frequently, taking the vacuum left by editorials and political news. The latest collection of all is the issue published on 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, on the front page of which, there is no commentary or political articles, but with 9 articles on economy, including three photos, two small pieces of advertisement and one reading index. The content is shown in the following pie chart.

Chart 7-1-2008



Since the 1980s, along with the introduction of the new technology into the printing, the page settings of People’ s Daily are more professional, for example, the use of photos in the articles. There is also evolution in the profession of journalism. The reports are not limited to domestic politics. The journalists started to report on international news, sports news, stories of regular people, etc. From late 1990s, there

is also a tendency of commercialisation in the newspaper. With the fierce competition in the market and the lower budget from the government, People' s Daily started to get advertising. Small pieces of advertisement even appear on the front page, on the front page of the issues collected on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2002; 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 2004; 6<sup>th</sup> April 2005, and 9<sup>th</sup> January, 2006, there is one small advertisement, and on the front page of the issues published on 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2007 and 7<sup>th</sup> January, 2008, it increases to two pieces.

#### 6.4.5 Names of the leaders on the front page: the appearance and disappearance

Investigating the names of the leaders on the front page of People' s Daily is an important way of understanding Chinese politics. The appearance of a new name and its repeating on the front page, especially in the headlines of the articles that are occupying the dominant places on the page, always shows the rising of a new political figure. Whilst the sudden disappearance of a familiar name on the front page often means the loss of power of this figure, due to his political oust or physical death, most of the times, the political reason other than the physical reason. For example, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping have both passed away, but their political legacy, referred to as Mao Zedong Thought and Deng Xiaoping Theory remained in CCP' s history, which will keep coming back in the articles on the front page, although not so much in the titles.

The dominance of different names on the front page of People' s Daily actually divides China' s last three decades into different eras. The years between 1976 and

2008 can be divided into four periods, which are Pre-Reform period, the starting of Reform, the democratic movement years and the Resume and Reform All Around period.

The Pre-Reform period refers to the years between 1976 and 1979, when there is a power struggle between the Reformists and the Whatever Faction. At this time, the names of the leaders that make the most appearance on the front page of People's Daily are Mao Zedong, Hua Guofeng, Ye Jianying, Deng Xiaoping and Li Xiannian. 1976 is the year when Mao died. As the supreme leader of PRC from its foundation in 1949 to the day he died, Mao was regarded as the saviour and great leader for Chinese people. His influence was so overwhelming that the personal cult to him in his late years resulted in a disastrous Cultural Revolution. However, after his death, his name is still respected the most and the Gang of Four were seen as responsible for the wrongs in the Cultural Revolution. Hua Guofeng, as appointed by Mao as the legitimate successor, with the help of Ye Jianying, had the Gang of Four arrested and trial. Hua was later criticized for his Two Whatever Doctrine to carry on Mao's class struggle mandate, which makes impossible for the rehabilitation of the people who were wrongfully treated in the Cultural Revolution and other campaigns mobilized by Mao. It is against the will of the most people at the time and also it is not good for the recovery of the economy. Deng saw the urgent need of change of the situation, and gradually he and other reformists gained the power over Hua through the Discussion of the Criterion of Truth (as elaborated in the previous session).

The Starting of the Reform era refers to the years between 1980 and 1988, which is the first stage of the economic reform and opening-up. During this period, the

reformists, Deng Xiaoping, and his subordinates, Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang, makes the first steps into the economic liberation and first trial in political transformation (which failed and resulted in the democratic movement). Their names make the most appearance on the front page of People's Daily. It is noticeable that from the issue collected in the year 1980, Hua's name suddenly disappeared, and is missing from all the other issues collected after 1980. It is because of his oust in 1980 and 1981 as he gave his posts in CCP to Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang. Hua became low key after his ousting. He remained as an ordinary member of the Central Committee of CCP until the 16<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of November, 2002. Although he failed in the power struggle with Deng, he is not physically harmed or jailed, compared to the power struggles in Mao's time, the political leaders who have lost their power were physically eliminated or jailed as during the Cultural Revolution.

The third period is a break of the Reform era, between the years of 1989 and 1992, when the democratic movement rose and the Reform was interrupted for a few years. Both Zhao Ziyang and Hu Yaobang are not mentioned in the People's Daily. As discussed in previous chapters, in 1986, a series of student demonstrations took place. Hu Yaobang, at the time the holding the official title of General Secretary of the CPC, had to resign in 1987 due to his empathetic attitude towards the student activists and the liberal intelligentsia. This once again proved that Deng, although not the official top leader, is the de facto supreme leader. Hu was also asked to self-criticize, and he died at a Party Political Bureau meeting on 15 April, 1989 due to a heart attack.

His death triggered a new round of student protests and later resulted in the 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident. Since then, Hu's name disappeared from the front page

of People' s Daily, and also other printed media. The 1989 Tiananmen Square Incident also brings end to Zhao' s political life. After the resignation of Hu, Zhao became the General Secretary of CPC in 1987. Zhao' s ideas are similar with those of Hu, for example, they both believe in the free-market reforms, both are advocates of the separation of the state and the party and both sympathetic towards the student movements. That' s why Zhao, after Hu, gradually loses the support of Deng, the paramount leader. Zhao' s post as the General Secretary ended in 1989 after the events, and he was under house arrest for the rest of his life. His name disappeared from People' s Daily, replaced by the name of Jiang Zemin, the successor General Secretary of CPC. During this third period, the names of Jiang Zemin and Li Peng made the most appearance on the front page. Li Peng, the Premier, also known as the one of the biggest hardliners, backed the use of force to crack down the student protests and declared martial law. The appearance of his name on the front page shows that during this period, the requirement of political stability overcomes the demand for the growth of the economy, and a more conservative policy was favoured by the leaders of the CPC.

The fourth period is the Resume of the Reform, which is since 1993 to the current. After Deng' s Southern Tour, the economic reforms were resumed in 1993. Jiang Zemin' s name appears the most on the front page of People' s Daily in 1990s and early 2000s. He was the core of the third generation leaders of CPC. He became the General Secretary in the aftermath of the 1989 student protests and resigned in 2002, but he still held the post as the Chairman of the Central Military Commission until 2004. (Just like Deng did after he resigned all other official posts, he still held the

Chairman of the Central Military Commission until retirement) Jiang was effectively the paramount leader in the 1990s due to Deng' s old age. During this period, Chinese economy experienced a significant and fast developmental growth, averagely nearly 10% GDP growth annually.

## **6.5 People' s Daily: Importance and Significance**

As discussed previously in this chapter, there has been an unprecedented growth in the new press media in the recent three decades. After a close analysis into the growth of the new press, there has been an actual decline of the Dangbaos (party newspaper) an expansion of the Shimingbaos (not a party newspaper) which includes all kinds of evening news, metros and other urban newspapers. Another major development in the recent years is the marketization in the press media. Newspaper offices which used to be part of the public service sectors are commercialized and re-established as limited liability companies. For example, the Yun Nan Press Media Group Limited Liability Company was founded on 18<sup>th</sup> December, 2009. To compete in the press market and compete with other media, especially the Internet, these press companies try to produce more news that would attract their readers.

The emphasis upon the People' s Daily in this research is because of its importance and significance in China' s press media. It has its unique status as the most authoritative newspaper of CCP. Also, the evolution in the People' s Daily mirrors the incremental democratization in China.

Firstly, compared to other new press or other party newspaper, the circulation of the People' s Daily is not the largest in China, however, it is still one of the biggest and most influential newspapers. More importantly, the readership of the People' s Daily is mainly composed of the CCP leaders, government officials, intellectuals and others in the public service sectors. It is the organ of the Central Committee of CCP and it publishes the statements for the most powerful elites of China. The readership of other newspapers such as the evening news and metros is quite different from that of the People' s Daily.

Secondly, after examining the front page of the People' s Daily in the last three decades, we can find the links between the changes in the People' s Daily and the social political processes in China. It is one of the most important sources for political observers and commentators to know about the political changes in China. Therefore, the indications of the evolution in the People' s Daily can help us to understand the changes in the press media as well as in the political realm.

Thirdly, due to the time period of the analysis (from late 1970s to the present), the People' s Daily has a history that is long enough for us to fully investigate. As explained before, most the new press come out in the recent years did not exist from the beginning of the reform. They are new born newspaper from the beginning and most of them have a distinctive nature from the conventional party newspapers. It does not mean to deny their influence, however, compared to the People' s Daily, they do not have a history long enough for us to trace and analyse.

Fourthly, the People' s Daily fits into the incremental model. It stands for the most conservative part of the press media. However, a small or insignificant change in the People' s Daily, especially on the front page may indicate a big and significant transformation in the press media as well as in the political realm. And the changes in the People' s Daily are gradual and incremental while the changes that take place in the whole press media are quicker and faster. For example, the advertisement appeared on the front page of People' s Daily is very small and the content is only a few Chinese characters, from which we can indicate that bigger advertisement is allowed in the other newspapers. In the political realm, it is proved as so. For example, a slightly sequence change in the names on the front page may indicate the rise or fall of a political figure. The sudden disappearance of a name may demonstrate a politician' s eviction or resignation.

Last but not least, most of the influential new press media are regional other than national. Due to the large territory of China and the localized feature of the urban newspapers, it is difficult to find a newspaper with a nation wide circulation and influence. It is manageable to collect the People' s Daily from all cities of China while the other newspapers which have equally large circulations are not so easy to collect.

To sum up, it is because of the political importance, and the nation wide circulation and influence, the richness of its history, that the emphasis of this research is placed upon the People' s Daily.

## **6.6 Conclusion**



This chapter is the last one of the three-level –analysis which includes changes at the state level, the grassroots level and the society level. However, it is not the least important one. The aim of this chapter is to verify (print) media as one of the rising civil society forces. The topic of civil society and China is no less controversial than the topic of democracy and China. Some theorists doubt that China has any civil society at all while other find the civil society of China is not exactly like those in the West. Since the founding of People’s Republic of China, the state is designed under the rules of Marxism-Leninist system in which individuals has very little space. The situation has been changed after the 1970s. Individuals gradually get more independence from the state and the public sphere is growing. The growth of media, the irreplaceable part of a modern society, is one of the most significant events since the late 1970s. The traditional media, the press, has expanded in terms of the total circulation and quantity of types of newspapers. These changes are significant in a number of ways.

Firstly, people have more sources of information and they have more freedom in choosing the information they like to get, which helped enlarge their rights to know.

Secondly, mass media mediates between state and society. It has changed from a pure ideology platform to a more professional ‘fourth power’. New values and ideas are introduced to people of China whose lives once used to be filled with ongoing political mobilization. It helped to shift people’s old values and believes, which could be essential in the transition to democracy.

Last but not least, the competition in the market has resulted in the change in the authoritative newspapers (Dangbaos), which accerlarates the wethering of old ideology. People's Daily, as the most authoritative newspaper of the Party, has also undergone some significant changes during the last three decades.

## **CONCLUSION**

## 7.1 Democracy and Democratization Revisited

The word ‘democracy’ has given inspirations to Chinese people since the introduction of it into China in the middle 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Although in traditional Chinese philosophic thought, some values such as the monarch should serve the interests of ordinary people<sup>435</sup>, could be regarded as sharing similarities with democratic values. The Confucianism based Chinese feudal political system has its distinctive features from the Western liberal democracies.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, 1919, when thousands of students went on parade in the name of seeking for ‘democracy’, to express their discontent towards the corrupted Republic government and its weakness in confronting the imperial presence, they did not realize that their actions have become an influential historical landmark, May Fourth Movement, which was about to change the whole state in the next 30 years. People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949 as an independent nation state.

70 years after the May Fourth Movement, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, 1989, another generation of young students, following their precedents of 70 years ago, went on parade in Tiananmen Square which resulted in bloodshed. It is also named by the date it took place, June Fourth. Indeed, it is after June fourth, that most Chinese scholars started to realize the democratization process is not as smooth as they originally thought it would be.

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<sup>435</sup> See, for example, Mencius, *Jin Xin Xia*, (the Analects of Mencius, With One’s Heart, the second half)

In fact, the theorists from the West have long time realized the complex nature of democratization process. The first problem comes with identifying a democratization process lies on the disagreement upon the definition of democracy itself.

Rousseau's ideas of unmediated popular government are no longer feasible in the modern nation-state by the 18<sup>th</sup> century, liberal/representative democracy became the choice for new democrats. Especially after 1945, with the end of WWII and the onset of Cold War, democracy is regarded to imply a particular form of government and more importantly, the empirical 'reality' of the West. However, the over determining nature of the empirical theorizing and its focus on the government while neglecting other factors such as culture and society were often criticized. The development of empirical democracy also gave rise to modernization literature on democratization, which later became one of the most influential schools within the literature. Modernization theorists sought to find the causal nexus between economic development and democratization because at that time, regimes that belonged to the West camp tend to be more economically advanced and prosperous than those belonged to the Soviet bloc.

Democratization literature was further enriched in the 1990s after a series of regime change took place in the former Eastern European Communist countries, which is described as the 'Third Wave' by some commentators.<sup>436</sup> After the end of Cold War, comparative politicians have been given a truly global task in its study for democratic political development for the first time<sup>437</sup>. The Transition Literature quickly expanded

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<sup>436</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* 1991,

<sup>437</sup> John D. Nagle and Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p1  
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in the 1990s as it tries to grasp the recent political change in the international relations. Different from modernization school and the comparative historical sociologists who place emphasis upon the structural change, (for instance, some modernizationists concern about how economic development gives rise to civil society and shifting people's values to more democratic ones, while comparative historical sociologists think that only through the revolution led by bourgeois can capitalism and democracy be realized), transition literature focus on the initiatives of human action. Indeed, for structuralists, the communist regimes in the Eastern European countries do not inhabit a structure that provides all the pre-conditions for a democracy. Therefore, the transition theorists agree that the only condition for democracy is unified national state.

Whether democracy is a reality that exists in the real world or it is just something we believe that exists, the process that brings it about is not a simple one. Modernization school, comparative historical sociologists and the transition theorists all give explanations for the creation of a democracy through different perspectives, what they seem to agree on is that the path through which democracy is established can be very complex and lengthy. For example, the transition theorists divide this dynamic process into several stages.<sup>438</sup> Some other theorists define the features of democratization as 'complex', 'long-term', 'dynamic', and 'open-endedness'<sup>439</sup>.

Recalling the constructivists' view of democracy, it has its core values and ideals

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<sup>438</sup> Dankwart A. Rustow, 'Transition to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model', *Comparative Politics* 2, 3, April 1970, pp. 337-363

<sup>439</sup> Laurence Whitehead, *Democratization: Theory and Experience*, 2001, (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.27, 246

which will remain as they are because of its deontological pressures<sup>440</sup>, while its applicability to a specific country should have historical, social and cultural context.

Out of all three schools, modernization scholars have done most fruitful works on the topic of China's democratization. Here, democratization has a broader meaning. As the meanings of democracy should not be only about government (state), the meanings of democratization should not be only about the forming of a democratic government. It should include more factors and variables. A broader meaning of democratization can be understood as, a process through which the authoritarian regime evolves into a democratic regime.

## **7.2 Incremental Democratization**

On 5<sup>th</sup>, December, 1978, Wei Jingsheng put up a poster for 'The Fifth Modernization – Democracy and so on', he may not be the first one to ask for Chinese democratization, but he is probably the first Chinese who related democracy with modernization in public. Wei's perception of modernization and democracy may not be exactly the same as the modernization theorists who have been working on this topic on China, but they agree on that democracy is an important feature of a modern state and society.

Modernization theorists are pleased to find what changes economic development has brought to China's state-society relations. Some of them drew out very optimistic

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<sup>440</sup>Giovanni Sartori, *Democratic Theory*, 1962  
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conclusions, expecting China to be free in a specific time in the future<sup>441</sup>. While this literature in a way helps with understanding the democratization in China, there is a total neglect of the intellectual debate within the Chinese academy.

The Chinese incrementalists refer to the theorists who hold a middle ground within the debate (not as radical as the dissidents, also disagree the ideas of the New Left), they believe that democratization in China will follow a so-called incremental model. They also stand for the mainstream opinion.

The starting point of the incremental model is very much closed to the modernizationists. Like the modernizationists' enthusiasm in the economic development, incrementalists' findings are mostly based on the changes in the last three decades (after the initiation of the Reform when the nation economy started to take off.)

The incremental model consists of three levels and shares the features with other democratization processes, identified as 'complex', 'long-term', 'dynamic', and 'open-endedness'.

The three levels include the incremental changes took place at the state level, the grassroots level and the society level. These changes are verified into three levels, however, these levels are not totally separated from the other levels, in fact, there is also interaction between them.

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<sup>441</sup> Henry S.Rowen, 'When Will the Chinese People Be Free?' , *Journal of*  
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Firstly, at the state level, it refers to the evolution of CCP and the strengthening of the legislature.

In the last three decades, there is a decentralization of power within the Party, it started to accept a species of interest-based politics (even if most interests are pursued by and through agencies of the state)<sup>442</sup>. CCP has evolved out of a former revolutionary party to a reformed party. One of the most recent and significant reforms is the enlarged party membership. The Party is now taking in new members from the middle class (including private entrepreneurs<sup>443</sup>, who were classified as the bourgeois as opposed to proletariat).

The legislature - People's Congresses at all levels of the hierarchy, especially the National People's Congress has been strengthened. As constitutionally recognized as the highest organ of state power<sup>444</sup>, the NPC has become more assertive in exercising its power as a legislature, including law-making and supervising the works of local government and the court and the procuratorate. As a result of which, a legal reform has been launch to develop a legal system of the rule of law. NPC has also become more progressively autonomous. For instance, during the 1989 incidence, it even tried to call emergency meetings of the people's delegates, in order to abolish

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*Democracy* 18.3 (2007) 38-52

<sup>442</sup> Mickel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) 27-34

<sup>443</sup> The term 'private entrepreneurs' is taken from Jiang Zemin's Speech on the Celebration for the Eightieth Anniversary of Establishment of CCP, published in *People's Daily*, 02-07-2001, translated by the author

<sup>444</sup> Article 57, Section 1, Chapter 3 of Constitution of People's Republic of China, Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Fifth National People's Congress and promulgated for implementation by the Proclamation of the National People's Congress on December 4, 1982, 1457

the martial law. However, it became result-less due to the intervention of the Party. Whether this tame legislative assembly will drive the political agenda in a democratising direction is not clear yet, but it has become more vocal and critical in the discussion of public policy.

The second level where the changes are taking place is at the grassroots, which is regarded as the first step of initiating a democratic transition from bottom up.<sup>445</sup> The reforms have accelerated urbanization in China and boost the economic growth in some big cities such as Beijing and Shanghai, however, the majority of Chinese population still live in the numerous villages in China's suburban and rural areas. The democratic practice created in the Village Committee election in the 1980s has given numerous Chinese citizens an opportunity to exercise their political rights which in turn helped to nurish their democratic consciousness.

The lowest level village election has been practised more than a decade. In recent years, there has already been some similar practice at the higher county and township level. Although it is still very limited and at the moment seems unlikely to be enlarged to the provincial or national level, the practice will continue. Some surveyors have already discovered the 'legitimacy downwards' phenomenon, in which truly democratically elected officers enjoy more legitimacy than those who are not, such as the township and county level government. This has resulted in tension in the structure which may anticipate the expansion of this democratic practice.

The third level refers to the society level, the expansion and commercialization of

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<sup>445</sup> Tang Liang, *Jianjin, Minzhu: Biange Zhong De Zhongguo Zhengzhi*  
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media, and the beginnings of investigative journalism.

The media has become more commercialized and market-oriented. Some central outlets are directly under the control of the Party's Propaganda Department, such as the People's Daily, the New China News Agency, China Central Television, Party newspapers, and army newspapers and so on. But these media together with other newspapers, magazines, radio and TV stations, now compete in the national media market. 'In the political domain, they often push the envelope of what the regime considers off-limits by investigating stories about local corruption and abuses of power'<sup>446</sup>. The media are increasingly taking the role of tribunes of the people by exposing complaints against wrong-doing by local-level official<sup>447</sup>.

The authoritative Dangbaos (Party Newspaper) has suffered a huge decline in the circulation and numbers, while the new Shiminbaos (Civil Newspapers) has quickly become prevalent and enjoyed an increasing readership of various social levels. To attract more readers, Dangbaos have started to provide more diversified content as Shiminbaos which gradually blurs the distinction between these two. Citizens of China enjoy more information and more transparency which enlarged their right to know. Some urban newspapers are becoming more assertive when less censorship is placed upon them since the Reform. More professionalized journalists now enjoy a freer hand compared to prior to 1978. Whether the press will become truly independent as the fourth power is uncertain yet, but new space for criticism and

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(*Incremental Democracy: Chinese Politics in transition*), 2004, p230;

<sup>446</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1 (2003) p.12

<sup>447</sup> Andrew J. Nathan, 'Authoritarian Resilience', *Journal of Democracy* 14.1

investigative journalism is being created.

The interactions between these three levels are constant. For example, between the state level and the grassroots level, the interaction can be identified when the authority recognized the spontaneously formed villager's committees, especially after the makings of Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees, the central government actually encouraged this system which is pushed by the state to be implemented nationwide.

There is also interaction between the grassroots level and the society level. The experimental reforms at township level to exercise direct elections were reported by the media, for instance, the direct election of the township Mayor in Suining was reported by Chengdu Shangbao (Chengdu Business Newspaper of Sichuan Province) on 29<sup>th</sup>, December, 1998. Xinhua Daily on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, 2000 also reported the election reform in Henan Province<sup>448</sup>. The media exposition of the corrupted township and county governments and party committees and the various forms of resistance (violent as the extreme form) from the peasants demonstrates the urgent need for accelerating the reforms<sup>449</sup>.

The interaction between the society and the state since the Reform is also noticeable. Before the Reform, all newspapers were required to release the news provided by the New China News Agency. After decades of Reform, especially after the press

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(2003) p.12

<sup>448</sup> Huang Weiping et.al, the Reform of Township Mayor Election in China, *Modern China Studies*, 2001:4, No.75, p.46-64; footnote 3;

<sup>449</sup> Huang Weiping et.al, the Reform of Township Mayor Election in China, *Modern China Studies*, 2001:4, No.75, p.47;

marketization, critical reports towards the corrupted party carders and leaders and reports on disclosure of the dark side of the society are now taking more space on the pages. For instance, the Xinkuaibao (News Express) reported exclusively on the frauds of the College Entrance Examination in Guangdong Province, which resulted in considerable social uproars<sup>450</sup>.

There are also some important features of the incremental model on Chinese democratization, which are described as ‘complex’, ‘long-term’, ‘dynamic’, and ‘open-endedness’.

‘Complex’ means that it is not a simple process. It is the reason why the three mini waves of democratization have failed to achieve the regime transition overnight. All the three mini waves, including Beijing Spring liberalization movement in 1978, students’ movements in 1986 and 1989, took place along with the international democratization waves. However, unlike the former East European communist countries where the democratic regime transition happened quickly, CCP was able to take control of the situation. It showed the resilience of the regime to transition, which means that the process will not be a simple one.

‘Long-term’ actually means incremental or gradual. It means that it takes time to proceed. There can be a few years of consecutive liberalization followed by some years of stagnation or even a set back. For instance, during the late 1970s to the mid 1980s, which is the initiation period of the economic reforms, the centralized economic system was reformed and the private sector began to grow. After the 1989

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<sup>450</sup> Xinkuaibao (News Express) reports, from 9th July to 17th July in 2000;  
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students' movement, there were a few years of set-back when the reform was suspended until 1992 after Deng's well-known Speech of the Southern Tour. However, it does not eliminate the possibility of a quick transformation in the future. The gradualism or the incrementalism of this model determined the discursiveness of this process.

'Dynamic' refers to the dynamics related with the model. A few dynamics are identified here, for instance, the dynamics of the interaction between economic and politics. The operation and function of a modern market economy is incompatible with the Leninist requirement of comprehensive party and state control over society. For some observers, CCP has faced a dilemma which other authoritarian regimes have faced, to continue economic liberalization or to tough it out. Oksenberg cited Robert Dahl's theory<sup>451</sup> that we may anticipate that the leaders' calculations will be governed by an assessment of the relative costs, benefits, and risks to them of each course of action. That is, the leaders would calculate that communist rule, political stability, and honest government would be enhanced rather than weakened by a process of democratization.<sup>452</sup> Other dynamics include the impact of globalization, the transformation inside the CCP, and the development of civil society forces.

'Open-endedness' as opposed to the clear-cut regime change, the pace of democratization process is under control by elites. The authoritarian regime is able to conduct the strategy of firstly economic modernization and liberalization, then political openness. As earlier experience proved that a more radical liberal democracy

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<sup>451</sup> Dahl, Robert A., *Democracy and its Critics*, 1989, Yale University Press

<sup>452</sup> Michel Oksenberg, 'Confronting a Classic Dilemma', *Journal of Democracy*

is associated with failure in performance. The regime then uses the priority of economic growth as an excuse to put off the political democratization. Later, the performance-based legitimacy of political authoritarianism allowed the regime to control the pace and limits of democratization, without clear-cut regime change.

### **7.3 Chinese Characteristics**

The incremental model of Chinese democratization can not be fully established without the historical, social and cultural context. In this thesis, an attempt to verify these contexts has been made.

Historical context. As in the debate on democratization, each school comes from a specific historical background or bases their findings upon a historical approach. For instance, modernization school became influential after the onset of Cold War as theorists tried to justify liberal democracy as opposed to the Soviet bloc. The transition of East European Communist countries into democracies in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century gave rise to the transition literature. The historical sociologists based their findings on the history of capitalism. The well-known wave theory seems simply describing the history since 1828<sup>453</sup>. The incremental model has its unique historical background. It appeared to be one of the four groups within Chinese academy in the discussion of Chinese democratization and became the most influential one. The theorists of this group have seen the failure of the mini democratic waves in China and have experienced the fundamental changes in China in the Reform era. Their

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9.1 (1998) p.31

<sup>453</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth*

research is mainly based on the changing state-society relations in the last 3 decades since the Reform started in 1978.

Cultural context. Some modernization theorists have applied cultural specific variables such as 'civic culture'<sup>454</sup> and the rational and individualistic values embodied in European culture<sup>455</sup> to explain the causality of democratization. The incremental model also tries to explain the distinctiveness of Chinese democratization with its long history the domination of Confucianism in the political culture. The values and ethical of Confucianism have been long rooted in Chinese culture and tradition which are distinctive from the western values. As Singaporean Prime Minister Lee outlined in official norms, these values are communitarianism, familism, decision making by consensus, and social and religious harmony<sup>456</sup>. While in the Western tradition, there are positive roles for individual citizens, and an autonomous civic culture which honours and sees virtue in social and moral pluralism.

During the two thousand years of feudal society in China, Confucianism has maintained its all-important status as the basis of the rule of the dynasts. Confucianism, originally established by Confucius and Mencius, is mainly about the philosophy of forming a hierarchical state and society, by which people's relationships are defined. The core element is called 'Ren' (benevolence). The basic

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*Century*, 1991

<sup>454</sup> Gabriel A. Almond and Sidney Verba, *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations*, 1965; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>455</sup> See the discussion in Huntington, pp.298-311; cited in Graeme Gill, *The Dynamics of Democratization: Elites, Civil Society and the Transition Process*, 2000, p.2

<sup>456</sup> Daniel A. Bell, David Brown, Kanishka Jayasuriya and David Jones (eds), *Towards Illiberal Democracy in Pacific Asia*, 1995, p.8; cited in John D. Nagle and 312



meaning of 'Ren', is to love people, as Confucius once answered his student Fan Chi<sup>457</sup>. It requires love for relatives and friends, but also to love all the people; sacrifice of one's own interest to benefit the community; unselfishness, ethics and morals. In this way, the society can become a harmonious integral entity.

For example, 'to build a harmonious society' was brought up in the 16<sup>th</sup> Party's Congress<sup>458</sup>. Although it was not explicitly referring to Confucianism, it seems that Confucius's ideas about maintaining the harmony in the state and society are experiencing a renaissance.

Social context. For example, some works of the modernizationists have paid attention to the relationship between economic development and the rise of civil society. While the historical sociologists are mostly concerned about the social structure and the roles different social classes have played on the way to democracy<sup>459</sup>. The incrementalists also pay a lot of attention to the social context relating with Chinese democratization. Chinese society is not evenly developed due to the vast size of it, the unevenly developed local economy, unevenly distributed population.

China has the third largest territory of the world which inhabits the world's largest population. Majority of the population live in or close to the south eastern coastal area where most of the urbanization and modernization projects and programmes take

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Alison Mahr, *Democracy and Democratization*, 1999, p.263

<sup>457</sup> Lun Yu Yan Yuan 12, (the Analects of Confucius, Chapter 12)

<sup>458</sup> It was firstly raised in the 4<sup>th</sup> session of the 16<sup>th</sup> Party's Congress which was held between 16<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup>, September, 2004

<sup>459</sup> Barrington Moore Jr, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy: Lord and Peasant in the Making of the Modern World*, 1969, originally published in 1966

place. Fewer people live in the north western inland area where the local economy is underdeveloped. It is thus very difficult to find a standard parameter when investigating social economical processes in different parts of China. Taking this into consideration, the incrementalists have paid attention to the rising civil society forces in big cities as well as the democratic practice in the rural villages.

## **7.4 Possible Critiques**

The three-level analysis and emphasis on the historical, social, cultural factors of the incremental model may be criticized as being cultural or structural determinism. However, the initiatives of the agencies (especially some individuals or a group of individuals) were also acknowledged. An investigation into the influence of certain political figures has been done. For example, in the discussions on the evolution of CCP, the rival between the reformists and the conservative figures in the early reform period is analyzed. Deng, the paramount leader of the time when 1989 students' movement took place, has played a decisive role in turning the democratic movement into a totally different direction as opposed to the other communist leaders such as Gorbachev. However, it was also him, in 1992, decided to continue with the economic liberalization and since, ordinary Chinese have actually enjoyed more freedom than before.

Some theorists have also acknowledged that a sudden or big-bang transition toward democracy may occur, only if all or most within the ruling elite calculate that the advantages of a shift from slow liberalization to more rapid and fundamental

democratization outweigh the risks of maintaining authoritarian rule.<sup>460</sup>

## 7.5 The Importance of the Case Study

Choosing People's Daily as the object of case study is primarily because of its significant and unique status as the organ of the Central Committee of CCP. It provides a mirror for the political changes took place in China in the past three decades. As we can see from the study, People's Daily, the most authoritative newspaper of CCP, has also undergone some important changes.

In the pre-reform era (1976-1979), it serves as the 'mouthpiece' of the Party, praising the greatness of leaders (mostly, Mao), and condemning the political enemy (such as the Gang of Four). The front page was filled with ideological slogans and expressions.

In the years 1979 to 1989, People's Daily started to change in a subtle way. Names of the paramount leaders are still taking the most significant places on the front page and their activities (meetings, speeches, diplomatic visits) are reported in detail, the ideological slogans make less appearance, and the more reports on economic development are published on the front page.

In the years 1989 to 1992, especially after Tiananmen, the ideological claims reappeared. However, after Deng's Nanxun Speech in 1992, these claims are quickly replaced by more useful and interesting news and reports.

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<sup>460</sup> See for example, Suisheng Zhao, 'Three Scenarios', *Journal of Democracy* 9.1 (1998) p.57  
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The content of the People's Daily has become diversified, the lay-out is more professional and the appearance of advertisement on the front page showed its commercialization.

People's Daily is still one of the biggest and most influential newspapers. The readership of the People's Daily is mainly composed of the CCP leaders, government officials, intellectuals and others in the public service sectors who are the most powerful elites of China. Therefore, it is still one of the most important sources for political observers and commentators to know about the political changes in China. More importantly, it has a rich history for the purpose of this thesis.

## **7.6 2008 Olympics and After**

2008 is a year that a lot has happened and may have pushed China forward on the road to the incremental democratization. It is 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of China's Reform and Open-up policy. Despite the impact of the global financial crisis, China's economy experienced 9% growth in 2008. China successfully hosted the 29<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games at the first time which was reported by all the major media in the world.

It is also a year the most disastrous earthquake took place in the history of PRC. The government leaders went to organize the rescue in the first place. Thousands of volunteers, organized by NGOs or by themselves, came to Sichuan Province to help rescue and with the reconstruction afterward. Charities and social organizations

played an important role in collecting the donations and fundraising programmes. All the information and moving stories are reported by the media, press, broadcasting and on-line. It was described as a rehearsal for all the civil society forces in China.

It is also a year when the Regulation of the People's Republic of China on the Disclosure of Government Information was passed. Chinese government was criticized of hiding the information during the 2003 SARS epidemic. In an internet era, it is becoming more and more difficult to hide some important information, especially when it affects a lot of people. Chinese government was afraid that the release of some sensitive information, for instance, the information on accidents or problems, would cause panic and social unrest. It might be right in some cases, but in most of the time, get to know what is happening in the first place can prevent people from harm and also reduce the loss. One of the most important incidents in 2008 is the exposure of the problematic San Lu milk powder. The media coverage and people's reaction helped to promote the 'accountability storm', during which the officials are held to their accountability and if misconduct is found, they would take the blame and resign or be dismissed.

In 2009, when in other countries like United State, the recession has become severe; it has not made much influence in China as it did in other places. The economists are still expecting an 8% growth rate in China this year; while in some developed countries, it can be 0 or even minus. In a world where the globe has become a village and values such as democracy and liberty are accepted as universal, the optimism towards China's path to incremental democratization will be appreciated one day.

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