

Revolutionary Rehearsal and the Case(s) of China

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“...even China is now on the way to a revolution” --- Friedrich Engels²

“When China wakes, it will shake the world” --- Napoleon Bonaparte³

In 1989, the world witnessed revolutionary situations in Eastern Europe and China. The rebellions and revolutions of that year shook beliefs as well as political parties and toppled theories as well as governments. While the revolutions were successful in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, the revolution in China failed. Therefore, China in 1989 represents a negative case of revolution (*geming*, literally heavenly change), despite it depicting a positive case of rebellion. Not only did China not experience revolution in 1989 (as Czechoslovakia and Hungary did), but it also failed to have a regime change (as Romania and Bulgaria did). Interestingly, however, China shares most of the causal characteristics of modern revolution with Czechoslovakia and its Velvet Revolution of 1989. The focus of this analysis, a decade after the Tiananmen Square rebellion and

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² Friedrich Engels, *Principles of Communism* [1847], #11, <<http://csf.colorado.edu/psn/marx/archive/1847-prin/main.htm>>

³ Cited in Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn, *China Wakes: The Struggle for the Soul of a Rising Power* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), frontisquote. Cf. W.A.P. Martin, *The Awakening of China*, 1907 cited in *Ibid.*: “China is the theatre of the greatest movement now taking place on the face of the globe. In comparison with it, the agitation in Russia shrinks into insignificance.... It promises nothing short of the complete renovation of the oldest, most populous and most conservative of empires”. Also see Andre Gunder Frank, *ReORIENT: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

massacre, therefore lies in the apparent differences: a history of democracy and, especially, the role of the domestic military.

The similarities are, nevertheless, worth recounting. Even though China does not have a history of democracy as does Czechoslovakia, it does have a history of democratic movements in opposition to its authoritarian regimes both before and after the Revolution of 1949. The 1989 Democracy Movement drew heavily on this tradition, engaging in what Elizabeth Perry calls the “recycling of tradition” and what James Chace calls “a usable past”.⁴ Democracy Movement protesters consciously made reference to, and skillfully employed the symbols of, the French Revolution and the signing of the U.S. Constitution (1789), the founding of the Second International (1889), the May 4th Movement (1919), a revolutionary student movement (1926), the Chinese Revolution (1949), the April 5th Movement (1976), the Democracy Wall Movement (1978-79), the Student Movement (1986), and the recent strike wave (1987-88). On 29 May 1989, the protesters theatrically constructed and centrally displayed a thirty-foot statue in Tiananmen Square---located spatially between a huge portrait of Mao and the imposing Monument of the People's Heroes depicting the May 4th student struggle from 1919---which became known as the Goddess of Democracy. Mao Zedong, representing the past, and the Goddess of Democracy, representing the future, both larger than life, were facing off and staring at each other as the present unfolded before them and as the media transmitted this iconographic

⁴ Elizabeth J. Perry, “Casting a Chinese ‘Democracy’ Movement: The Roles of Students, Workers, and Entrepreneurs” in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China: Learning from 1989* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992), p. 149; James Chace, “‘Managing’ China’s Ascent”, *World Policy Journal*, Summer 1996, p. 87. Claude Lévi-Strauss used the term “mythemes” to describe similar phenomena. Also see Gennie Bull and Feng Ouyang, “On Culture, Democracy, et al.”, *Chinese Community Forum*, 30 September 1998.

scene around the world. Like many of the secret societies of China's past, the Democracy Movement, and especially its student leadership, both opposed and mirrored the regime it was fighting against, just as it mirrored many past political movements in China.⁵ In this way, the political economic history of China exhibits both social change and cultural continuity.⁶

The Chinese, like the Czechs, also had a unifying issue which was, broadly speaking, democracy (*minzhu*); democracy was and remains the “master frame” through which dissident individuals and groups in China organize their claims. For most dissidents, these claims did not (originally) necessitate multiparty democracy; rather, the Communist Party could, with modifications, retain its (historical, Leninist, and self-proclaimed) vanguard role. Though democracy was sometimes confused with capitalism (e.g., when Wuer Kaixi, a student leader, spoke of the *right* to wear Nike sneakers), issues of freedom and liberty were pervasive in the Democracy Movement. It is sometimes unclear, however, whether Chinese student protestors want the “struggle fruits” of their social movement to be primarily political or economic. That is probably why it has been said that “China is a country caught between a hard rock and the Hard

⁵ Even the use of Tiananmen Square itself, the site where Mao declared the establishment of the “People's Republic”, is in this cultural vein, as the documentary *The Gate of Heavenly Peace* suggests. Cf. Alexander Groth, *Revolution and Elite Access: Some Hypotheses on Aspects of Political Change* (Davis, CA: Institute of Government Affairs, 1966), p. 1; Lee Feigon, “Gender and the Chinese Student Movement” in Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom and Elizabeth J. Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, Second Ed. (Boulder, San Francisco, and Oxford: Westview Press, 1992, 1994); Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, “Mass Media and Mass Actions in Urban China, 1919-1989” in Jeremy D. Popkin, ed., *Media and Revolution: Comparative Perspectives* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1995).

⁶ Craig Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors: Students and the Struggle for Democracy in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)

Rock Café”.⁷

The students, and other protestors, initially rallied in mourning for Hu Yaobang, the reformist and purged former Communist Party General Secretary who died on 15 April 1989. In an authoritarian system where open calls for political change are viewed as threatening and therefore can be dangerous, public mourning for Hu, the purged reformer, was a metaphorical vehicle for demands for reform. The metaphor soon became more literal and calls for change began to be publicly vocalized. The core of the popular demands for change during the Beijing Spring of 1989 comprised calls for freedom of speech and press, the right of peaceable assembly, an end to the 'campaign against bourgeois liberalism', an increase in the education budget, and an end to governmental and Party corruption. These demands were shortly followed by certain other more narrow demands, such as the resignations of Prime Minister Li Peng and of Deng Xiaoping. Shortly thereafter, some students began to call for the suicide of Li, suggesting that hanging himself would be an appropriate method. The verbal attacks against Deng were generally less common and much less severe.⁸ Deng's fear, exemplified by his so-called “Polish nightmare”, was “that political concessions made in response to popular demands would be perceived as a sign of

⁷ Anonymous, told to Geraldo Rivera in Beijing during President Bill Clinton's visit to China, June 1998

⁸ Deng officially resigned from all posts five months later on 9 November (the same day, ironically, that the Berlin Wall fell), however as he was (and is) still venerated in the Communist Party, he continued to wield much power and was widely believed to be in control until his death in February 1997. Indeed, “[i]n a televised discussion with Mikhail Gorbachev, Zhao [Ziyang, then Communist Party General Secretary] revealed a secret 1987 party agreement by which leaders had agreed to consult Deng on all major policy decisions” (Melanie Manion, “Introduction: Reluctant Duelists: The Logic of the 1989 Protests and Massacre” in Michel Oksenberg, Lawrence R. Sullivan, and Marc Lambert, eds., *Beijing Spring, 1989: Confrontation and Conflict: The Basic Documents* (Armonk, NY and London: M.E. Sharpe, 1990), p. xxxv).

weakness, leading to further escalation of demands and ending in chaos, as in Poland in 1980-81".⁹ In spite of Deng's strategy, more radical and militant demands were later voiced by student protestors, including "down with military government" and "down with fascists". The students also chanted "Long live freedom, long live democracy". Echoing the big character statement (*dazibao*) that Wei Jingsheng posted on Democracy Wall in Beijing on 5 December 1978, the protestors demanded China's "Fifth Modernization: Democracy".¹⁰

Unfortunately for China, the various demands and movements for democracy may not be coherent and concrete enough of a tradition to act as a functional substitute for an *actual* history of democracy. A history of democracy, such as that which exists in Czechoslovakia, may not cause revolution *per se*; however, it can serve to inspire and unite the opposition(s) to (re)imagine the past and (re)create an honorable and legitimate aspect of national political culture. Whereas the Czechs used their histories of democracy and the power of human rights to rally the masses around a popular national tradition and against the authoritarian regime, the Chinese dissidents

⁹ Richard Baum, "China After Deng: Ten Scenarios in Search of Reality", *China Quarterly*, March 1996, p. 162

¹⁰ Deng Xiaoping stated, in 1978, at the first session of the Fifth National People's Congress of China, that the "Four Modernizations" should be "for the all-round modernization of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology" so that, by the end of the century, "China will have a new look and will stand *unshakably* in the East as a modern, powerful socialist country" (Deng Xiaoping, "The Four Modernizations" in Molly Joel Coye and Jon Livingston, eds., *China Yesterday and Today*, Second Ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 1975, 1979), pp. 510-12, emphasis added). Wei Jingsheng was arrested a few months later and then sentenced in the Fall of 1979 to fifteen years in prison for his simple action. Interestingly, "the sort of things Wei said with great daring... years ago are now on the lips of any taxi driver" (Jasper Becker, "The Fading Voices of Dissent", *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*South China Morning Post*, 3 December 1995], p. 21).

were denied this particular social opportunity by their own history, or lack thereof.¹¹

Throughout the 1980s, many associations and organizations, like the secret societies in China's past, were formed that would later play an important role in the dissemination of ideas and information. These organizations were also instrumental as social networks which facilitated mobilization amongst its similarly situated members. These groups are called conversation associations, Democracy Salons, democracy associations, and action committees. With the loosening of ideological control over work committees beginning in 1979, these networks were also employed as modes of popular communication and action in Simmelian fashion.¹²

The protesters also made use of street theatre, photocopiers, big character posters, newspapers, radio broadcasting, audio and video cassette recorders, telephones and fax machines (subsidized by AT&T), and both domestic and foreign television. Students and others in the U.S. and Hong Kong also faxed news reports and photographs back to the protesters in Beijing,

¹¹ Cf. Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of Memory*, Vol. I (London: Verso, 1995) and Raphael Samuel, *Island Stories: Unravelling Britain: Theatres of Memory*, Vol. II (London: Verso, 1998)

¹² Cf. E. Pierre Deess, "Social Change in the German Democratic Republic: The Role of Institutional Pre-Mobilization Practices (IPPs)", Paper presented at the 91st Annual Meetings of the American Sociological Association on *Social Change: Opportunities and Constraints*, New York, New York, 16-20 August 1996, pp. 1-2: "Where a sophisticated secret police oversees all political activity and effectively smashes opposition groups, movements cannot rely on the usual means to prepare popular mobilization.... [The IPP approach] looks for the development of social change through institutions controlled by the state. This approach holds, fundamentally, that the process of change can be furthered by the unintended consequences of official institutions". Also see Dingxin Zhao, "Ecologies of Social Movements: Student Mobilization during the 1989 Prodemocracy Movement in Beijing", *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1998. On the concept of "everyday forms of resistance", see James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), as well as John Markoff, *Waves of Democracy: Social Movements and Political Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 1996), p. 23.

thereby (re)cycling information of the ongoing revolutionary situation across national borders at the speed of light and exemplifying Marshall McLuhan's concept of a “global village”.¹³ The mass media, through their global dissemination of information and images, were clearly important in mobilizing the masses, just as they were in Eastern Europe in 1989. The mass media taught many Chinese people that their individual private problems were also mass political issues. It showed citizens of China that they were feeling similarly to each other and to people in other countries, as well. The mass media, in this way, was (unwittingly?) helping to “manufacture consent” and to instill a “sociological imagination” in the people, which they encouraged to run wild.¹⁴

Following President George Bush's visit to China in February 1989, Mikhail Gorbachev arrived in Beijing on 15 May, for the first Sino-Soviet summit in thirty years, and was greeted with much more excitement from the citizenry and the media. Many of the Chinese protestors regarded changes in the Soviet Union not so much as a model to be replicated, but rather as a socially legitimate and relatively safe political metaphor to agitate for social change within their own country. When Gorbachev came to China, so too did the international mass media and, by proxy, the world. Gorbachev's itinerary was repeatedly modified in attempts to avoid the hundreds

¹³ Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*, Produced by Jerome Agel (San Francisco: Hardwired, 1996 [1967])

¹⁴ Cf. Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 1988). For an earlier study employing the same concept with regard to corporations and the labor process, see Michael Burawoy, *Manufacturing Consent: Changes in the Labor Process Under Monopoly Capitalism* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979). Further, E.E. Schattschneider in *The Semi-Sovereign People* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960) discusses a “mobilization of bias”, while Ralph Miliband refers to an “engineering of consent”. Also see Ethan Huang, “Disinformation in Democratic Society”, *Chinese Community Forum*, 23 October 1996. On the sociological imagination which connects social histories to personal biographies, see C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (London: Oxford University Press, 1959).

of thousands of protestors in and around Tiananmen Square, some of whom were even holding banners in Russian and English hailing Gorbachev as a great reformer. Other banners, often large and colorful, announced the protesting delegations of teachers and professors, students and scholars, factory workers and entrepreneurs, writers and artists, young children and Buddhist monks, low-level government officials and *People's Daily* journalists, among others, in support of the Democracy Movement. Along with Gorbachev, the media saw hunger strikers in Tiananmen Square, as well as hundreds of thousands of protestors calling for democratic reform and changes in leadership. The mass media sent the reports and photographs of these events throughout China and around the world. Just outside of where a banquet was being held for Gorbachev, some protestors sang the Internationale (a revolutionary workers' anthem, the Chinese version of which includes “There has never been a savior, nor should we rely on gods and emperors” and “To create happiness for humankind, we must rely on ourselves”), some chanted various anti-government slogans (e.g., “Long live democracy” and “Down with corruption”), while others shouted more practical demands, such as “sell the Mercedes-Benzes to pay the national debt”.¹⁵

Realizing that the rebellion was being internationalized through the use of instantaneous global communications technologies, both the government and the students began “staging” actions and events for particular foreign audiences and “cultivating” international sympathies. Indeed, with regard to the 1989 Democracy Movement, as well as earlier social movements in modern Chinese history, “there have always been two audiences: eyewitnesses and those exposed

¹⁵ Sheryl WuDunn, “150,000 Lift Their Voices for Change” in Bernard Gwertzman and Michael T. Kaufman, eds., *The Collapse of Communism* [an anthology of *New York Times* articles] (New York: Times Books, 1990), p. 52

to representations”.¹⁶ Protest banners written in English and Russian are a clear example of this; the Goddess of Democracy statue, although a little less clear, is another. The Goddess of Democracy statue and the way in which it was transported into and displayed in Tiananmen Square was a complex cultural amalgam of democratic symbolism, socialist realism, Chinese nationalism, and folk deificationism. Interestingly, though not coincidentally, in the 1940s and then again in the 1960s, statues of Chiang Kai-shek and Mao, respectively, were paraded through the streets and the one of Mao was placed on the very same spot where the Goddess of Democracy came to rest.¹⁷

Beginning on Karl Marx's birthday (5 May), official Chinese media coverage went from ignoring the pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square to covering them prominently and even quite favorably. Sympathetic articles were accompanied by large, color photographs of the demonstrations. In a veiled criticism of their government, the *China Youth News* published a lengthy narrative of a Soviet citizen who said, in part, that prior to Gorbachev the Soviet Union was “run by old and sickly people who need help to walk, who lack the breath to speak, whose minds are stiff and muddled”, unlike the “young and strong” Gorbachev.¹⁸ This account was, no doubt, clearly understood by its many youthful readers.

In a particularly stunning incident of revolutionary political theatre which was broadcast on national television, Prime Minister Li Peng and other government officials had a “meeting” in

¹⁶ Wasserstrom, “Mass Media and Mass Actions in Urban China, 1919-1989” in Popkin, ed., *Media and Revolution*, pp. 211, 214

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 211-213

¹⁸ Nicholas D. Kristof, “China's Hero of Democracy: Gorbachev” in Gwertzman and Kaufman, eds., *The Collapse of Communism*, p. 50

the Great Hall of the People alongside Tiananmen Square with Wuer Kaixi, Wang Dan, and other representatives of the Student Leadership Federation, on 18 May, a month into the movement. Wuer Kaixi was dressed in a hospital gown, having come directly from the hospital after having been recently hospitalized due to his participation in the hunger strike. During the televised discussion with the Prime Minister, Wuer Kaixi even conspicuously pulled at his nose tube while making a trenchant political point, and “for a fittingly tragic/heroic ending to the dialogue, Wuer Kaixi fainted”.¹⁹ Another “meeting, not a dialogue” between top government officials and the students was held and televised the following day in Tiananmen Square.

Popular modes of communication, especially the mass media, further fueled the mass mobilization of a student-led coalition of workers and others. With the support of the Chinese (and foreign) media, huge rallies grew into enormous crowds. Major support by students was also garnered by more traditional and more low-tech methods, intimately based on Chinese culture and university campus ecology, such as posting large character messages on campus walls in Beijing University's “Triangle” in the Haidian University District.²⁰ At various times, gigantic throngs of people marched through the streets of Beijing, often along a zig-zag path which began in the University District, joined by various types of vehicles, while hoards of other people packed the sidewalks. A million or more people may have been in and around the over one hundred acres of Tiananmen Square on many days during May and through early June. Certain special days

¹⁹ Douglas J. Guthrie, “Political Theater and Student Organizations in the 1989 Chinese Movement: A Multivariate Analysis of Tiananmen”, *Sociological Forum*, September 1995, p. 440

²⁰ Zhao, “Ecologies of Social Movements”

(notably the seventieth anniversary of the May 4th Movement,²¹ the beginning of the hunger strike on 13 May, and the 17th and 18th of May when government leaders were meeting with both Gorbachev and the student leaders in separate venues) mobilized even larger numbers of people, perhaps as many as three million. If, as Lenin claims, revolutions are the “festivals of the oppressed and the exploited”, then Beijing in the spring of 1989 was rather revolutionary.²² Many Beijing citizens donated clothes, blankets, food, and refreshments, in addition to voicing moral support, to the students occupying Tiananmen Square, the largest public space in the world. The crisis was clearly escalating. Although crisis, in the words of Georg Lukács, is simply the “intensification of everyday life”, it is further infused with meaning in Chinese. As the Chinese ideogram for the word suggests, crisis (*weiji*) encompasses the concepts of danger and opportunity, both of which are chock-full of choice, chance, contingency, and cultural interplay.²³

At the same time as the students were protesting in Tiananmen Square, millions of other people gathered and rallied in at least eighty other cities, and even some villages, across the country, representing all of China's provinces (excluding Tibet). In addition, solidarity hunger

²¹ The May 4th Movement of 1919 was a student-led movement in Beijing (the first major one to occur in China) that demanded political and cultural modernization, scientific rationalization, and western democracy. The May 4th Movement foreshadowed the birth of the Chinese Communist Party in 1921. Since shortly after the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, the fourth of May has also been National Youth Day. Cf. Lucien Bianco, *Origins of the Chinese Revolution, 1915-1949*, trans. Muriel Bell (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1971 [1967]), esp. pp. 31-52

²² Stephan T. Possony, ed., *The Lenin Reader* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1966), p. 349. Cf. Liu Xiaobo, “That Holy Word, `Revolution” in Wasserstrom and Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, Second Ed.

²³ Cf. Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors*. Crisis is also something that many Chinese, especially Chinese leaders, fear the most.

strikes were staged in Shanghai, Xian, Chengdu Shenyang, and Harbin.²⁴ Sympathy rallies in the U.S., Taipei, and especially Hong Kong also helped to raise both international consciousness and vast amounts of money and matériel for the dissident student organizations in Beijing. Ironically for orthodox Marxists (of which Marx himself claimed not to be one), China's communist revolution of 1949 is attributable primarily to peasant activity in the countryside (Mao's estimate was 70 percent), while China's modern revolution (i.e., its democratic revolution) is shaping up to be a largely urban affair led by the middle class. Once again, the “rules of revolution” derived from theory are being broken in practice.²⁵

The 1989 Democracy Movement easily dwarfed many others in recent Chinese history and is probably only surpassed by the Revolution itself. Part of this is surely due to the fact that the Democracy Movement was the first anti-government collective action in China to receive encouragement and support from reformers in the government itself, most notably Communist Party General Secretary Zhao Ziyang. Zhao, in fact, in his “tearful farewell to the students” in Tiananmen Square (correctly expecting that he would soon be purged from power, as his predecessor Hu Yaobang was two years earlier), courageously “commented to the students that as a young man he had been involved in student demonstrations against [Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist] Guomindang, going so far as to lie on railroad tracks to disrupt rail traffic---an act later emulated by students and workers in several cities after the June 4 crackdown”. Zhao's

²⁴ Cf. Jonathan Unger, ed., *The Pro-Democracy Protests in China: Reports from the Provinces* (Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe, 1991)

²⁵ Clifton B. Kroeber, “Theory and History of Revolution”, *Journal of World History*, Spring 1996, pp. 26, 36. Also see Charles Tilly, *European Revolutions, 1492-1992* (Oxford and Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), p. 237.

inspiring and self-sacrificing statement that 'it doesn't matter what happens to me' was also "later mimicked by Beijing residents in daily confrontations with authorities".²⁶ Zhao's words and past deeds, along with the hunger strike itself, became what Sidney Tarrow terms "modular actions" for the Chinese dissidents, i.e. actions, like petitions and strikes for example, which are easily convertible and reusable from one political-historic context to another, regardless of actor(s), issue(s), or target(s). "It was when flexible, adaptable and indirect forms of collective action", Tarrow says, describing what he refers to as the "*modular* repertoire", "were diffused through print, association and state building that national social movements developed. They brought together broad coalitions of supporters around general claims", he continues, "using the political opportunities created by the expansion of the national state to do so".²⁷ This, too, is a "recycling of tradition" and the student protestors were ardent recyclers.

Although there was no threat of foreign intervention in China, there was strong domestic military opposition---at least amongst its leadership---to the Democracy Movement. This characteristic represents the major relevant difference between China and Czechoslovakia in 1989. The Czechoslovak and other Eastern European militaries, as well as the Soviet Red Army, were unwilling or incapable of violently suppressing their own citizens.²⁸ This proved to be pivotal. In

²⁶ Michel Oksenberg with Lawrence R. Sullivan, "Preface" in Oksenberg *et al.*, eds., *Beijing Spring, 1989*, p. x

²⁷ Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 6, original emphasis; also see pp. 19, 33, 39-45, 73, 114-15

²⁸ It is true, however, that whereas the Eastern European countries were to some extent colonized by the Soviet Union, China is much more independent and sovereign in this regard. Some scholars have used this type of logic, along with the concept of homegrown revolutions as opposed to imposed ones, to explain the absence of modern revolution in Cuba and Vietnam, in

China, there was an initial possibility of a split in the military, and perhaps even a civil war as some army units were reported to have fired upon other units outside of Beijing. Among various other incidents, open letters were sent by military officers, journalists, trade unionists, and others in support of dialogue and peaceful reform.²⁹ On 25 May, Prime Minister Li had to call on the soldiers to “overcome difficulties and carry out martial law” in the face of clear and open non-compliance by officers and soldiers alike.³⁰ There were incidents not only of soldiers being pushed back by protestors, which was problematic enough for the political leaders, but also incidents in which thousands of soldiers and protestors sat down together to talk about issues and sing patriotic songs. At other times, citizens gave food and refreshments to the soldiers while reminding them that the People's Army should never repress the people. On 21 May, further, “marshals Nie Rongzhen and Xu Xiangqian had apparently telephoned Deng Xiaoping to urge against the use of force to end the movement, and seven veteran generals had apparently sent a letter to the Military Affairs Commission and the Martial Law Command demanding that the army remain outside [Beijing]”.³¹ The veracity of these rumors were less important than the fact that they were widely circulated and widely believed. In fact, though, “[c]opies of the letter by the seven generals were dropped on [Tiananmen] Square by helicopters”, graphically indicating the

addition to China. The cases of modern revolutionary situations in the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia where revolutions were not originally imposed are explained away by powerful extenuating conditions. The Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for example, despite their other serious problems, were eventually torn apart by ethnic rivalries and nationalist movements for secession.

²⁹ Oksenberg *et al.*, eds., *Beijing Spring, 1989*

³⁰ The Editors of *Time Magazine*, *Massacre in Beijing: China's Struggle for Democracy* (New York: Time Inc. Books, 1989), p. 260

³¹ Manion, “Introduction” in Oksenberg *et al.*, eds., *Beijing Spring, 1989*, pp. xxvi-xxvii

divisions within the military and government.³² Other top military leaders openly opposed the use of violence against the people, as well. Of the seven designated military regions of China, the leaders of three of them, including Beijing, refused to support the martial law declarations. Additionally, over one hundred high-ranking officers signed a petition declaring that “The People's Army belongs to the people.... It should under no circumstances fire at the people and create any bloody incidents”.³³

The People's Liberation Army, however, finally fell into line under the control of the Party and was used to violently suppress the movement. “In [late May and early June] 1989 the Chinese government... finding that the units committed to the occupation of Beijing were fraternizing [with the protesters]... withdrew them and sent in fresh troops drawn from many parts of the country (and hence speaking strange dialects and held together only by institutional loyalties) who had been isolated from the news media for a period of two weeks in advance of the operation”.³⁴ An ultimatum was issued by the government on 3 June (following the martial law curfew announced on 20 May) warning the people of Beijing to leave Tiananmen Square and to stay off the streets that night.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ Christopher Tuck, “Is the Party Over?”, *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*Contemporary Review*, May 1995], pp. 17-18. In May, there were incidents of police officers proclaiming “Victory to the Students” and soldiers declaring “the PLA [People's Liberation Army] supports you”. Citizens also pledged *with soldiers* not to harm the students. On 23 May, and on other days through 3 June, the PLA even retreated after being blocked by a large crowd in Beijing (Support Democracy in China and Christus Rex et Redemptor Mundi, “Tiananmen, April-June 1989”, Revised 28 February 1998, <<http://www.christusrex.org/www1/sdc/tiananmen.html>>).

³⁴ Peter Calvert, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), p. 43. It was, in a sense, a “reversed reality” (to use Laila Kabeer's phrase out of context) of the Long March.

Commencing the night of the ultimatum and continuing throughout the next day (and week, in some areas of the capital), the army arrested, silenced, beat, disabled, disappeared, crushed, and killed up to several thousand people who continued to protest, whether individually or collectively. Tanks, driven by (peasant) soldiers from the countryside, some even from distant Inner Mongolia and Sichuan provinces, rolled through the capital city of Beijing on the Avenue of Eternal Peace and into Tiananmen Square, brutally retaking control. As Mao says, “political power grows out of the barrel of a gun”. The latest wave of the Democracy Movement abruptly ended in a blood bath. Along with the Goddess of Democracy statue, which was *physically* destroyed but otherwise remains in existence, another powerful iconographic image was created when a 19-year-old student named Wang Weilin courageously stood in front of a line of tanks, after the massacre, and effectively blocked them singlehandedly for about six minutes while the world watched in suspense on television.³⁵ These commanding images will live on in the underground cultures of resistance in China and will serve to further inspire the next wave of democratic dissidence. Although the Chinese students had the broad-based moral, physical, and financial support of millions of people both in and out of China, representing all classes and various ethnicities, this vast mobilization of people and resources was still not enough to overcome the government and its control of the military forces. As was noted earlier, the “rules of revolution” do not always seem to hold.³⁶ The window of political opportunity was again closed

³⁵ When asked by Barbara Walters in 1992 about the whereabouts of Wang Weilin, Jiang Zemin coldly responded, “I think never killed”.

³⁶ For excellent and concise critiques of the resource mobilization approach, see Doug McAdam, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency, 1930-1970* (Chicago, IL and London: University of Chicago Press, 1982), ch. 2; John Walton, *Western Times and Water Wars: State, Culture, and Rebellion in California* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of

to opponents of the regime. The struggle for democracy is part of a political process, punctuated by events, which confers both opportunities and constraints on all of its participants. Those with the biggest “war chests”, though advantaged, do not necessarily or automatically prevail.

In the years since, many of the causal characteristics that led to social upheaval in 1989 either have remained the same or have been exacerbated. There is reason to believe that “the storm is gathering in the disillusioned sectors of China's society”.³⁷ It is not yet a thunderstorm. Indeed, a young woman who lives in Beijing commented that “Chinese people often don't like to say things directly but we do think about them”.³⁸ The desire for democracy is still strong and is more coherent, and there is now another movement to draw from (i.e., the events of 1989), both domestically and in Eastern Europe.³⁹ Additionally, “the sophistication and political experience of the pro-democracy people (both in and out of the governance system) has increased dramatically”.⁴⁰ Although there has been substantial and rapid economic growth in China in the

California Press, 1992), pp. 320-26; and also Aldon D. Morris & Carol McClurg Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1992).

³⁷ Drew Liu, “The Unfolding of Post-Deng Era: Reports from China”, *China Backgrounder No. 2*, <http://www.ned.org/page_3/China/publ/backg/back2.html>, p. 1. Cf. David Shambaugh, “China's Fragile Future”, *World Policy Journal*, Fall 1994

³⁸ Julia Wilkinson, “Heart of the Celestial Empire”, *National Geographic Traveler*, September/October 1998, p. 91

³⁹ Cf. Wang Dan, “The Star of Hope Rises in Eastern Europe” [4 March 1989] in Mok Chiu Yu and J. Frank Harrison, eds., *Voices from Tiananmen Square: Beijing Spring and the Democracy Movement* (Montreal and New York: Black Rose Books, 1990), p. 38: “Only when China follows in the footsteps of these Eastern European countries, and only then, will full democracy and full development be successfully accomplished”.

⁴⁰ Cited in Liu, “The Unfolding of Post-Deng Era”, p. 2. And as Carlos Fuentes has stated, “Democracy generates confidence”.

last few years, the gains have not been equally distributed and there are growing class and regional polarizations. “From 1985 to 1994 the average urban-rural income differential rose by almost 40%---from 1.9:1 to 2.65:1” and “[i]n 1993, two Chinese social scientists noted that regional income disparities---estimated to be as high as 8:1---were equal to or greater than those existing in Yugoslavia on the eve of its disintegration”.⁴¹ Inflation, furthermore, which has been a significant problem since the mid-1980s, signifies that nominal economic growth has been greater than real economic growth and also greater than what people would reasonably expect and feel that they deserve, thereby likely increasing feelings of frustration and relative deprivation. “Rising inflation is pinching urban incomes, and rural incomes have actually declined over the last [few] years”.⁴² Yet, the (private) business community has grown and has greater resources, and more independence, both of which can, and probably will, be employed against the government during the (inevitable) next social movement. Many have heard Deng's slogan that “to get rich is glorious”, and they no longer want the political constraints on their attempts to do so. The state sector is not faring nearly as well, however, with about two-thirds of the 13,000 medium to large

⁴¹ Baum, “China After Deng”, p. 158, fn. 10. Also see Azizur Rahman Khan and Carl Riskin, “Income and Inequality in China: Composition, Distribution and Growth of Household Income, 1988 to 1995”, *China Quarterly*, June 1998. Cf. Henry Rosemont, Jr., “Why the Chinese Economic Miracle Isn't One”, *Z Magazine*, October 1995; and Jack A. Goldstone, “Gender, Work, and Culture: Why the Industrial Revolution Came Early to England But Late to China”, *Sociological Perspectives*, Spring 1996, pp. 5, 8-9, 17

⁴² Shambaugh, “China's Fragile Future”, p. 44. Despite the feelings of relative deprivation in some quarters, paradoxically it is also the feelings of aspiration and optimism regarding the Chinese economy that may limit and blunt political attacks against the government in other quarters. The Chinese equivalent of the American Dream is a powerfully conservative force in Chinese society and it may forestall political rebellion. Additionally, economic pursuits, like the market itself, individualize people's thoughts and actions, thereby redirecting them from the political to the personal.

state industries operating at a loss and about 70 percent of all state factories unable to pay their employees on a regular basis.⁴³

Moreover, the Chinese population is expanding dramatically despite the contraction in the growth rate, while the food and water supplies are stagnating or diminishing. So severe are the food shortages in China that it has, in the 1990s, gone from being a net exporter of grain to becoming the world's second largest importer. Moreover, China's agricultural sector has been in a recession for at least the past decade, largely due to the fact that since 1979, over ten million acres of farm land have either been washed away, been used for commercial cash cropping, been built on with factories and new housing, or have been otherwise transformed into non-food producing ventures.⁴⁴

Most ominous of all demographic trends, perhaps, is the gigantic "floating population", officially estimated to be as high as 105 million people. Millions of families and individuals are no longer rooted to a particular geographical place, while there is no other particular place to go. Therefore, many "floaters" are becoming unofficial residents of the already overcrowded megacities of China. The depth of the government's fear of the floaters is illustrated by a book

⁴³ According to *The Economist* (13 September 1997), there are a total of about 305,000 state-owned firms employing over 100 million people and accounting for up to 90 percent of loans granted by China's state-owned banks, many of which are considered "policy loans", i.e., loans made for political rather than strictly economic reasons and are not expected to be repaid.

⁴⁴ Floris-Jan Van Luyn, "Will China Eat Up the World?", *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*NRC Handelsblad*, 26 October 1995], p. 39; B.M. Bhatia, "Famine Math", *Ibid.* [*Hindustan Times*, 16 June 1995]; Lester R. Brown, "Who Will Feed China?", *World Watch*, 1994; Lester R. Brown, "China's Food Problem: The Massive Imports Begin", *World Watch*, 1995. Cf. Martin Walker, "China and the New Era of Resource Scarcity", *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1996; Lester R. Brown and Brian Halweil, "China's Water Shortage Could Shake World Food Security", *World Watch*, July/August 1998. But see "Self-Sufficiency in Grain Ensured", *Beijing Review*, 28 October-3 November 1996, p. 5 for an official and optimistic scenario.

published by Shanxi People's Press in 1994 by a confidant of government insider Chen Yuan, entitled *Viewing China Through a Third Eye*. The book warns of an imminent social apocalypse brought on by a combination of massive rural emigration and epidemic lawlessness, and describes the floaters as a “seething volcano”.⁴⁵

Combined with the restrictions on family size,⁴⁶ continuing official (i.e., party, government, military, and police) and now corporate corruption,⁴⁷ the appearance of “conspicuous consumption” among the political and economic élite (e.g., luxury cars), encroaching marketization, rising crime rates (including prostitution, drugs, guns, gambling, and even the disappearance of 4,300 Beijing sewer hole covers in the summer of 1995), declining

⁴⁵ Jiang Zemin reportedly praised the book, giving special attention to the section on agriculture. Cf. Baum, “China After Deng”, pp. 155, 158

⁴⁶ For an analysis of how Communist policies relied on family politics among the peasantry during the Chinese Revolution, see Judith Stacey, *Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1983). For an assessment of how the student protestors mirrored the sexism of the government, see Feigon, “Gender and the Chinese Student Movement” in Wasserstrom and Perry, eds., *Popular Protest and Political Culture in Modern China*, Second Ed.

⁴⁷ A survey conducted in October 1994 found that 71 percent of the 2,500 people questioned were angry at the level of governmental corruption. When last asked in late 1988, furthermore, 55 percent of respondents claimed they would be willing to protest in the streets “if necessary” (Bruce Gilley, “Vox Populi”, *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7 December 1995], p. 16). Ironically, the anger towards corruption, in particular, helped the Communist Party gain many adherents in the 1940s and greatly aided the cause of the 1949 Chinese Revolution. Cf. Abbe Huc, *L'Empire Chinois*, 1854 cited in Kristof and WuDunn, *China Wakes*, p. 184: “We've seen the most hideous corruption spread everywhere. Magistrates sell justice to the highest bidder, and Mandarins at every level---instead of protecting the people---use every imaginable means to oppress them and pillage them”; Liu Binyan, *People or Monsters?*, 1997 cited in Michael S. Duke, *The Iron House* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith Publ., 1990), p. 22: “The Communist Party regulates everything, but it does not regulate the Communist Party”.

healthcare and worker safety,⁴⁸ deteriorating environmental conditions (including heavily polluted air and waterways, flooding, acid rain, deforestation, and desertification), worsening educational conditions, rampant inflation, growing unemployment, shrinking budgets, growing tax avoidance, and the knowledge of Eastern Europe and other viable political economic alternatives to the authoritarian present, frustration and anger have increased and are increasing.⁴⁹

There have also been numerous, albeit (so far) isolated, protests all over the country. In 1993 there were more than 12,000 “large-scale” labor disputes and 1994 saw more than 10,000 sit-ins, strikes, and rallies before the Chinese government stopped publishing this type of data. According to Louie Kin Sheun, “the 1990s ha[ve] been a period of rising expectations”, as many people seem to want “something more”.⁵⁰ That “something more” appears to include positive political and economic rights, i.e., a focus on the “freedom to” of democracy and capitalism as opposed to the “freedom from” of the Communist Party. And indeed, the divergence between the Chinese people's reality and the Communist Party's ideology is probably wider now than at any other time, except perhaps for June 1989.⁵¹ Gorbachev's visit to China may have had more immediate and noticeable effects, however President Bill Clinton's visit in the Summer of 1998

⁴⁸ In the most prosperous province of Guangdong, where foreign firms are increasing their presence, “accidents abound. In some factories, workers are chastised, beaten, strip-searched, and even forbidden to use the bathroom during work hours”. In total, the province officially reported 45,000 industrial accidents in 1993 alone, which claimed the lives of over 8,700 workers (cited in David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (West Hartford, CT and San Francisco, CA: Kumarian Press and Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1995), p. 231).

⁴⁹ Cf. Rosemont, “Why the Chinese Economic Miracle Isn't One”. Also see Henry Rosemont, Jr., “China & U.S. Morality”, *Z Magazine*, December 1995.

⁵⁰ Cited in Gilley, “Vox Populi”, p. 16

⁵¹ Baum, “China After Deng”

may ultimately have a more profound and long-term influence. In one of the events of his visit, President Clinton appeared on live television with President Jiang, deftly answering questions and discussing issues related to democracy and human rights, along with independence for Tibet and other matters rarely discussed so candidly in China. People are increasingly resentful of their government's monopolization of public discourse on so many of the issues that matter to them. Economic growth and the lure of wealth cannot permanently put aside all other conceptions of the public good. The “ties that bind” in Chinese society are fraying and loosening.

One particularly striking example of fiscal crisis and market mania is worth noting here:

Universities, and their individual departments, have also been obliged to enter the market in a variety of ways, most of which have little or nothing to do with education. One department at a distinguished institution, for example, formed a company in 1993, and took money from its operating budget to hire a consultant on investment opportunities. The advice given was to purchase a large quantity of a chemical used in food processing which was for sale immediately at a low price. Much more money was taken from the operating budget to purchase the chemical, which, unfortunately, is seldom used anymore by food processing firms. Consequently, a couple of classrooms had to be emptied in order to store the chemical---a ton of it---where the containers of it continue to sit, gathering dust.⁵²

An article in *China Daily* in March 1994 even boasted that Shanghai “is trying to promote the development of its college-run businesses to boost educational and economic development”.⁵³

Going too far, perhaps, the International Politics Department at Beijing University was warned by the Chinese Education Ministry to focus more on political thought and less on its economic ventures, such as its lucrative business of selling women's underwear. Likewise, the University's

⁵² Rosemont, “Why the Chinese Miracle Isn't One”, p. 44

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 45

History Department was ordered to close its gift and souvenir shop.⁵⁴

Popular communications networks also appear to be even more dense and more autonomous than in 1989. Just as Benedict Anderson “imagined communities” of “reading publics” which encouraged the development of nationalist social movements, one could also begin to imagine electronic publics in urban China.⁵⁵ An increase in the use of cellular telephones (many provided by corporate employers) and long-distance phone calls (doubling from 1989 to 1991), short-wave radios, televisions, fax machines, and computers (especially with regard to the internet generally and e-mail specifically; e.g., Beijing and Shanghai now boast hundreds of internet cafes which are only nominally censored) all aid in this process. So do the presence of the Voice of America on the radio, CNN and MTV on television, and *Newsweek* on the streets, not to mention news and entertainment sources from Australia, France, and Taiwan, as well. People can even view the BBC in Chinese or watch the many Star Television programs from Hong Kong on one of the at least 1,800 cable television systems and the hundreds of thousands of satellite dishes in this era of “borderless television”. Interestingly, even government ministries, including the Army General Staff Department, are selling satellite equipment, despite the ban on doing so. Furthermore, since 1994, ten newly released western movies have been (officially) imported annually, with many more showing up unofficially. President Jiang Zemin even recently recommended that the people go to see the movie *Titanic*. This flow of information, and how it is received and ultimately consumed, cannot be censored or coopted by the Communist Party. For example, “American cops-and-robbers shows sometimes play on Chinese television, and viewers

⁵⁴ R.J. Lambrose, “Department Stores”, *Lingua Franca*, January/February 1994, p. 6

⁵⁵ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1991)

often find the plot twists full of surprises---like the moments when the bad guys are read their rights and allowed to call a lawyer. To some Chinese, that kind of novelty is more memorable than the plot itself".⁵⁶

As evidence of China's new appetite for global communications, "China has become a major producer and consumer of TVs, VCRs, satellite dishes, and, in a recent emerging trend, PCs with Internet connections". And, as George Koo continues, "[i]nformation and knowledge change attitudes".⁵⁷ In May 1995, ChinaNet was established for "public" access to the internet. Mostly used by students and faculty of the universities, there are hundreds of thousands of users. This is not to be confused with another important network with a similar name, China-Net, which was established in May 1989, and is a electronic network that serves the overseas community of students and scholars interested in China. Both of these computer networks help spread information and ideas amongst the Chinese communities in and out of China. There are three other public servers approved by the state, along with over 100 internet service providers (ISPs) and several hundred internet cafes.⁵⁸ A Beijing University lecturer boasts that "I am now talking to my friends on almost everything, even politically sensitive issues, without the worry of being

⁵⁶ Nicholas D. Kristof, "Satellites Bring Information Revolution to China", *New York Times*, 11 April 1993, p. A12. Cf. John Lippman, "Tuning In the Global Village: How TV is Transforming World Culture and Politics", *Los Angeles Times*, 20 October 1992, esp. p. 2: "Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase 'global village' to describe how the electronics revolution [is] shrinking the world and shortening the time between thought and action".

⁵⁷ George Koo, "An Asian American Perspective on China", *Asian Week*, 17 January 1997, reprinted in *Chinese Community Forum*, 29 January 1997

⁵⁸ Wei Liming, "Are You On Line?", *Beijing Review*, 30 November-6 December 1998, pp. 8-10. The first internet café was started in Shekou, Shenzhen in 1993 and the idea caught on. Beijing now has about 200 internet cafes, while Shanghai has over 400. Fully 1/4 of internet users in China are in Beijing, and 80% of users are between the ages of 21 and 35.

bugged.... A friend of mine communicates frequently with an old friend who fled to the United States because of his involvement in the prodemocracy movement”.⁵⁹ Presently, there are millions of personal computer owners in China, while tens of millions of middle class Chinese now have a computer at the top of their latest consumer wish list.⁶⁰ There are between one and two million Chinese online and, with about four thousand new computers being sold each day, the numbers are sure to continue to increase rapidly.⁶¹ The lesson from the events during the spring of 1998 in Indonesia are not lost on either the Chinese government or the dissidents. Indonesian students, in their successful struggle to oust authoritarian President Suharto, used the internet to communicate with each other and to send messages to journalists, U.S. government officials, human rights groups, and others. The international community was successfully mobilized along with the Indonesian people.

More than two centuries ago, Emperor Qianlong demanded: “Be sure to prevent any contact between the barbarians and the population”, thereby ordering his authorities to block

⁵⁹ “Invasion from Cyberspace”, *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*Asiaweek*, 8 September 1995], p. 40

⁶⁰ While the “old three big things” include a wristwatch, a bicycle, and a sewing machine, and the “new three big things” include a color television, a refrigerator, and a washing machine, all of which are now commonplace in Beijing, the “super three big things” now sought by the urban middle class are a computer, a car, and a private house. Of the super three, obtaining a computer is presently the most realistic (Teresa Poole, “The Long March to Affluence”, *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*Independent on Sunday*, 31 December 1995], p. 32).

⁶¹ There are also about 1,000 mobile phones being sold each day. Though not nearly so in the rest of the country, “out of every 100 Beijing households: 99 have a television... 56 have a stationary phone... 19 have a personal computer... [and] 12 have a mobile phone” (William Lindesay, “The New Consumers”, *National Geographic Traveler*, September/October 1998, p. 102).

communication between foreigners and Chinese.⁶² As usual, however, politics could not keep up with technology. If ever it was possible to honor Qianlong's fearful demand, his contemporary Communist Party counterparts know this to be a futile exercise. Even under an authoritarian regime, the possibility of contact in the global village between “barbarian” ideas and Chinese minds is ceaseless.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the Chinese military leaders seem to be much less enthralled with their political leaders *and* their official ideology, and also are distancing themselves from the 1989 violent crackdown. Military leaders now giving public lectures often comment that their units were neither involved in the suppression nor even in Beijing in June 1989, insisting that they would not do such things. This is not just talk. Hundreds of officers, including several high-ranking officials, and thousands of soldiers refused to carry out direct orders to violently repress civilians in June 1989. Other soldiers who did participate are now bitter and disillusioned.

Whereas “[s]tudents are the universal opposition”, “[t]he military are the ultimate support of regimes. If they withdraw their support, if they carry out a coup against the regime, or if they refuse to use force against those who threaten to overthrow the regime, the regime falls”.⁶³

Katharine Chorley was perhaps the first student of revolution to emphasize the role of the military and is still virtually alone in the field. She argues that “little serious attention has been given to an

⁶² Emperor Qianlong (of the Qing Dynasty [1644-1911]), 11 October 1793, cited in Kristof and WuDunn, *China Wakes*, p. 2

⁶³ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), pp. 144-45. Huntington, no friend of democracy beyond occasional lip service (sounding similar to Mao, he elsewhere speaks of an “excess of democracy”), thankfully tries to keep his values detached from his otherwise insightful analyses “95 percent” of the time.

effort to make an historical analysis of [revolution] in its relation to the character and strengths of the defending force of the *status quo* government which the [revolution] is designed to overthrow”.⁶⁴ Doing this herself, Chorley concludes that “governments of the *status quo* who are in full control of their armed forces and are in a position to use them to full effect have a decisive superiority which no rebel force can hope to overcome”.⁶⁵ Huntington concurs, arguing that the military is the “necessary support” of authoritarian regimes: “In the last analysis, whether the regime collapses or not depends on whether [the military] support[s] the regime, join[s] the opposition to it, or stand[s] by on the sidelines”.⁶⁶ More than half a century later, Chorley's analyses and conclusions still appear to be empirically accurate.

East German officials' decision in 1989 to cancel Erich Honecker's direct order to open fire on the hundreds of thousands of peaceful protestors in Leipzig was a significant turning point in the revolutionary situations throughout Eastern Europe. After those demonstrations, many people, especially in East Germany, sensed that it was now safer to demonstrate against the government and, all over Eastern Europe, they accordingly translated their “private political preferences” into public action, establishing a “latent bandwagon” effect.⁶⁷ This belief was strongly reinforced in many people's minds, both in the regimes and in the oppositions, by

⁶⁴ Katharine C. Chorley, *Armies and the Art of Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1943), p. 11. This is still largely true.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ Huntington, *The Third Wave*, p. 150. Cf. Ted Robert Gurr and Jack A. Goldstone, “Comparisons and Policy Implications” in Nikki R. Keddie, ed., *Debating Revolutions* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1995), pp. 333-34

⁶⁷ Timur Kuran, “The East European Revolution of 1989: Is It Surprising That We Were Surprised?”, *American Economic Review*, May 1991, pp. 122-23

Gorbachev's repeated remarks that the USSR had no right to interfere in its neighbors' affairs and that the threatened or actual use of military force should not be employed as a weapon of foreign policy. The Communist Party leaders throughout Eastern Europe were losing legitimacy amongst the masses, were losing support from their long-time superpower ally, and were losing faith in their authority to rule amongst themselves. Feelings of being in crisis were pervasive throughout the region. These factors, combined, led to the Communist Party regimes losing their power and authority to force their will onto the citizens, as they had so brutally done in the past. China appears to be on a similar, albeit unique, trajectory.

All tolled, the “iron rice bowl” appears to be rusting from the inside out. It is in this sense that like East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, and Poland in 1980-81, China's Democracy Movement in 1989 may be viewed as a “revolutionary rehearsal” for the inevitable next round of collective action.⁶⁸ “As Marx remarked about the 1848 [rebellions]”, Colin Barker reminds us, “a movement sometimes needs the `whip of reaction' to stimulate it forward”.⁶⁹ For as the students say, “you can't kill an idea!”. Indeed, during a “Free Speech Hour” at Beida just one week before the massacre, a young woman read her riveting poem aloud:

There is one sentence,
Spoken aloud it brings calamity.
There is one sentence,
That can cause conflagration.
Don't divulge it!
Youth did not disclose it.
You can understand
Our silence deep as a volcano.
Perhaps we'll suddenly be possessed,

⁶⁸ Colin Barker, ed., *Revolutionary Rehearsals* (London: Bookmarks, 1987)

⁶⁹ Colin Barker, “Perspectives” in *Ibid.*, p. 236

Lightning suddenly strikes from the sky,
Our China [will] be born from the thunder!
 How's that, how can I express it today?
 It's all right if you don't believe an iron tree can still blossom.
 But
 There is one sentence, just listen:
 Like a volcano that cannot bear the silence,
 Shakes its head, sticks out its tongue, stamps its feet,
 When lightning strikes from the sky,
Our China will be born from the thunder!

The sentence that cannot be “spoken aloud”, but is often thought, is “Down with the Communist Party!”. The students will be the buds on the iron tree of China that will make it blossom again.⁷⁰

Jack Goldstone also makes a convincing case that the next mass mobilization against the Chinese government will likely have different results than those from 1989. “Should nationwide disturbances recur, particularly after [a national leader's] death” or some other major crisis or event, Goldstone suggests, “it seems highly unlikely that any party leader would be able to persuade the army to take actions similar to those of spring 1989”.⁷¹ This appears all the more

⁷⁰ Duke, *The Iron House*, pp. 65-66

⁷¹ Jack A. Goldstone, “The Coming Chinese Collapse”, *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1995. Goldstone also predicts that the crisis will occur within ten to fifteen years. “Deng's death” or a similarly significant event, Goldstone suggested, could “touch off popular protests, power struggles within the party, and the formation of provincial coalitions of business[people] and local officials, perhaps supported by workers, proclaiming greater autonomy”. Cf. Jack A. Goldstone, *Revolution and Rebellion in the Early Modern World* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), p. 482, fn. 2. Also see Martin King Whyte, “The Social Sources of the Student Demonstrations in China, 1989” in Jack A. Goldstone, ed., *Revolutions: Theoretical, Comparative, and Historical Studies*, Second Ed. (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1994), p. 192: “The shift of mood in China is symbolized by the sad fact that many who in the early 1980s used to pray for Deng's longevity [began to] hope for his early demise [by the early 1990s]”. Their hopes and fears materialized on 19 February 1997 when Deng finally died at the age of 92. The apparent successor is President Jiang Zemin, Deng's political heir. Though he lacks charisma, Jiang maintains the top positions in the Communist Party, the Chinese government, and the People's Liberation Army and has recently shored up his position in each of these spheres. Other possibilities for future top leadership include former State Chairman Yang

likely given the possibility that the post-Deng leaders will “reevaluate” and “rehabilitate” the 1989 Democracy Movement (what many students called “The Great Revolution For Democracy and Against Dictatorship”, but what is officially labeled the “counter-revolutionary rebellion”), and its sympathizers, just as was done with other past popular movements. Already, official accounts have referred to it as a “political disturbance”, or more neutrally as the “June 4th Movement”. The April 5th Movement of 1976, for example, officially went from being maligned as a “counter-revolutionary political incident” to being positively termed a “revolutionary action”.⁷² A would-be successor might choose to seize this terminology early, so as to beat, rather than to catch or follow, the political wave of the future. Zhao Ziyang, the purged leader of the Communist Party under house arrest since 1989, purportedly wrote a letter which was read at the 1997 five-yearly Party conference advocating such a re-evaluation, while warning that “The problem of reassessing June 4 will have to be resolved sooner or later”.⁷³ As the students did with Zhao's predecessor Hu Yaobang, they may again “spontaneously” rise up in mourning and protest after the death of

Shangkun, who supported the approach of Zhao Ziyang up until the massacre, former chair of the National People's Congress Wan Li, and its current chair and Politburo member Qiao Shi. Prime Minister Li Peng, the adopted son of Zhou Enlai, can also make a bid for leadership, while one cannot rule out the political resurrection of Zhao Ziyang, Deng's former political heir. Some also have speculated about a collective leadership if Jiang can't maintain his power bases. For these and other possibilities, see Baum, “China After Deng”.

⁷² Bruce Gilley, “The Sound of Silence”, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 18 April 1996. While the government since Spring 1989 employed the terms “chaos” and “turmoil” (*dongluan*), which is the chronic fear of Chinese leaders, the students preferred the phrase “free-form dancing” (*luandong*), derived from a syllabic reversal of the same word, which came to symbolize a new hope of many Chinese citizens. The students may have been performing political jazz, but they were not creating chaos. They were, they said, “dancing in spontaneous order” (Calhoun, *Neither Gods Nor Emperors*, p. 1).

⁷³ “New Rumbles of Democracy”, *World Press Review*, November 1997 [Marcus Gee, *Globe and Mail*, 17 September 1997], p. 8

Zhao. Of course, “revolutions do not occur haphazardly or purely spontaneously. A syndrome of variables coalesce before... revolutions take place. These variables consist of an array of observable economic, political, social, and psychological changes or occurrences”.⁷⁴ These changes have been quietly taking place for some time now, especially since the 1980s.

However, since 1990, the military, under the at least nominal control of President Jiang, has received steady and huge increases in its official budget (more than 200 percent over the past nine years), in addition to the military's non-budget revenue derived from its vast network of profit-making ventures (a \$5 billion industry of around 20,000 companies).⁷⁵ Ironically, it was Deng Xiaoping who once remarked to German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt that “one of the reasons why the Soviet economy suffers from paralysis is that the Russians spend too much money on the military”.⁷⁶ The increased expenditure on the military, especially in the current context of an increasingly fiscally constrained state, is being pursued, according to Li-Cheng Wang, “for three reasons: to solidify military-civilian relations, to curtail military corruption, and to distract social frustration with aggressive military policies. These three policies [a]re all aimed

⁷⁴ Mostafa Rejai, “Survey Essay on the Study of Revolution”, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, Fall 1973, p. 302

⁷⁵ “China's New Model Army”, *The Economist*, 11 June 1994, p. 29. In the summer of 1998, however, Jiang ordered the Army to fully divest itself of all business operations. It remains to be seen if this order will be carried out. The 1990s have also seen the replacement of the top few military commanders and the shifting of all seven regional leaders. The military now accounts for a quarter of the 190 members of the Central Committee. Additionally, the Party has substituted the People's Armed Police, of which 40,000 now occupy Beijing, for the People's Liberation Army as the first wave of defense against unarmed citizens. Cf. *China Quarterly*, June 1996 [special issue on “China's Military in Transition”]

⁷⁶ Thomas Bernstein, “Domestic Politics” in Steven Goldstein, ed., *China Briefing, 1984* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), p. 9 cited in Nancy Bernkopf Tucker, “China as a Factor in the Collapse of the Soviet Empire”, *Political Science Quarterly*, Winter 1994-95, p. 505

at increasing Party authority, support, and credibility, in order to counter internal threats”.⁷⁷ Max Weber long ago noted, for example, how domestic legitimacy and support often can be purchased through international power plays. Military posturing, especially towards Taiwan, may be seen as just this sort of attempt.

Yet the Chinese government, and its chaos-averse leaders, still appears to be worried. Even more so, it seems, since the overthrow of the Communist Party regimes of Eastern Europe in 1989 and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Poignantly, the Czech writer Ludvik Vaculik, noting that his “[g]overnment always seemed to be frightened”, asked “[w]hy does it not conduct itself so that it does not have to be afraid?”.⁷⁸ Qiao Shi, chair of the National People's Congress and member of the Politburo, delivered a speech in October 1994 on “sudden incidents” that could shake the Chinese government.⁷⁹ Qiao did not ask or answer Vaculik's trenchant question, but he did outline twelve of these possible “sudden incidents” that apparently keep the Communist Party in a chronic fear of chaos. They are: (1) social and political movements similar to the Democracy Movement of 1989; (2) a disruption during a major conference or event in China, thereby “causing chaos and attracting international attention”; (3) the potential that enemies of the state might attempt to subvert or overthrow the government when the older revolutionaries die; (4) opportunists could start power struggles by exploiting internal party

⁷⁷ Li-Cheng Wang, “Chinese Military Expenditures in the 1990s”, *Stanford Journal of International Affairs*, Spring/Summer 1995, p. 153

⁷⁸ Cited in Mark Frankland, *The Patriots' Revolution: How East Europe Won Its Freedom* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990), p. 259

⁷⁹ Li Zijing, “Twelve Nightmares for Beijing”, *World Press Review*, March 1996 [*Cheng Ming*, December 1995], p. 19

disagreements; (5) the U.S. could remove MFN status or otherwise impose economic sanctions on China which could cause an economic downturn and social instability; (6) a Taiwanese declaration of independence could force military intervention on the island; (7) U.S. support of Taiwan could jeopardize Sino-U.S. relations and instigate military action; (8) Hong Kong (or Macau) could declare itself an “independent entity” which might force the central government to put it under martial law in order to quell the rebellion; (9) overseas Chinese dissidents could secretly return to China by the sea, land, or air in order to create upheavals, as some U.S.-based Cuban-Americans have tried to do with Cuba; (10) anger at corruption from both inside and outside the Communist Party could cause massive dissatisfaction if the party's corruption problem is not resolved; (11) peasant discontent could evolve into large-scale rebellion, as it has many times in Chinese history; and (12) Xinjiang Uyghur, Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and other remote and/or autonomous areas could develop stronger separatist movements and foment rebellion.

The reversion of Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 and the scheduled re-incorporation of Macau on 21 December 1999, when these different political economic entities will have to coexist as “one country, two systems”, may also increase the pressures on the Chinese government and the demands for democracy. So too would an independence (or secessionist) bid by either of these two territories, by Taiwan, by any of China's five “autonomous regions”, especially Tibet and Xinjiang Uyghur (both of which have had sporadic incidents and uprisings), or by one of the newly prosperous provinces such as Guangdong, Fujian, or Hainan. Guangdong, for example, which is “the fastest growing provincial economy in China”, “is now largely self-financing, receiving little

cash from [the] central government and, in return, paying little in taxes”.⁸⁰ This, of course, only exacerbates China's ballooning budget deficits, compounded by its general revenue collection problem. It is in this sense that the Communist Party of China “reigns but it does not rule. It is a hollow shell of an organization to which officials and citizens alike feign compliance at best and ignore in normal circumstances”.⁸¹ Therefore, in sum, China in 1989 represents a negative case of revolution; however, the case of China in the medium term (within a generation) will almost certainly experience a modern revolution.

One wonders about the relevance of the *I Ching (Book of Changes)*, an ancient Chinese text of prophesy and wisdom that “does not describe the past; rather, it establishes a mythological treatment of the actor's present and potential futures, charted among a myriad set of interlinked

⁸⁰ Tuck, “Is the Party Over?”, p. 17. Ye Xuanping, the outspoken governor of Guangdong, was removed from office in 1991. The breakup of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc increased the calls for autonomy and independence, especially in the north and west of China. In 1994, Deng warned that if a Soviet-style disintegration was to be avoided in China the political leaders needed to “handle well the relations between the party centre and the localities” (cited in Baum, “China After Deng”, p. 164). It is highly questionable, though, whether Chinese leaders will be more successful at this than was Gorbachev with the USSR, Vaclav Havel with Czechoslovakia, or the leaders of the former Yugoslavia and former Yemen.

⁸¹ Shambaugh, “China's Fragile Future”, p. 43. “It survives through its monopoly of political power; the suppression of dissent and lack of any organized political rival; by pushing economic growth; and by playing the nationalism card.” But also see Koo, “An Asian American Perspective on China”. Koo cites Michael Dowdle as stating that “[t]he 1982 constitution is becoming increasingly relevant to China's decision making process... [and that the National People's Congress] is beginning to take independent action and [is] getting away with it [as happened in some Eastern European countries in the late 1980s]... [including] rewriting the criminal law to state that defendants shall not be presumed guilty, that they shall have lawyers, and that the police shall no longer be able to hold them without charge”. Koo also claims that “the Chinese Minister of Justice, Xiao Yang, has publicly stated that China needs to govern all affairs by the rule of law [and] admitted that China is not there yet”. Furthermore, the Chinese legislature on 6 March 1997 approved a new civil code which, importantly, no longer contains a category for “counterrevolutionary” crimes, and on 5 October 1998 China signed (but did not yet ratify) the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

possibilities”.⁸² The “judgment” for the 49th hexagram, “*Ko*”, is: “Revolution. On your own day/ You are believed./ Supreme success./ Furthering through perseverance...”. One specific line for that hexagram reads: “When one's own day comes, one may create revolution./ Starting brings good fortune. No blame”.⁸³ This day may indeed soon be upon us. And with one-fifth of the world's population (over 1.2 billion people) and an economy predicted to be the largest in the world early next century, China's awakening certainly will, as Napoleon prophesied, “shake the world”.

⁸² John R. Hall, *Cultures of Inquiry*, unpublished manuscript, ch. 3 [“Forms and Agencies of Narrative”]. The *I Ching*, reputed to be the oldest book in the world, is premised on the belief that everything changes except change itself. The text contains a total of 64 hexagrams.

⁸³ Cited in *Ibid.*