



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

School of Humanities

China's Modern Emperors

A look at China's government

Bachelors dissertation in Chinese studies

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University of Iceland

School of Humanities

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Summary

In this paper I want to evaluate China's government and ask the question of whether or not it is a government that is modernizing in terms of its authority. I will shine some light on its track record from the first emperor and then discuss in detail the more recent history, mainly the twentieth century. I also want to incorporate some recent actions taken by the government such as the imprisonment of writers and journalists. The most important aspect of this paper is to distinguish the difference between the necessity of China's authority, such as population control and preventing the country from falling apart and the more extreme measures that are sometimes taken as a result of excess and corruption.

I also want to talk about some of the improvements China has made over recent years and inquire whether or not the Chinese government is taking its country towards a path of freedom and justice, or a path of resurgent legalism and tyranny. I will do my best to talk about the most heated topics of China today given the fact that some of the discussion surrounding them may come from biased sources. I do believe that if China is attempting to reform its society in order for free thoughts and ideas to take place, then they need to reevaluate their actions. They continue to deny or airbrush some of the historical facts in their country which is not good if they want to avoid repeating them and although the Chinese economy has improved it has created a hotbed of corruption. That along with many other issues is something that only time will tell whether or not they will improve and if not the consequences of bad governance in China may be catastrophic for the rest of the world.

Úrdráttur

Í þessari ritgerð legg ég mat á kónversku r kisstjórna og rannsaka hvort sú r kisstjórna sé aðnútínavæðast hvað varðar valdnotkun. Fyrst mun ég skoða sögu Kóna frá byrjun og tala ég síðan meira um síðari hluta hennar, aðallega tuttugustu öldina. Ég mun einnig fjalla stuttlega um nýlegar fréttir af listamönnum og blaðamönnum sem hafa lent í klóm r kisstjórnarinnar fyrir gagnrýni sína á henni. Það er mikilvægt fyrir lesendur þessarar ritgerðar að gera greinarmun á milli þess sem er nauðsynlegt í stjórnfari Kónverja, svo sem stjórnun búafjöldans og áreynsla til að halda landinu saman, og þess sem hægt væri að telja ónauðsynlegt, eins og öfgafullar handtökur og misnotkun valds.

Ennfremur hyggst ég fjalla um hvað hefur breyst til batnaðar sökum framkvæmda kónversku r kisstjórnarinnar síðastliðinna ára. Ég mun reyna að komast að niðurstöðu um það hvort að verið er að stefna Kóna í áttina að kerfi sem byggir á frelsi og réttlæti eða kerfi sem byggir á endurkomu löghyggju og harðstjórnar. Ég mun gera mitt besta til þess að fjalla um nýlegar heitar umræður í Kóna með það í huga að eitthvað af heimildum mínum eru ekki ritrýndar. Ég trú því í áð ef Kóna ætlar sér að endurbæta sitt samfélag, þar sem frjálss hugsun væri möguleg, þá þurfi þeir að endurskoða sín mál. Kónverska r kisstjórnin heldur áfram að neita eða fegra sögulegar staðreyndir sem er ekki mjög gott ef þeir hyggjast ekki endurtaka fyrri mistök. Þó að kónverski efnahagurinn hafi breyst til batnaðar á undanförunum árum þá hefur velmegunin skapað mikla spillingu auk annara vandamála. Aðeins tóminn getur sagt til um það hvort að þetta ástand spillingar og vandamála muni batna. Ef það gerist ekki þá gætu afleiðingarnar verið skelfilegar fyrir Kóna og heiminn allan.

Forward

Ever since I was a child I have always been interested in Chinese. When I lived in Los Angeles with my mother she was learning Chinese medicine and I would sometimes page through her textbooks, which contained many Chinese characters. I always wanted to figure out what they meant and the beauty of the language only drove my enthusiasm.

My knowledge of China would not be where it is if it were not for my teachers and friends who have over the last few years opened my eyes to a civilization that has for so long been closed. In 2006 I began learning Chinese at Northfield High School in Minnesota and my teacher, Gao Hong was a bit of a celebrity in China where she acquired fame as a very talented pipa player. She showed me not only that learning a language can be very interesting but also that Chinese is something more than just grammar and verbs. It is in itself an art and because of how the language is comprised there is always an opportunity to learn about Chinese culture while simultaneously learning the language. I excelled in my later years but when I travelled to China I became more interested in the country itself. Upon returning to my home country I began feeling that there was a disconnect with East and West in terms of politics and culture and what I really wanted to do was embrace a growing bridge that might bring forth more knowledge and understanding of these distant worlds.

One teacher in particular who took me under his wing and helped me understand China at a more fundamental level is Wang Linzhe, a humble man from Tongliao, Inner Mongolia. He had been a teacher at the University of Iceland before I began my studies there and once a week we would meet up and discuss everything China related and he himself along with an Icelander by the name of Geir Sigurðsson encouraged me to take part in a summer course at Ningbo University. Later when I began studying there I began to seek the “root” of Chinese culture, what is important to the Chinese and the reasoning behind their thinking. I have been taught by many brilliant people about every element of China and it is to their enlightenment that I dedicate this paper. I want to thank Jón Egill Eyþórsson who along with proofreading this paper, taught me about China’s religions and Geir Sigurðsson who gave perspective to China’s history in the most profound manner. I especially want to thank Magnús Björnsson who taught me about China’s economy and politics and was also my instructor for this paper and played a huge role in perfecting it. I

also want to thank my mother whose expertise in journalism and experience in writing for the Huffington Post was so helpful with both the wording and language of this paper. Of course every teacher I had in China deserves a great deal of praise for how energetic they were at teaching young foreigners their language and perhaps they saw their path as being one of bridging the gap between East and West as well.

This paper was in part written because of the global shift in power that we are seeing right now and it is absolutely necessary that we learn as much as we can about the world's impending superpower so that we can put aside our preconceptions and fears and embrace the idea of transparency based on facts and understanding. I truly believe that everyone who has inspired me to pursue this path in life has done so with the best intentions in mind and I hope to inspire others with the same amount of reason and joyfulness as they did.

Index

Summary	2
Útdráttur	3
Forward	4
Index	6
Introduction	7
1. History of Chinese authoritarianism	9
2. Necessity of control	15
3. Elements of Chinese authoritarianism	19
4. Examples of political reform	24
5. Economic participation	26
6. Excesses	28
Conclusion	30
References	32

Introduction

Throughout the history of the Chinese civilization there has been a constant shift of power from different emperors to different leaders. None of them have ever evaded from the idea that they are in power because of something known as the “Mandate of Heaven”, the concept that heavenly forces have granted them the right to rule. (Zhao, 416-433) However if they would exceed their powers and become brutal towards their own people the country would experience massive natural disasters or peasant revolts. A leader whose reign happened to coincide with such misfortunes was said to have “lost” the mandate of heaven.

Westerners commonly believe that the level of authoritarianism in China is intolerable to its people but that does point out the cultural difference. When China was first united under Emperor Qin Shi Huang the country had just gone through a brutal civil war and the following years were marked by legalistic authoritarianism. Scholars who criticized the emperor were buried alive and people were under constant surveillance. The leaders’ justification for these authoritarian measures was that they were necessary in order to control a country of such size with so many residents. This conventional wisdom has carried on throughout China’s history and when Europe was entering their ages of enlightenment, China was still stuck in its old ways.

The fundamental difference between East and West is that the latter defines itself according to the paradigm of “Westphalian Sovereignty”, which refers to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. China doesn’t see itself in that manner but through the paradigm of being a civilization rather than a country. The Chinese sense of unity, pride and self-preservation is an ultimate winner over individual and human rights and other concepts such as free speech and democracy. Certain methods deemed authoritarian in the West might be viewed as necessary in China and that over the course of its five thousand year history has grown to become essential to its society.

In China Confucianism was and still is the dominant ideology in dealings with family, friends or one’s government. The demand of respect one must show for their parents and leader, in other words, respect for people of authority or seniority is vital and non-negotiable. These points are very important and should not be ignored, especially to those who view the Chinese as gullible and obedient towards their own government. A good portion of the Chinese simply just do not care what goes on in government buildings

so long as they are able to feed their family and keep a roof over their heads. The definition of authoritarianism is a form of social organization characterized by submission to authority. It is usually opposed to individualism and libertarianism. In politics, an authoritarian government is one in which political authority is concentrated in a small group of politicians. The Chinese government argues for a “wider” definition of human rights, to include economic and social as well as political rights.

Basically, authoritarianism in China no matter who controls it comes down to one thing: control, control of a massive population of 1.3 billion people with 56 ethnic minorities all with different viewpoints and desires. As a result, sometimes the government’s authoritative control may counter popular demand. This paper will explore China’s authoritarian model and how it has evolved through the centuries and, in light of the changes that have taken place in China in recent years, discuss whether or not China is retreating or whether it is indeed moving in the direction of political reform. The historical section of this paper does reserve a larger portion, since one could not possibly understand China without its history. Much like understanding modern Germany’s position of Nazism and why certain things surrounding it are illegal, China has its own history that its leaders use to help them govern in accordance with avoiding mistakes. I do believe that this issue needs to be talked about since there seems to be an existential divide between East and West and that these discussions should take place based on reality and facts and not emotions and preconceptions. The problem is with any heated subject like this is that people tend to begin by first taking a side and then obtaining the type of evidence that fits their narrative. That poses a danger not only to the intellectual process but also to people’s way of thinking; because it makes us think that we are right and we just need to prove it. Although I will do my best to discuss this as fairly as I can, please enjoy this paper while I do just that.

1. History of Chinese authoritarianism

The first emperor of China was a man who ruled very authoritatively. He ordered the destruction of all weapons not made specifically for his army and the burning of all literature made by his contemporary sages. (Sima, Ch.6) There is also evidence that he ordered philosophers to be buried alive to send a message to anyone who might criticize him. These facts may sometimes be exaggerated, since any dynasty that overthrows an old one usually changes the history in their favor to justify their seizure of power. What is factual about China's first emperor; Qin Shi Huangdi is that after he and his army came out victorious from the Warring States period he unified the country, its currency, the unit of measure and perhaps most importantly the written language. The reign of China's first emperor only lasted 14 years and one of the greatest stories about the emperor is the terracotta army he had constructed to guard his tomb. The emperor hired 700,000 workers to fulfill his dream of an army surrounding his tomb, all of whom he had killed after the construction project had ended, ensuring that no one would know where the mausoleum was. This is a great example of the behavior of leaders who think that they are more than simply human; they are either god kings or divine rulers. The part that gets interesting is how their subjects react to their authority and especially when it gets out of control.

One thing that is evident of both China and Russia is the people's attitude towards king-like behavior. They seem to accept a great amount of authority and even tyranny in the name of progress. Ivan the Terrible might have been a tyrannical leader but he also expanded Russia's borders and brought prosperity and development to the country like no other. Much like emperor Qin, China at least achieved an era of peace and unity and so the people were willing to accept their ruler's behavior as necessary.

Much like Muslims have a deep sense of culture surrounding honesty and charity the Chinese subscribe to a culture of respect towards seniority, family and heads of state. In the West, the „nation states“ were born out of revolutions and demand for liberalization and democracy. The Chinese simply wanted peace, unity and stability. What Westerners often fail to understand is that unlike in the West where people define themselves through the paradigms of nation states, with borders and territorial integrity; the Chinese define themselves more as a civilization of people with a similar culture. China showed this point

of view when Hong Kong was returned to the mainland in 1997. Fears had risen surrounding the potential loss of the island's freedoms and the policies of Beijing would take over Hong Kong, absorbing it into the country as just another city. Hong Kong continues to negotiate and maintain its own aviation bilateral treaties with foreign countries and territories and the only things that have changed are public holidays and the flags over public offices.

During China's Warring States period the main philosophic current was Legalism. The most famous proponent and contributor was Han FeiZi who believed a ruler should use three tools to govern his subjects. Those of *fa, shu and shi*. (Beck)

The interesting thing about this code, especially to those who view ancient China as being a place where the ruler's power was absolute is that it was the system, the rule of law that took precedent over the leader. Even the most diabolical, selfish ruler understood that to maintain the throne, there must be order. On the other hand the idea of individual autonomy was not a prevailing one and legalist philosophers emphasized that the lone individual had no legitimate civil rights and any personal freedom had to strengthen the ruler. This system of thought in fact originated in the state of Qin and was the law of the land under China's first emperor. In later dynasties, Legalism was discredited and become obsolete; however imperial China has often been described as a Confucian exterior covering a core of Legalism. In other words, Confucian values are used to sugarcoat the harsh Legalist ideas that underlie the Imperial system. This game of words has reappeared in previous years, such as „Socialism with Chinese characteristics“, or as Bill Maher wittingly put it: „Dictatorship with a Capitalist Economy“. (Maher, S09E14) Since imperial China, it has continued to be a very convenient method for responding to allegations of extensive power grabbing. Simply by responding that China is a very different place from any other and its government needs to behave the way it does in order to prevent harmony from turning into chaos it gains an edge towards the conclusion that if one does not agree with that statement, then it is because they just don't understand China.

For thousands of years onward China continued its internal struggle of controlling its masses while creating the type of place where peace and harmony could prevail. As the 20th century drew China into an era of madness, one party was in control; the Kuomintang. It had taken power after the revolution of 1911 that overthrew the emperor and dissolved

China's two thousand year tradition of imperial rule. Although the revolution was successful, China went into a period of chaos where warlords seized and controlled different parts of the country. Japan invaded Manchuria in 1937 and the country was also in a state of civil war. These were among many reasons for the KMT leading China into what is now known as the "Nanjing decade" from 1927-1937. It was a decade of pure control by China's Generalissimo Chang Kai-shek which began with the same event that sparked the civil war, the purging of communists. Because the KMT regarded the Chinese in Taiwan as traitors because they had once been under Japanese influence it is said that the KMT soldiers pillaged and plundered the Taiwanese people for a living. They confiscated a lot of land and transferred many resources to China for the war. (Zarrow) Not only were communists being persecuted during this time. Other parties were banned until the Second Sino-Japanese War when the KMT had begun relaxing their oppressive positions or it could have been that the party realized they were losing support from their own people after making "eliminating political rivals" a bigger priority than defending their own country.

When Mao Zedong took power in 1949 and stood on Tiananmen Square proclaiming the new "People's Republic of China" the country was still recovering from decades of chaos where ruling warlords had taken power. Japanese armies had bombed, pillaged and raped and civil war had left the country in ruins. The promise of peace in a country that had experienced too much hardship was something that everyone looked forward to. Nevertheless the biggest issue needed to be addressed; the country's economy. As Qin Shi Huang did after the Warring States period, Mao also issued a single currency for the Chinese. In the beginning private companies were left alone but had all been nationalized by 1955, and land that had previously been run by landowners was quickly given to the farmers and ordinary people. However these people would not enjoy their newly acquired farms for very long because just a few years later Mao had them thrown off their farms into put into state-run collective farms. Mao had increased his position since taking power and put in place systems like the *hukou* house registration system, but also signed marriage laws based on equality of the sexes, monogamy and banned such practices as polygamy, child marriage and the taking of concubines.

In the summer of 1957 Mao launched a campaign called the “Hundred Flowers Campaign” where the Communist Party encouraged different solutions to national policy issues from the country’s intellectuals. The Communist Party expected nothing else than hails of praise for a job well done, but instead people from all over criticized their low living standards, proscription of foreign language and the simple fact that the Party members enjoyed many privileges that the public did not. Many people had sent in letters calling for the Communist Party to give up power, and by the end of the campaign things were spiraling out of control; Mao also used the information acquired during the campaign to crack down on critics, sending students to labor camps and imprisoning others, some were even executed.

Mao felt he had to do something and in 1958 the CPC decided to transform China from an agrarian society into a modern communist society through rapid industrialization. To meet the quota of smelting for example, people in communes were ordered to bring millions of tons of household pots and pans along with essential farming equipment to makeshift smelting centers and have them melted down, the quality however was poor and anything made from the material was often useless. People would send in false reports about harvesting numbers even though grain production actually declined drastically from 1958-1962. Mao went on with his plan as if grain production was increasing and city dwellers continued to get their share of food; this along with bad weather conditions resulted in the largest famine in history. (Song, 551-558)

This ordeal forced Mao to reconsider and contemplate what had gone wrong and his conclusion was that the failure of the “Great Leap Forward” lay within his own party. His own authority began to be questioned but he simply said that the party had lost the revolutionary spirit and had allowed too many bourgeois elements to enter society.

In 1966 Mao decided to mobilize the youth, believing they still had the fiery zeal left in them to accomplish anything. They were told to criticize their own teachers, anyone involved in the arts and anybody who was seen as counter-revolutionary. The main aim was to purge Chinese society of capitalist, traditional and cultural elements and create a cult around Mao Zedong. Since this was in theory a declaration of war by Mao on his own party many people who had been faithful to Mao and the party were swallowed up and labeled as having prosperous goals. Deng Xiaoping who would later on lead China was

sent to work at a tractor factory and even the poet laureate of the Communist Revolution, Ai Qing was sent with his family to Xinjiang to clean toilets.

During Deng Xiaoping's rule, China experienced growth at an unprecedented rate. Farmers were allowed to sell for profit again and once small villages like Shenzhen became Special Economic Zones where foreign investors were lured into the Chinese market through low taxes. During these years Deng Xiaoping said: "I don't care whether the cat is black or white, so long as it catches the mouse", in other words he was a pragmatist who would pursue whatever path worked best, regardless of ideology. As the government continued to loosen its grip on state-owned industries corruption and inflation followed because the pace of political reform did not match economic reform. In December, 1986 protests began throughout China and eventually reached Beijing. The CPC began to see a frightening similarity to something they themselves had experienced twenty years earlier. Hardliners took over and Party members like General Secretary Hu Yaobang who was very popular amongst the students was forced to resign after being too "weak" on the protesters and was denounced by his own party.

On April 15 1989 Hu Yaobang suddenly died of a heart attack and within days his posted eulogies had turned into bigger political issues such as freedom of the press, democracy and corruption. Small gatherings began to be seen around the Monument to the People's Heroes at Tiananmen Square, they quickly increased when Hu Yaobang's funeral took place. The protests showed no sign of going away and the protests even included a hunger strike along with other students from all over China travelling to Beijing to join the protests. During this time the Sino-Soviet conference was taking place and many students used the foreign press to their advantage. Members of the media from all over the world were in Beijing to cover the visit but their attention was turned toward the protests. In the days leading up to June 4 the politburo received a report from Li Peng, who advocated using force to clear the square; he said that it was the only way to restore order since the students had no plans of leaving. The military began to infiltrate the square and by the early hours of June 3 the first reports of violence from both sides began to emerge, and it would only intensify. As the People's Liberation Army drew near protesters began throwing rocks and Molotov cocktails at police and army vehicles. Some soldiers were even burned alive in their armored vehicles and others were beaten to death by protesters.

In response the soldiers opened fire on the protesters and even surrounding apartment complexes, shooting people in their own homes who watched from their windows and balconies. Chaos raged on throughout the night. The number of deaths is still unknown, but the Chinese Red Cross puts the death toll at around 2,600.

2. Necessity of control

China is the world's most populous country with around 1,4 billion people compressed into an area of 9,6 million square kilometers. Most of China's population resides on the east-coast around the major cities like Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Putting that simple fact in perspective is the first step towards understanding why China operates the way it does.

As previously mentioned, it is a historical fact that anytime the government loses control of its massive populous the country goes into chaos. Realizing this, China put forth a goal to keep its population under 1.3 billion by the end of the 20th century. Despite huge losses of life during Mao's leadership the country managed to decrease its infant mortality rate from 227/1000 births in 1949 to 53/1000 in 1981 and life expectancy dramatically increased from around 35 years to 65 years in 1976. (Bergaglio, 2)

In 1979 to counter overpopulation and to alleviate social, economic and environmental problems in the country, the government introduced the "One Child Policy". The policy states that parents living in urban areas cannot have more than one child and parents with multiple children are not entitled to the same benefits as parents with only one child. If either a girl or a child with a mental retardation or other physical disability is born in a rural area, the parents of that child are allowed to apply to have a second child. However people who violate the policy may be subject to pay monetary penalties and could be denied bonuses at their workplace.

These types of punishments are minimal compared to some of the reports that have come out of China's countryside. Serious human rights violations, such as forced abortions and sterilizations, have been reported. According to a 2001 report 20,000 abortions and sterilizations were set for Huaiji Country in Guangdong Province after widespread disregard for the policy. Incidents of women as far as 8.5 months pregnant having been forced to abort by injection of saline solution have been reported. More outrageously, even babies of women who were in their 9th month of pregnancy or already in labor were killed while still in the birth canal or immediately after birth. (Mcelroy) Although the government outlawed the act of abortion through force in 2002 it is difficult to enforce and the fact remains that

many parents, especially farmers prefer to give birth to a son rather than a daughter either to ensure a farm worker or someone to carry on the family name.

Although China has been considering abolishing this policy there is another big problem sailing towards China. Between now and 2050 the number of people over 60 is going to rise by 230 million, in other words the number of elderly Chinese will rise from the current 12% to about 1/3 of the population. This means that a dwindling workforce will be supporting a growing population of seniors. (Ferguson, E03)

One of the first things economics students learn is the market model of supply and demand – that in a competitive market, the price for a particular product will vary until it settles at a point where the quantity demanded by consumers equals the quantity supplied by producers resulting in an economic equilibrium of price and quantity. China's market model, however, has more to do with the need to sustain a vast population with limited resources. China provides food to 21 percent of the world's population, despite having only seven percent of the world's arable land. (Zhang, 6)

On New Year's Day 2006 the United Nations officially stopped food aid to China, thereby ending the country's 26 year long dependency on the World Food Program, on the same day the Chinese government also abolished the "Regulations on Agricultural Taxes", that put an end to over 2,600 years of taxing Chinese farmers. This along with other measures taken economically have lifted millions of Chinese citizens out of poverty and in 25 years the annual grain output in China has increased from 300 million to 500 million tons. (Zhang, 6) In his book *Who Will Feed China*, Lester R. Brown said that: "To feed its 1.2 billion people, China may soon have to import so much grain that this action could trigger unprecedented rises in world food prices". (Brown) He goes on to explain the dilemma China faces; for example the scarcity of water and that 80 percent of China's grain crop require irrigation. China, for example, has only one-fifth as much water per capita as the United States. Furthermore, while southern China is relatively wet, the north, home to about half the country's population, is an immense parched region that threatens to become the world's largest desert. (Jacques, 170) Despite this China has ceased to accept aid from the UN's WFP and it is now able to answer Lester's question of "Who will feed China", the answer is China, at least for the time being.

Since the great canals of the Ming dynasty the Chinese state has viewed the environment as something that can be manipulated and used for consumption and human endeavors. What took Europe over 200 years to accomplish in terms of growth and modernization, China did in three decades. The difference is that at the time the West could pursue prosperity without having to worry about the environment the way China does, and those three decades of growth have left the Chinese skies, rivers and lands plagued with pollution. 300 million people in China lack access to clean drinking water, there is rampant deforestation, sixteen of the world's twenty worst-polluted cities, acid rain affecting a third of Chinese territory, desert covering a quarter of the country, and 58 percent of land classified as arid or semi-arid. (Jacques, 170) Keep in mind—these are the statistics under a communist government that still retains control over a large portion of the country's production. Imagine a laissez-faire system where business is allowed to do whatever it wants without restraint from an authoritarian system to the least has to be held responsible to the living conditions of its people, including their environment. The dilemma is that China wants to maintain its economic growth but it can't seriously do so without a massive availability of energy, which in China means coal and since coal is what powers 75% of China; no coal, no growth. However, unfortunately, when reviewing Chinese safety records for coal miners it doesn't appear that China is very authoritative in regards to regulation; on the contrary it seems to be utterly corrupt, even though in 2007 the government shut down over 10,000 small, unlicensed mines. (Koppel, E04)

That same year China overtook the United States as the world's biggest emitter of CO₂, even though the per-capita emissions are one-seventh of those of the US, and if the country wishes to avoid a devastating environmental catastrophe the government will need to make some unpopular decisions.

Signs are already visible with increased desertification and changing weather patterns within the country, including increased droughts and storms. The upside of having an authoritarian government as opposed to a bureaucratic system of representation is that urgent matters can more easily be solved and China's government is very willing to listening to scientific facts in an effort to respond promptly. China already has some of the most advanced laws in the world on renewable energy, clean production, environmental impact assessment and pollution control, through these still remain widely ignored in

practice. (Jacques, 173) The bottom line is that the Chinese government views its authority over its people as essential with respect to the fact that it has limited resources and until China and the rest of the world come up with new alternative energies that won't rob the planet dry, it needs to maintain a degree of consumption control in order to stave off chaos.

3. Elements of Chinese authoritarianism

Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, almost every media outlet in the country has been state-run and in recent years other outlets such as the internet have dramatically changed the media landscape.

During the 2011 Arab spring revolution it wasn't just Arab governments that were receiving worldwide attention. In fear of what the Chinese government was seeing, they went after dissidents, clamped down on foreign media and mobilized the police force. (Bennett, 1) However with a growing economy there has been a surge in more diverse media coverage that will undoubtedly test the government's control over control of the media. Senior Fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations Elizabeth C. Economy says the Chinese government is in a state of "schizophrenia" about its media policy, on the one hand they know there needs to be freedom of the press and they are constantly testing the line of free information, but they fear the type of free information that could lead to the regime's downfall. (Bennett, 2) Politics aside China is a very socially conservative country and although the government goes against the questioning of their legitimacy in power, taboo subjects like pornography are generally neither accessible nor acceptable in China.

Whereas the media owned by the state bans access to information deemed "dangerous", like historical facts about Communist Party's mistakes or activists that have been conveniently swept under the rug, the government also ensures that the foreign press is regulated or even censored in China. One censorship method is radio jamming. Foreign stations like "Voice of America, Radio Free Asia and the BBC World Service have all been jammed through interference. In response several of these international radio stations have planned on closing their Mandarin services in frustration over radio jamming and will likely focus more on internet radio

When people assemble in the West their numbers usually do not exceed the thousands; in China they can reach well over a million protestors. This, and a history of assemblies turning into violent revolts like that of the White Lotus Rebellion or the Taiping Rebellion, which combined resulted in the deaths of nearly 40 million people is one of the reasons China is and has always been suspicious of those types of activities. Sometimes protests in China can get so massive that they can actually overtake a local government;

which is what happened in Wukan in the fall of 2011. After the local government had sold land to real estate developers without giving proper compensation to the villagers, several thousand people protested in front of the government building and the police station. To meet the protesters somewhere in the middle the authorities allowed the protesters to select 13 representatives to begin negotiating with the government. While in police custody, a man by the name of Xue Jinbo who was also one of the representatives died under suspicious circumstances. His death turned outraged protestors into rioters who eventually got so powerful that they had forced all Communist Party officials and police to flee the city. A deal was reached, but the protests in Wukan were quite surprising since Wukan has received a reputation for being especially harmonious and it goes to show that if the Chinese government fails to serve its people, the solemn state of modern China can easily be replaced by chaos.

Many times when China is plunged into that state it has been or at least to some degree fueled by religion or religious groups. The Yellow Turbans, a Daoist sect brought down the mighty Han dynasty in the year 184 AD. The rebellion was crushed but the price of victory had been so great that the Han dynasty could not sustain its state of power for much longer; the following years would split China into an era known as the “Three Kingdoms”. Another famous rebellion that took place in China was one started by a group of Buddhists known as the “White Lotus Society” in 1794 that resulted in the deaths of some 16 million people, it weakened the Qing government and marked a turning point in its rule. The flagship of religious revolts in China is undoubtedly the Taiping rebellion, which managed to turn into a full blown civil war. It began with a Christian convert by the name of Hong Xiuquan who started the uprising in Guangxi province but later moved the capital of his “Kingdom” to Nanjing once he had gained more ground. The rebellion was eventually crushed but resulted in the deaths of around 25 million people, most of them civilians.

Perhaps one of the main misunderstandings people have of the Chinese government’s view towards religion is that because it is a communist state it is adamantly against religion. The more likely explanation is that it fears more than anything large groups, especially those with dogmatic ideology and a charismatic leader within their

circles. That is precisely what happened in the case of Falun Gong (Falun Dafa), a spiritual movement that was brought to China in 1992 by a man named Li Hongzhi.

Since the discipline has no formal membership list it is difficult to say exactly how many people are affiliated with Falun Gong, but in 1999 the Chinese Communist Party placed the number of followers at around 70 million and people like Wu Shaozu, an official from China's National Sports Commission have said the numbers may in fact be around 100 million. It wasn't until that fact became clear that the alarm bells in China's government began to sound and to them this "cult" was starting to resemble the "White Lotus Society" and that was something that they didn't want. The government began detaining followers in 1999 after a protest by some 30,000 Falun Gong followers that had taken place on April 25 in Beijing, and since then the government has operated a very successful campaign to not only suppress Falun Gong but also propagate an image of Falun Gong to its own citizens as being a dangerous cult. China's government has slammed Falun Gong for "disrupting social order and contributing to the deaths of hundreds of Chinese practitioners and non-practitioners by discouraging medical treatment and causing or exacerbating mental disorders, leading to violent acts".

According to the U.S. State Department up to 100,000 people have been imprisoned for Falun Gong activities and several hundred to a few thousand have died while in custody from torture, abuse or neglect. Since this is a heated issue there tends to be exaggerations from both sides in order to gain credibility for their own rhetoric. In 2006, representatives from Falun Gong claimed that thousands of practitioners had been sent to 36 concentration camps around China and at one of these camps outside of Shenyang, a hospital had been used as a detention center for 6,000 followers. Allegedly three-fourths of the detainees had been killed and had their organs harvested for profit. However, when American officials from the U.S. Embassy in Beijing and the U.S. consulate in Shenyang visited the area as well as inspected the hospital on two occasions they found "absolutely no evidence" of these claims and stated that it was just a "normal public hospital".

If you were to ask most university students in the West about China, there is a very good chance they automatically think of Tibet and the treatment China has given to Tibetans over the last few decades. Many valid arguments have been made concerning

Tibet and human rights issues, but thanks to an effective anti-China campaign many people have a pie in the sky idea of Tibet and its history.

Tibet first became a part of China in the 13th century under the Mongolian Yuan dynasty and remained in one way or another under de facto control of China. The 1911 revolution led to warlords taking over Tibet and in 1913 Tibet had declared itself independent from the Qing dynasty. When China regained control of Tibet in 1959 it viewed that it was simply defeating the last stronghold of China's warlords. It is nevertheless the area in which China's authoritative measures are what most controversial and to go back to the point about activists making a good case they are right about a lot of things, especially how the Chinese government can be so tenacious towards the Dalai Lama, but the fear of him mostly lies around how admirable he is to the West as opposed to the man himself.

Pre 1950 Tibet experienced no more freedoms than it does today and was described as a theocratic society, which tolerated serfdom, a form of slavery and horrors like penal mutilations. Where China exactly oversteps its authority in Tibet is an open question because like previously mentioned, China keeps a tight lid on freedom of the press and in the absence of information it's not difficult for people on the outside to fill in the blanks. Tibetans claim that China is infringing on their religious freedom and have claimed that Buddhists are pressured to change their religious beliefs to conform government positions and policy. China has also intensified their media campaign against the Dalai Lama, denouncing him as a "separatist rebel" and persuading native Tibetans to think that way too.

Christianity is one of the fastest growing religions in China, and since 1949 it has steadily gained more ground throughout the country. According to former Communist Party official and Christian convert, Zhao Xiao, there are over 130 million Christians in China, which is pretty impressive for a country that bans missionaries. Which if true means that there are more Christians in the country than Communist Party members, who are around 80 million. A popular type of Christianity in China is the so-called "House Christianity", small congregations who meet privately for mass. In communist China house churches are neither banned nor fully approved of and as long as they keep their numbers at a minimum they are more or less left alone. This is true for China's Protestants but

because of China's tense relationship with the Vatican, Catholics are under closer scrutiny. During the 2008 Beijing Olympics, government harassment of churches began to grow as Beijing feared the contact they might have with the foreigners coming in to the country. As with any religion in China it seems that the government has more of a desire to control the growth of Christianity rather the religion itself.

4. Examples of political reform

The Chinese have sought to learn from their mistakes, but it seems that the government acknowledges the mistakes but then airbrushes what really happened into a more suitable version thereof, or completely ignores it all together. In the city of Changsha, where Mao studied as a young man there is a very visible crowd of “Mao worshippers” who make pilgrimages from all over China lay flower wreaths at the feet of his shrine-statue. Not only that but Changsha has the largest statue of Mao in the world. When one considers that more people died under Mao’s rule than under Hitler or Stalin, mostly due to his bad policies, one cannot help but ask if this Mao worship is mass delusion or if there is something else to the equation?

As of 2003 China has done away with all welfare programs that Mao put into place like guaranteed employment, free healthcare and education, job security and employment housing. During the 1950’s farmers were herded on to state run collective farms and in 2006 they no longer had to pay taxes. The fact is that one of the reasons that China’s government behaves the way it does is that they are terrified of unrest and chaos but there is always disagreement about how best to contain something like that. In the view of the government they feel they need to take authoritative measures to ensure that everybody stands in line but as we have seen from the Arab spring movement; it is exactly that form of governing that can lead to the type of chaos that China fears so much. While China was busy trying to reform itself under Deng Xiaoping’s new economic policies there came to light a dissatisfaction with the dark side of capitalism. Since free market ideas were so new to China the country became a hotbed of corruption and coupled with inflation there would be inevitable unrest.

Despite the work being done by the Chinese government on reform there is always going to be pressure from the international community, especially now since China is poised to be the world’s next superpower, China is under more scrutiny than ever before. Chinese leaders are constantly being reminded of human rights violations on their visits to foreign countries and Western leaders often meet with the exiled Dalai Lama to show that China isn’t the moral arbiter of the universe. During the 2008 Olympics in Beijing the Chinese government realized that changes were inevitable; foreigners simply would not put up with

things like pollution, lack of transparency and lack of journalistic freedom. People were calling the Beijing Olympics “China’s coming-out party” and just like the 1964 Olympics in Tokyo and 1988 Olympics in Seoul, people hoped that the changes made during the games would have a lasting impact on the country. Some people did point out that the pomp and circumstance China displayed during the games was a strategic effort to throw a fancy veil over reality in order to divert attention away from China’s problems.

Nevertheless change was making way and being in the spotlight put pressure on China’s leaders to respond to international demands. This was apparent during the Lhasa uprisings a few months prior to the Olympics, where the military and police force handled the uprisings very differently than in 1989 when they occurred after the death of the Panchen Lama.

More recently China’s house church pastor Shi Enhao was released from custody due to international pressure. He had been both verbally and physically abused upon his arrest and people like Christian human rights activist lawyer Gao Zhisheng were ready to put China’s “freedom of religion” to the test and after a long legal battle Shi was released. The question is now hovering over whether or not the world will put up with China imprisoning dissidents for bogus reasons, that is if China really does want to become a dominant player on the world stage?

5. Economic participation

Necessity of control is one thing but many experts have pointed out that China seems to be changing its ways because of a more open economy. As Wen Jiabao pointed out in a recent speech; China must reform its politics if it is to maintain its economic growth. A part of China's booming economy has been that many Western companies have made tons of capital by moving their production to China and given formerly poor farmers new jobs and opportunities. However large corporations like Apple have ended up in the spotlight for making their products under the veil of exploitation. According to activist Mike Daisy: "one of the reasons you set up your company in a fascist, authoritarian country run by thugs is so you don't have pesky reporters wondering around finding out stories that then make people upset". (Maher, S10E04)

In my opinion, today's China bears a painful resemblance to 1920's America where it is leaping into its heyday at the speed of light and the fear is that it might eventually experience its very own 1929. Looking at the history of the United States during that time it seemed that anything was permitted so long as it brought economic development. The Mafia ran cities like New York and Chicago; they also ran bootlegging operations along with construction projects. Booming cities in China like Chongqing are the archetype of that type of transformation.

A few years ago there were a series of construction projects where people were told to move in order to make way for more luxurious skyscrapers. In cities like Shanghai, half of the old neighborhoods have outright disappeared. The residents were paid for their trouble but some people didn't want to move and one man in Chongqing made international news when the entire area around his house had been excavated and only his house stood on a steep hill surrounding it. He was eventually paid a handsome sum of money but the question that goes with this story is whether economic development has taken a front seat on everything else, like say human rights. To fight eviction means living on a construction site, often without electricity but the people who live there say they have no choice. They are in a situation where the government only pays them a fraction of what their property is worth and then sends them off to live in much more expensive homes in the suburbs. In 1949 the government seized all land in China and is now making a fortune

leasing to real estate developers. When a society is put into a position like that there is a very big incentive for people of power and wealth to take one more cookie out of the cookie jar.

China is ranked 78 out of 179 countries by the Corruption Perceptions Index and public opinion polls in China have shown that this issue is often at the top of people's concerns. In 2006 alone, 24,000 corrupt officials were put in prison and in Chinese courts there is practically no presumption of innocence, no trial by jury and for people who accept more than \$14,000 in bribes or kickbacks there are harsh penalties and some officials have even been put to death. (Koppel, E04) Despite all these efforts corruption remains rampant in China and no city represents that as much as Shanghai. Long before communism took over, Shanghai was known as the "whore of the Orient", where if you had money you could buy yourself into and out of anything. As mentioned with housing problems, most lawyers in China will not take on any property disputes. The reason is they have no idea how well connected real estate developers are with the Communist Party. There was a famous case in Shanghai where a woman named Jiang Meili was married to a lawyer by the name of Zheng Enqiong, who took up a property case of his wife's friend. It turned out that many of the deals were being done under the table and when the story hit the Hong Kong media the authorities in Shanghai reacted—arresting Zheng and not the corrupt land developer. Zheng Enqiong was found guilty of revealing state secrets and sent to prison for three years. (CBC, E02)

The danger corruption poses in China is not only limited to financial scandals, they can also become deadly. In November, 2011 a British businessman named Neil Heywood was murdered in Chongqing. He had been poisoned, but there didn't appear to be any suspicious motive for his death until February 2012, when the police chief of Chongqing, Wang Lijun defected to the U.S. consulate. It later turned out that deposed Chinese political leader Bo Xilai may have had a part in the death of Neil Heywood. Bo's wife, Gu Kailai had allegedly planned to illegally move money abroad and Heywood had asked for a larger piece of the pie for helping her do so, or expose her plan to the authorities. This scandal has effectively ended Bo Xilai's career, but it is unbelievable to see that corruption now runs so deep in China that people believe that they can get away with murder because of who they are or whom they know.

6. Excesses

China remains a one party system where the country's leaders are appointed rather than elected. It has representative democracy at a local level but it's unlikely that democracy will go any further than that in the coming years. Wrapped up in the Chinese flag is the resilience of a 5,000 year old civilization, and what traditional Chinese in fact fear is that the "Western-invasion" will end their culture. It is difficult for the West to comprehend that its democracy paradigm may not be the solution other countries need or even want; transformation in a country like China is going to take a lot longer than the West wants it to.

That's not to say that China's leaders don't overstep their authority and over the past years there has been a scary resurgence of secret arrests.

In 2010 a man who very few had even heard of won the Nobel Peace Prize and gained worldwide attention as he was serving an eleven year prison sentence for "inciting subversion of state power". The man is Liu Xiabo and he is a literary critic, writer, professor and human rights activist whose crime was calling for political reform and the end of China's single-party rule. Born to an intellectual family in 1955 he began writing about individual freedom and criticized China's Confucian values. In 1989 he returned to China from the U.S. to take part in the Tiananmen Square protests and right before the massacre, he persuaded many of the students and soldiers to allow for a peaceful withdrawal from the square, saving many from sure death. He was later arrested for his involvement in the movement and sentenced to prison in 1991 but was released a year later. In 1995 he launched a petition campaign on the anniversary of the June 4 massacre, calling on the government to reassess their position on the event and in response he was put under house arrest and has yet to be released. His receiving the Nobel Peace Prize is ironic since he adamantly supported the U.S. led invasion of Iraq and heavily criticized Senator John Kerry during the 2004 presidential election for not supporting the war his country was in enough. He is nevertheless the poster boy of Chinese authoritarianism and since he has not done any harm to anybody else, China is in the wrong for treating him the way they do.

During an interview with the Discovery Channel, the artist and critic Ai Wei Wei talked about his experience growing up in the midst of the Cultural Revolution. His father,

Ai Qing was the poet laureate of the Communist Revolution and as mentioned earlier he and his family all fell victim to the insanity of that period. At the time Ai Wei Wei believed his government was moving slowly and deliberately into the right direction. His experience as a child shaped him into the man he is today and he has made headlines with his activism. After the 2008 earthquake in Sichuan he organized an investigation into the deaths of schoolchildren due to politicians funneling money into their own pockets from school building funds. This interview was conducted in 2006 and five years later, on April 3, 2011, like his father before him, he was detained without any official charges being filed against him. He was released on June 22, 2011 after nearly three months in detention and predictably, he was banned from saying too much to the media. Even though there is in fact evidence of tax evasion it is clear that he would not have received this type of “hellish” treatment if he was not who he is.

By June 2011 China had 485 million internet users and it is projected that by 2013 China’s internet population will reach 718 million, accounting for 52.7% of the total population. Like most internet users around the world the Chinese go online to read news, research information and check e-mail, the difference is that the Chinese are only allowed to read or research government-sanctioned material. Just like with the country’s radio and television the internet is tightly controlled, and many websites are censored by the government. China’s Internet police is believed to be more than 30,000. Reporters without Borders have pointed out that as of 2012, out of the 121 netizens imprisoned; more than half of them, 68 have been jailed in China, making it the world’s largest jailer of journalists/cyber-dissidents. Their crimes range anywhere from communicating with groups abroad, signing online petitions or calling for reform. In contrast with the law regarding freedom of speech, the internet laws in China are very vague and are all open for interpretation, which is most likely how the government uses them. This whole umbrella of Internet censorship was been wittingly dubbed “The Great Firewall of China”.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed whether or not China's government has shown improvement and is attempting to join the international community with improved standards for freedom and justice. Since the critical information used to come to this conclusion has been largely derived from Western media, and the information coming from China might seem more in line with propaganda, there may be bias from both sides.

That being said, China doesn't seem to be making the progress that Western experts previously thought it would make with a more dynamic economy and increased transparency with the international community. In fact, China's government seems to be leaning more in the opposite direction, viewing openness as something of a cultural invasion and expressing paranoid tendencies over any criticism, whether from the inside or the outside.

China has gone down the list in recent years in freedom of the press and since a free press is what keeps governments honest, the current outlook is not a reason for optimism. The growing consensus is that ever since the West came crawling to the Chinese doorsteps, begging them to bail out their destroyed economies, China has realized it has a very powerful bargaining chip. The Western world might be forced to play by their rules and not the other way around. This means that if Europe and America want Chinese investments, they need to be nice to China even when the latter step out of line.

The good news is that it doesn't appear that China will "rule the world". First of all the Chinese are communists, not imperialists and the task of ruling China is going to be hard enough without the Chinese imposing their will on other sovereign nations. Ideas like democracy will not likely be attractive to China's government, but that doesn't mean there is no hope for progressives in the country. Just like the United States experienced with Iraq, Jeffersonian democracy doesn't guarantee improvement and the question should rather be asked whether or not the country in question wants democracy as much as other countries want democracy for it.

If China is to change its ways and adopt a more tolerant, benevolent system of rule it will have to come from the demands of Chinese people and since the government fears internal chaos so much, they will most likely have to negotiate. Going back to Wen Jiabao's point of political reform, the underlying sentiment there is that for a country to

continue economic growth, there needs to be innovation and for there to be innovation, the government can't tell its people how to think.

China's five thousand year old history includes a two thousand year history of autocracy. To change such a system requires time and political will but if that's what the government is attempting they are not doing a very good job. Religious people are frequently targeted by authorities and so are journalists, lawyers and artists. From an economic standpoint it also seems that China is gaining all the economic benefits of capitalism, without the standards for safety, pollution control and even basic human dignity. Not to mention corruption will eventually lead to a system where all the wealth is concentrated to a small minority and the rest are left to fight over the breadcrumbs.

Looking to the future there is a possibility that China might change its ways and that we here in the past were simply wrong. The fact remains that China's government is retreating back to its authoritarian ways and the only difference is that now they are able to pave over their actions with economic prosperity, which pleases the rest of a desperate world, looking for a way out a tough economic spot – The best example I can think of is Ai Wei Wei who is if anything, the modern Qu Yuan. Every year the Chinese celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival, commemorating a poet by that name who committed suicide after his leader had ignored him about the concerns he had for his people. Given the governments' recent behavior it is probable to think that if someone like Qu Yuan were alive in China today, pointing out concerns they have for their people like Ai did after the Sichuan earthquake that someone would be under house arrest. If China's government continues this trend many have predicted a nightmare scenario. In the future China's citizens become more displeased with growing corruption and income inequality and eventually to divert attention from domestic problems the government panders to a resurgent nationalism amongst its youth. This creates massive instability with a fifth of the world's population that is being told that their problems are the fault of foreigners. Of course this is the worst case scenario but nevertheless China's government will determine the world's future as being one of peace and stability or one of chaos.

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