

Democratization of China

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Abstract

This paper hopes to provide a historical panorama of China's democratization process, describe the historical background of on-going process of China's democratization and its ups and downs, analyze and explore its origin, development, stagnation and even retrogression. This process of democratization is also a social movement, even a social revolution, aiming at changing China's current political system. Therefore, it uses the political opportunity theory derived from the West academia to interpret it. This paper explores central problems in political opportunity theory and explores the implications of adopting political opportunities for explaining the emergence, development, and influence of protest movements and emphasizes the decisive influence and role to the emergence of political opportunities on success or failure. As political opportunity theory interprets social movements more in open society, while China is a closed society and a significant difference emerges, therefore, the traditional Chinese theory of "right time, right place with right people" is introduced to analyze the feasibility of the ultimate goal of China's political change expected to be achieved by the Chinese democracy movement. The paper concludes the ultimate success depends on the arrival of political opportunity, *tianshi* which is coming on the horizon, but the tough reality would be that the chance is very slim for China to rebuild a united and constitutional democracy with all ethnic minorities remaining when the CCP is no more.

Keywords: China; democratization; political change; political opportunity; society

1. Introduction

The Chinese democracy movement aims to terminate one-party rule in China and achieve constitutional democracy. The modern Chinese democratic movement is somewhat the continuation of the Republicanism achieved through the Revolution of 1911 overthrowing the Qing Dynasty after nearly two decades of consistent armed struggle and setting up the Republic of China. The ensuing 1912 Republic was an imperfect and short-lived democracy, but freedom of speech and association were the essence of the polity.

The newborn and imperfect democracy of the ROC was overridden by the Chinese communist Party-led People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. Under rigid political control during the Mao Zedong period from 1949 to 1976, there were no clear visible signs and hearable voices of any tangible democratic movement.

The contemporary Chinese democratic movement emerged with the advent of the Xidan Democracy Wall in November 1978, about two years after the death of Mao Zedong and the end of the Cultural Revolution. The growing political pluralism and infighting of political power within the top leadership of the Chinese Communist Party offered the opportunity for the grass-root people to express their grievances.

The Xidan Democracy Wall in Beijing became the unique venue or place where people expressed their political viewpoints. This is the inception of the modern Chinese democracy movement. The first wave of democracy in China was very soon quelled. However, with the ascendance of Deng Xiaoping to the top power, aided by his two liberal minded Party chiefs Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang, China enjoyed a decade long relaxed political period between 1979 and 1989. This offered youths and people the opportunity to think considerably freely to learn western ideologies of democracy and freedom. The outbreaks of two university students' movements in 1986 and 1989 were really the results of the 10-year political relaxation.

The sudden death of Hu Yaobang in April 1989 triggered Beijing students pouring onto the Beijing streets and occupying Tiananmen Square for over two months expressing their outcry for free speech and free association. Alarmed by the millions of people assembling in Tiananmen Square, on 4 June, Deng Xiaoping, ordered the PLA to crackdown on the movement by force, causing the blood-bath massacre that shocked the world.

Deng Xiaoping skilfully quelled domestic political opposition and fended off international criticism. Ever since, reform forces within the CCP were driven out of the central arena of Chinese politics.

Dr. Wang, Bingzhang, PhD (McGill University), launched the "China Spring Democracy Movement" in November 1982, lifting the curtain for the Chinese overseas democracy movement, carrying on the Beijing Xidan Democracy Wall movement.

Fleeing Tiananmen Square, leaders on the wanted list gathered in Paris, France in late September, 1989, to form a new pro-democracy organization, the Federation for a

Democratic China (FDC), vowing to end the one-party rule of the CCP in China as their ultimate political goal.

In the wake of the dissolving Soviet Bloc, the Western democracy leaders integrated the CCP into the new world order as the end of Cold War and “End of History” (Fukuyama, 1992) by providing a golden opportunity to Communist China to build up its economic strength, wishfully believing that McDonaldization (Ritzer, 1993) could ensue democracy. The overseas Chinese democracy movement was next to be discarded. The movement has been running at a low ebb ever since early 1990s.

2. Body of paper (TNR 14pt., bold)

2. Political opportunity theory (Methods)

The modern Chinese democracy movement is undoubtedly a social movement. Political Opportunity Structure theory was created by Western scholars in explaining the phenomenon of social movements. This theory has been used by many scholars to explain phenomena related to social movements, including the emergence of social movements, the mobilization of social movements, the dominant strategy of social movements and their ultimate success (Zhang et al, 2013). If an existing political system is vulnerable to a challenge, it creates an opportunity for the movement members to pick up such a challenge at this opportune time to push through a social change (Cragun et al, 2006). That is the political opportunity. The vulnerability can be the result of the following: increasing political pluralism, decline in repression, division within elites and increased political enfranchisement.

Eisinger first explicitly proposed in early 1970s the political opportunity theory as an analytical tool to understand the occurrence and evolution of social movements. In Eisinger's (1973) view, the political opportunity theory mainly refers to a regime's nature of openness or closure, where open regimes can provide a path for political expression of a particular social group and respond to its political demands while on the contrary, in closed regimes, governments tend to have power centralized and ignore the voice of public who are force to take collective political action to meet their own requirements, therefore the political opportunity is limited.

Chinese and Western approaches to be accepted to political change have something in common. One is that the political change can be triggered when an old-regime or an authoritarian government is under enormous and unbearable pressures from both home and abroad (Skocpol, 1979). Another is that economic development can lead to the evolution of society and eventually cause political change (Inglehart, 1997). World leaders and academia have been so obsessed that economic growth in developing states would lead to political change. It has become such a common practice in the wake of the Cold War that the Western democracies have made it their foreign policy bundling to promote economic development of the less developed states in order to achieve the ultimate goal of promoting political change. However, it has been proved that this has been a complete failure in China after a quarter century's implementation (Grugel, 2004:31).

But Chinese and Western approaches also differ in some important respects. In Western open society, social movements of conscious, concerted, and sustained efforts by ordinary people to change some aspect of their society by using extra-institutional means can be workable. China, on the contrary, a closed society, the feasible methods and means in Western open society are completely inapplicable. In the West, when an existing political system is vulnerable to a challenge, it creates an opportunity for the movement members to pick up such a challenge at this opportune time to push through a social change. This is also completely unfeasible in China because the Chinese authoritarian political system is extremely rigid and leaves no room for activities of self-initiated social movements.

3 Political Opportunity and the Chinese democracy movement (Results)

Opportunity is the key to success, which became more recognized and acceptable. However, the opportunity is not necessarily the equivalence of success, the factual strength and capability is the basic requisition of capitalizing the opportunity to succeed. In addition, the psychological preparation for an opportunity must exist. Only those who have been well prepared are able to pick up the gifted opportunity when it knocks. Both McCammon (2001) and Kurzman (1996) found that political opportunity can be created. To create opportunities and achieve the desired goals are to make impossible possible, instances of this kind are plenty in the history of China and the world.

The elaborations above are both subjective and objective political opportunities emerged outside of social movements and revolution. There are as well as two vital political opportunities inside, which can be so crucial to determine the success or failure of social movements: strong and efficient leadership and sufficient resources (Cragun et al, 2006). "Leaders are critical to social movements: they inspire commitment, mobilize resources, create and recognize opportunities, devise strategies, frame demands, and influence outcomes" (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004: 171). Leaders have function both within the movement as a "mobilizer", inspiring participants and outside the movement as an "articulator," connecting the movement to the larger society (Gusfield, 1996). They are the inner organizational strength propelling social movements.

Political Frozen Period of Mao Zedong. Throughout the period of Mao Zedong, China's political atmosphere was chilling, and the political opportunities were in no favor of democratic thoughts and movements to bud. China was tightly isolated from the outside world and had zero tolerance for democratic thoughts. Anyone who dared to openly express their thoughts inconsistent to the Chinese Communist dogma would be cruelly blocked and even executed. The majority of ordinary people kept their Mao Zedong's blind worship to believe communist doctrines. In general, Mao's era was a political frozen period when the democracy movement had almost no space and political opportunity to develop (Weng, 2016). China at that time was a totalitarian state where the party-state held absolute authority over the whole society to control everything in both public affairs and the private life of citizens (Xu, 2005).

Thawing Period of Economic Reform under Deng Xiaoping Empire. The modern Chinese democracy movement commenced from this period. The large-scale Chinese democracy movement was attributed to the loosening of the political environment formed by

the division of the Chinese Communist Party's political elite after the death of Mao Zedong in 1976 which marked end of the 10-year Cultural Revolution. Deng Xiaoping's accession to the highest political power paved his way to start the economic reform and "Open Door" policy in 1978 (Luo, 2016). Chinese reformers sought to change China, economic reform was chosen to go ahead (Chen, 1990). China had a very slim chance to change its political system. Deng Xiaoping appeared as a reformer in front of the Chinese people and also on the world stage. Hu Yaobang with the backing of Deng Xiaoping had conducted an in-depth review of China's political system and designed a blueprint for future political and economic development. But it was short-lived. Political opportunities unexpectedly emerged and quietly disappeared. Deng and other veterans immediately changed their minds and lost their enthusiasm to fundamentally change the CCP's autocratic system after regaining power (Chen, 1990: 10).

The Xidan Democracy Wall. The "Open Door" policy of China pushed open a window to the outside world and connected the West, giving rise to the Xidan Democracy Wall, with its influence crossing the border to the West. The people of Xidan Democracy Wall obtained nutrients from democratic thoughts blown into China, as a result, a new political aspiration was put forward to demand for the fifth modernization of political system, constitutional democracy (Wei, 1978). Before long, the Chinese government outlawed the Xidan Democracy Wall, marked the milestone of modern Chinese democracy movement and has exerted far greater social implication than ever. The slightly loosened political environment and atmosphere after Mao had, gave birth to the short-lived Xidan Democracy Wall Movement opening up the China's modern democracy movement in the true sense.

The rise of China's democratic movement both home and abroad. The set-up of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy (CAD) in New York in 1982 marked the outset of the overseas Chinese democracy movement (Weng, 2016). Deng Xiaoping's reaffirmation of political reforms (Vogel, 2013) in 1986, coupled with the propaganda in keeping the relaxed political environment, greatly stimulated the political enthusiasm of intellectuals and young students to political reforms for democracy (Wu, 2014). China's political environment continued to be relaxed due to Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang in charge in the front line with the main theme "emancipation of the mind, reform and opening up." The relaxing political environment encouraged Fang's bold remarks triggered the 1986 Chinese students demonstrations (Chen, 2003), which, as a direct consequence, caused the step-down of Hu Yaobang (Vogel, 2013). Zhao Ziyang, taking over the Party Chief, continued economic and political reforms encouraging active thinking to be in favor of emancipation of thoughts and ideological activism and lead to the 1989 Democracy Movement and eventual shocking Tiananmen Square Massacre (Chen, 1990).

Analysis of failure of 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests. Three issues worthy of attention in relation to the success or failure of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests are: First, Deng Xiaoping, the actual supreme leader of the Communist Party of China, tough and strong-willed, was always prevailing over both Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. Secondly, the Cold War was in full swing, the US-led West was confronting the formidable rivalry Soviet Union, so the defection of Communist China from the Soviet Camp was badly needed as the ally of the West. US Congressman Rohrabacher (2016) made it clear that Reagan would definitely want to stop Beijing's military action to suppress students in Tiananmen Square if he were the US President and the results of Tiananmen Square might have been different.

Thirdly, the situation at that time was at a crossroads, one step forward to promote political changes in China or one step backward to place hope on the CCP who would continue reform, open up and eventually gradual transformation into democracy.

Overseas democracy movements after Tiananmen. France was the first (Tian, 2016) to open the door to accept the Tiananmen Square exiles, who set up the Federation for a Democratic China (FDC) in September 1989 (FDC, 1990). This once again set off a climax of the overseas democracy movement, but it was short-lived and plummeted quickly. The hard fact was that then the Bush Administration decided not to support the Chinese exiles in Paris (Pillsbury, 2015: 168). The 1993 Amalgamation Conference of the Chinese Alliance for Democracy (CAD) and the Federation for a Democratic China (FDC) held in Washington DC became a debacle (Chien, 1993). Instead of reaching the desirable outcome to form a unified overseas Chinese democracy organization, the Chinese overseas democracy movement suffered an unprecedented setback of splitting apart and quickly fell to a low point. The continuous downturn of the modern Chinese democracy movement had its internal and external factors. In spite of the unanimous condemnation and isolation of Beijing by the West, then US President George H. W. Bush played a key role in supporting the Chinese Communist regime, aiming at normalizing relations between Washington and Beijing (Wu'er, 2018). The rampant neo-appeasement ideological trend of the West immediately marginalized the Chinese democracy movement. The internal factors are two, resources (Freeman, 1979) and leadership (Morris and Staggenborg, 2004). No resources maintained this great movement to keep it healthily prosperous and moving forward. The second main internal factor causing the downturn of the movement is the unsurpassable problem of movement leaders who are short of political charisma to demonstrate leadership and attract masses to follow closely with great respect.

The historical summary of the Chinese democracy movement from 1978 – 1989. The modern Chinese democracy movement came into being in the late period of Mao Zedong and beginning period of Deng Xiaoping, in line with the development trend of the whole world trend. The 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests coincided with the third wave of democracy in the world. However, China missed the opportunity to achieve democracy. The ensuing dissolving of the Eastern European Bloc and the former Soviet Union disgraced China who lost this hard-won political opportunity that had slipped away. The lonely China of the world communist camp missed out helplessly the historical trend, the third wave of democracy. Opportunity knocks but once, time and tide waits for no man. Chinese lost the political opportunity in 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests, it is no use to cry spilled milk, the Chinese failed to perceive it soberly and embrace it warmly. Political opportunity is an important external factor or impetus for the social movement to reach the target (Suh, 2001). Bush's action could decide who would win and who would lose in 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, but he chose to throw his support behind Deng Xiaoping (Pillsbury, 2015). After the 1989 Tiananmen Square incident, there is no living space for continuing survival of democracy movement in China. Only the overseas Chinese democracy movements has been adhering to the consistent political aspiration beyond the Chinese border, waiting for the emergence of the next political opportunity. Good fortunes come and go in turns, in the race between the pursuit for democracy by the Chinese people and the CCP's endeavor to maintain its one-party autocracy, in the long run, democracy that represents progress and justice will eventually prevail in defeating the dictatorship that represents the backwardness and evil, though the process is full of ups and downs.

4. The Chinese Democracy Movement after the Tiananmen Square Incident (Discussion)

The Chinese democracy movement should be considered in the entire international environment, the emergence of political opportunities must be a combined dual effect of a larger international climate and a domestic microclimate as Deng Xiaoping (1989) understood in reference to the 1989 Tiananmen incident. The emergence of the next political opportunity to the Chinese democracy movement will also be like this. Changes in the international climate could be enough to promote fundamental changes in China. This international climate is marked by the 2016 US presidential election of Donald Trump. His election has completely changed the political stance of the United States toward the Chinese Communist Party. Trump begun to impose a severe blow on the CCP. The prelude to changing China's political future is thus opened.

Political Opportunity to the Chinese democracy movement. China, under the rule of the CCP, is no doubt a closed society where the movement is endeavoring to reach the ultimate target. The eventual success of social movements or social revolutions must have a political opportunity to achieve their goals. Political strongmen have often been seen to have the most direct effect on social change, for instances, the deaths of Mao Zedong and Hu Yaobang demonstrated important impacts on changes in China. Mao Zedong's death opened the short-lived relaxation of Chinese society, which gave birth to the modern Chinese democracy movement. Strong-willed Deng Xiaoping withstood the negative political change toward the demise of the international communist movement with his willpower to turn the tide and allow the CCP to successfully halt the process of Chinese democracy. Once another political crisis to the CCP occurs, the democracy movement will attract all sorts of supporters.

The race of tortoise versus hare between democracies and autocracies. The CCP survived after the collapse of the entire communist camp, then became tougher to challenge the existing world order. The CCP has been conducting covert competition with the United States and the West, exploiting the Chinese Stratagems of the Warring States in order to win the race by taking the advantage of the unawareness of the United States (Pillsbury, 2015). In the race between the Chinese democracy movement as turtle and Beijing as rabbit, the former lags far behind while the vigilant Beijing never falls asleep and keeps leading ahead. The United States and the Western democracies often fall asleep like the rabbit without knowing the high risk of being overtaking while Beijing as diligent turtle may first arrives at the end to win the race. Today's CCP has no intention and thoughts for political transformation to join into the world trend toward an open society, which was the decision and consensus among top elders reached in 1989 after escaping the catastrophe of the regime to be toppled over or suffering the political fate of the Eastern European camp and the former Soviet Union. Beijing's determination to stick to dictatorship was closely related to the benign international surroundings that major Western democracies connived and acquiesced the CCP since 1989. Beijing now seeks to challenge the existing world order after the covert "peaceful rise" under the tactics of "hiding the light and biding the time" (Barme, 2012), as the United States began to gradually wake up, developing a new cognition of the true color of the CCP. The CCP's comfortable days will be numbered, and the political opportunity has begun to shift to the Chinese democracy movement.

The CCP may end because of the Trump administration. The emergence of Trump was exciting for the Chinese pro-democracy activist circles as it could be a political opportunity. Trump is bold, decisive, committed, and knowing how to contain rivalries and competitors. He is the first US president posing the greatest deterrent and threat to the CCP since 1945. It is likely that the US-China Trade War would expand and transfer to other domains (Ward, 2018). Vice President Pence (2018) Hudson Institute speech heralded the tangible reversal of the 40-year US China policy and it may further change the US-China relationship toward a neo-cold war. This may also trigger the world's democracies to be alert to keep eyes wide open. Xi Jinping admitted seven major crises of politics, ideology, economy, science and technology, society, the external environment, and CCP's building, the CCP is now facing. It is clearly felt that the crises are directly jeopardizing the survival of the Chinese Communist regime. (Shen, 2019). Any crisis mentioned above breaks out, it will lead to the collapse of the current regime of the CCP. It cannot be ignored that the whole world, especially the United States leading the world, badly lacks clear and correct understanding of a true China, the evil of the Chinese Communist regime and its looming danger to the future world, whether it is political circles, academia, cultural, media and the ordinary citizens.

Participants and stakeholders in China's political changes. In the event of political changes in China, the following conditions must be met: First of all, the ruling CCP's top leaders must have the sense of political consciousness and historical mission to actively initiate top-down political reforms, advocate freedom of speech, freedom of association, and open political elections. On the contrary, the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party hope to remold the world with the CCP's authoritarian political model. Secondly, the ordinary people must demand rulers for political change. The reality is that the majority of Chinese people show weak voice and indifference for political reform. The third that could push change China's current political status is the Western democracies who committed strategic error to believe that the rapid Chinese economic development would assist China moving toward political liberalization. In the past three decades, the entire West, headed by the United States, has had little demand on the issue of political change of the CCP. There are participants and stakeholders in China's political changes. No doubt, the CCP, the Chinese people, and the Chinese democracy movement are all participants, while the West is the stakeholder. However, among the oppositions, only the democracy movement is a consistent participant.

IMRaD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion).

3. Conclusion (TNR 14pt., bold)

5. Conclusion

The ultimate success of the Chinese democracy movement depends on the arrival of the new round of political opportunity. All political oppositions of the CCP combined themselves have neither the ability nor strength to shake the Chinese Communist regime. The change of China policy of the US may weaken the Chinese autocracy, encouraging the oppressed masses to stand up for the democracy and liberty they long for. The opportunity for the oppositions cannot be created, only patiently waited for its appearance.

The political opportunity, the oppositions had been long awaiting, may come and go instantly independent of their expectations, but dependent on the instantaneous thoughts of Trump. Trump can defeat Beijing autocracy, sweeping away the biggest obstacle for the advancement of world civilization to open a new era for the world if he is insightful, clear-minded and determined to bear in mind his goals. Trump may also defeat himself by wishfully believing Beijing for the sake of striking a binding trade deal, once again trapped in the deceptiveness of Chinese Thirty-Six Stratagems, treading the footsteps of his predecessors. The Chinese democracy movement would be thus benefited to achieve their long pursuing goals only if the Americans dramatically change the China policy and treat Beijing as the strategic opponent rather than partner.

There were three options and three scenarios (Mann, 2007) for China after 1989 Tiananmen Protests. The first one is the soothing scenario: the US hoped that China should take the road to economic development and open politics to democracy. It did not appear, prompting Pence (2018) thirty years later to admit the failure of the US China policy. The second scenario is that the CCP continues economic growth to enhance national strength, covertly bidding to replace the United States; this strategy has been discerned by American strategists such as Navarro, Pillsbury, Gordon Chang and the alike, who openly warned of the danger of the conspiratorial hidden agenda of the CCP and alerted the Trump Administration to offset Beijing's covert strategy. The last option, the upheaval scenario (Mann, 2007), will see China's economic downturn. The current Sino-American trade war should play a role, triggering a domestic turmoil, a Romanian style military coup and the eventual downfall of the regime.

The history of China repeated time and again that long separation tends to be united while long unification tends to be divided. Therefore, it can be foreseen and predicted, in the post-communist era, a united and constitutional democracy in China would be highly unlikely, instead, a falling apart China would be more realistic.

Future China has three prospects: Prospect 1. The CCP will insist on continuing its rule, despite of declining. Prospect 2. Increasing ruling difficulties due to intra-party tussles and political purges within the CCP's ruling clique may force it to accept various internal and external pressures to make structural changes, which would further threaten the CCP's regime. However, Xi Jinping (2018) has explicitly ruled out any meaningful political reforms. Prospect 3. The blundered CCP collapses overnight like the former Soviet Union, and the ethnic minority regions and Taiwan may take advantage of the situation to exit Greater China, with Lee Teng-hui's "seven-block theory" (Lee, 1999) coming true. This study speculates that the third scenario is the most likely.

In 1923, the British government proposed an "international condominium of China" (People's Network, 2003). In 1924, Zheng Xiaoxu proposed the "Three-Gong Theory", first *Gonghe*, Republic, then *Gongchan*, Communism, and finally *Gongguan*, Condominium; prophesying "Qing Dynasty died of republic, the Republic of China dies in communism and finally the communism dies in condominium" (Gao, 2013). The first two prophecies have already been fulfilled. Will the third prophecy be fulfilled? Does the "Three-Gong Theory" imply a certain logic with regularity? It is perceivable that China is now moving in this direction.

To sum up, in the post CCP era evolving in this upheaval scenario, the chance would be very slim for Greater China to rebuild a united and constitutional democracy with all ethnic minorities remaining as before. That would be the tough and harsh reality the majority Chinese will face when the CCP is no more. The CCP has been given a golden opportunity to choose the best way for China and the Chinese people, however, no CCP leaders have had the insight and sense of historical responsibility for the nation. Chinese people should hope for the best, but at the same time prepare for the worst.

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