PART 3

CONSOLIDATION

8

The Political Challenge

Will Democracy Fail?

The year 2012 will mark the 100th anniversary of the first and only election of a national government in China. It may be around that time when the country makes a second attempt to build an enduring democracy. Having successfully navigated the dangerous shoals of democratic transition, it now will face the vast and turbulent sea of democratic consolidation. Will it finally achieve a stable position among the world's democratic majority? Or will it fail again, falling back into a cycle of revolution and dictatorship that reflects a centuries-old crisis of state legitimacy?

There are two separate but related possibilities. One is an outright democratic failure that brings a return to dictatorship. This might come under some guise like "managed democracy" or "tutelary democracy." By failure, we mean a reversal that is *significant*, such as the suspension of elections or the banning of opposition parties, and *sustained*, meaning that such conditions last for more than one or two years. The other possibility is a democracy which, while not failing, experiences a prolonged and painful period of consolidation, characterized by frequent political crises, extraconstitutional behavior, and institutional weakness.

To return to our initial metaphor of the intersection, once the drivers have ousted the lone policeman and decided to implement a traffic light system, there are two threats. A single driver may seize the abandoned traffic podium and direct traffic with promises of restoring order. Even if this does not happen, adaptation to the new system may be slow. Some drivers may run red lights. Others may drive on days they should not. The newly installed lights may short circuit one day, bringing temporary disruption until they can be repaired.

History suggests that rapid and trouble-free democratic consolidations are the exceptions. In China itself, democracy failed in the Republican era, providing the conditions for a return to dictatorship. History is also littered with

famous democratic failures. It took nearly a century for the French Revolution to lead to the foundation of a genuine democracy despite the democratic ideals of the revolution. Failures also grew out of Weimar Germany, Russia's democratic revolution of February 1917, Japan in the 1920s, South Korea in 1961, Budapest and Prague in the early communist era, and many postcolonial transitions in Africa and Latin America.

If we narrow our focus to the post-1970s democratizations, however, there are grounds for optimism. Most of the Third Wave transitions gave way to successful democracies, a reflection both of the stronger supporting conditions as well as the greater normative appeal of democracy by then. Of the 28 new democratic states created out of the collapse of Eastern European and Central Asian communist regimes in 1989–91, for example, 25 were considered either consolidated or moving in that direction a decade later.[1] Most of the modern-day democratic failures have been in Africa, where a nonexistent civil society, economic distress, and ethnic conflict have savaged the foundations of political order.

On that basis, there is reason to believe that China too will break the cycle of failure and achieve a stable democracy. It will begin its democratic age with a strong dose of normative support for democracy alongside the usual pragmatic supports related to the crisis of dictatorship. The belief within society that democracy will eventually bring about a "superior" point in terms of stable governance, a fair and just society, prosperous economy, and a settled international role will ensure that the difficulties of consolidation will not overwhelm the system.

Nonetheless, the process will be difficult. As Russia and Indonesia have shown, troubled democratic consolidations are common in large countries, characterized by regional secessionism, political turmoil, social upheaval, and economic volatility. Elsewhere, overly strong elites hampered consolidation in Latin America, while socioeconomic crisis was a factor for the rocky beginning in Eastern Europe.

Democracy may be a pacifying force in the long term, but democracies usually take years—if not several decades—to reach this stage. In the interim, the new system can unleash disruptive forces that test the very fabric of a nation. As China struggles with this aftermath, the main bulwark of democracy is a pragmatic one: there is no turning back. No one will acquiesce to the forfeiting of their democratic rights and no group is strong enough to bring this about by force. In any case, the spoils system that sustained the old regime cannot be reestablished. History's march of events makes a return to "the good old days," infeasible.

It may take several decades before the struggle to entrench democracy ends

in China. While democracy will not likely fail, it will likely be ugly, very ugly at first. To quote one former top Chinese political advisor, discussing the post-transition scenario: "China will likely have to go through several more nationwide protest, strike, and student movements before it achieves mature democracy. It will have to get through several short-lived military coups, many local-level armed conflicts, many cases of major political scandal, the entry of bribery and violence into elections, and maybe a couple of cases where the national election results in a great dispute that brings constitutional government to the brink of collapse. Even so, China can surely march through the various stages of democratic development."[2]

A word of caution is in order. Here we are most of all in the realm of speculation. To say that we tread on uncertain ground in this section is merely to state the obvious. Democratic consolidation is a contingent process that depends on the already contingent transition that has preceded it. Before we were dealing in possibilities derived from facts, here we are dealing with possibilities derived from other possibilities. It is perfectly reasonable to posit that democracy will fail in China. I simply believe that it is more reasonable to predict that it will succeed.

Either way, this chapter may help to frame the possibilities so as to provide a basis for positive action by domestic and international actors alike. We should try to predict what the road will look like, where the potholes, unexpected exits, or U-turns may occur. To be forewarned of the difficulties of democratic consolidation in China is to be able to recognize those difficulties when they occur. As one Western scholar notes: "The imperative of making democracy succeed is almost inevitably going to appear on the political agenda. Consequently it is worthwhile even for a democratic opposition in a still-Leninist state to begin to contemplate how they would consolidate a democratic breakthrough, how they would quell the forces of those who could be attracted to alternatives to democracy."[3]

Legacies and Choices

There is a good argument, remember, that proto or pro-democracy legacies exist in China's long history, things like bureaucratic meritocracy, Confucian accountability, and Buddhist tolerance. China will be drawing upon this rich legacy as it grapples with the new demands of political liberalism. As occurred in South Korea and Japan, this heritage will await rediscovery as the country reimagines itself in democratic terms. China's people will suddenly be "ransacking the cultural attic, looking for the furnishings the revolution drove out of sight" to use one salutary phrase.[4]

The Republican-era legacy will be no less useful. The relatively rapid advance of Eastern European countries to functioning democracies in the space of a decade has been attributed to their pre-communist democratic legacies and to the relatively short period they lived under communist dictatorship. China too will be able to hearken back to its pre-1949 democratic episodes, the liberality and civil society of Shanghai and other Republican-era metropoles, and to its democratic thinkers, from Republican founder Sun Yat-sen to democratic scholar Hu Shi, a Cornell University graduate.

The PRC era, of course, will leave a mixed legacy. Certainly there are many antidemocratic legacies—the absolutism in political life, the atavistic security forces, the unreconciled historical issues—that will constrain democratic emergence. Still, it is worthwhile to recall that the worst phase of totalitarianism lasted for only two decades—from 1957 to 1976. Before and after that, Communist China was more like a soft authoritarian regime. There were also, as mentioned, some democratic legacies of high Maoism, not least the revulsion to dictatorship that it spawned.

The reform era, meanwhile, created much stronger foundations for democracy. The growing consensus on the need for democracy to solve the crisis of CCP rule provided normative momentum. Meanwhile, many, if not most, of the resources we traced in part 1 will help to consolidate democracy just as they helped to overthrow dictatorship. Economic growth, nascent civil society, the emergence of a liberal nationalism, international pressures, and moves to institutionalize and depoliticize state power will all help China's new democracy.

The political legacies cannot be overemphasized. Countries like Russia and Ukraine have shown that democracy can survive in countries without a strong middle class or civil society as long as the political system was sufficiently decompressed by the time of transition to make a reestablishment of autocracy impossible. Just as this pluralism and autonomy within the regime helped in the choice of democracy, so too it will act as a bulwark against a return to dictatorship. A professional bureaucracy, hardening legislatures, and a more adept judiciary will add to the supports. As one Western scholar notes: "By the time political transition occurs, a panoply of late-Leninist institutions may have enabled the [new democratic] state to manage society with increasing sophistication."[5]

China's real trump, however, is economic. In cross-country evidence, above a certain GDP per capita a democracy will survive "come hell or high water." Several scholars contend that the level is around $10,000 (in 2002 price-adjusted dollars). If so, then any democratic breakthrough in China—with a level of $4,500 in 2003—will be impregnable by around 2020 (or 2024 if we

discount GDP by a quarter for quack statistics), assuming a modest annual per capita growth rate of 5 percent.[6] With every passing year, the probability of success rises. Another research project found that the probability of a return to authoritarian rule fell steeply from 2 to below 1 percent in any given year as income rose from around $6,700 to above $8,400.[7] Again, that means that democracy will be virtually unassailable in China by the end of the second decade of the century and more or less stable much before then. On other measures, China is already near a level at which its income is sufficient to make democracy indestructible.[8]

Of course, some factors will hamper democracy. The fiscal problems of the state, income inequalities, the authoritarian and illiberal norms implanted by CCP rule, and the regional strains of Tibet and Taiwan will be legacies that undermine democratic success. But in general, and unlike other former communist regimes, China's "democratic infrastructure" will be reasonably well developed by the time of transition. As a result, the eruption of political participation that defines a democratic breakthrough is less likely to breach the walls of systemic order.

The legacy of the transition itself is also important. Empirically, mass overthrows—as in Chile and the Philippines—have led to unstable new governments while elite-led transformations have the best track-record of success. On that basis, the elite-led transition posited here will help to ensure greater stability. At the same time, the economic crisis preceding transition along with the turbulent interplay of mass protest and pact-making leave any number of potentially explosive issues lingering in the public space. As with the interim regime, the main bulwark against this transitional aftermath is the new legitimacy of rulers in the democratic era. No longer dependent solely on performance, they enjoy a honeymoon with the populace, giving them time to act without immediate threat. That is why even messy transitions in the Third Wave gave way to stable democracies.

Finally, just as global border effects helped China through the transition, so too they should help its consolidation. There is every reason to believe that democracy will continue to dominate the international system. China will also enjoy the "latecomer advantages" of crafting its democracy according to the lessons of a century of democratizations elsewhere. The only danger would be an outbreak of democratic deterioration in the world's established democracies. That is why ongoing efforts in the U.S., Europe, and Japan to deepen their own democracies, including the pursuit of more ethical and law-abiding foreign policies, will be important for China's successful consolidation.

For argument's sake, it may be worthwhile to draw up a legacies scorecard for China, taking into account the many factors (critical ones highlighted)

Table 1 Democratic Legacies Scorecard

- Democratic pre-communist legacy: 2
- Severity of communist period: 2
- Small geography and population: 1
- **Developed market economy: 3**
- Limited crony culture and rentseeking: 1
- Significant middle class: 3
- **Strong civil society: 1**
- Aggressive media: 2
- Basic social freedoms: 2
- **Ethnic and religious unity: 2**
- Traditions of public compromise and public good: 1
- Democracy-compatible nationalism: 2
- Entrenched rights norms: 1
- Rule of law and independent judiciary: 2
- Institutionalized legislative process: 2
- Politically-engaged population: 1
- Experience with elections and political life: 2
- Organized democratic opposition parties: 1
- **Pluralism and autonomy within the former regime: 2**
- **Regulatory strength of state: 3**
- Fiscal strength of state: 1
- Weak military role: 3
- Favorable international environment/global support: 3
- **Elite-led, non-violent transition to democracy: 3**

that are generally assumed to be critical to democratic consolidation. We range the scores between one and three, where one represents an unfavorable condition, two a neutral condition, and three a favorable one. Then, based on the analysis of parts one and two, we might have the results shown in table 1.

The average score of all 24 factors is 1.9, and of the six highlighted factors 2.3. This is a suitable reflection of China's "mixed prospects." It suggests that China faces neither democratic hell nor democratic heaven but a sort of unsettled purgatory where democracy survives but is rife with problems.

Of course, even if these rough scores are accurate, deriving predictions from them is difficult. Some countries with high scores have experienced democratic failure, as in Argentina. Meanwhile, the three most frozen and undeveloped Eastern European countries under communism—Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania—had by 2002 defied all predictions and attained remarkably democratic and free societies.[9]

This is a salient reminder that beyond the "embedded" factors lies a vast unknown territory of contingent "path dependent" events. Whatever has preceded the breakthrough, the consolidation period itself is one of choices that

can sabotage or support democracy. As with all democratic failures or successes, the behavior of elites is a big part of this uncertainty. Legacies are possibilities, nothing more and nothing less. Countries with strong pro-democratic legacies may nurture dictatorship, while those with weak legacies may foster democracy. As with the transition, the only thing that can "explain" where China heads will be the dynamics of the consolidation period itself, in particular the choices made by those in power. As with China's entire quest for democracy since the Qing, no one's decisions are scripted.

A few points can be made about the choices of elites based on experiences elsewhere. The simplest, if disarmingly bland, principle is that democracy succeeds when politicians act democratically. In particular, that means they act in two ways. One is to act inclusively, making a sincere and steadfast effort to embrace as many distinct voices as possible in decisionmaking. Inclusiveness ensures that every significant interest group is more likely to abide by the new democratic order. Whether it be ethnic minorities, laid off workers, victims of communist-era repression, stability-seeking business tycoons, or nationalistic military officers, attention must be paid to these interests in crafting the new democracy, perhaps more so than in future. For China, the challenges of meeting disparate demands will be huge. Not only will the new state need to recognize known groups, it will also have to embrace new groups previously excluded from public life. A people long schooled on notions of being singular and pure, of having an officially delimited structure of different groups, may wake up surprised by the army of unrecognized minorities, victims of unknown CCP horrors, transvestites, Hakka farmers, and hitherto little-known religious sects clamoring for recognition.

Second, elites should stick closely to the procedural norms of democracy. Proceduralism occurs when principled standards are met in the process of achieving something, when the means must abide by certain rules and cannot be violated for some higher ends. The opposite is consequentialism, where almost any means can be justified by the ends. We will see proceduralism (often called procedural justice or legal proceduralism) crop up again and again below. The idea is that society is engaged in a struggle to think and act in terms of procedures as much as outcomes, whatever the issue at stake. This may be an even greater challenge in a post-Leninist state that leaves behind a legacy of extreme consequentialism in policymaking. Weak evidence can no longer be used to convict a rapist in order to satisfy demands for vengeance. Peasants cannot be arbitrarily thrown from their land for a new business park bypass.

Put simply, in making choices about everything from new national symbols to reconciling economic conflicts, China's society will be engaged in learning

democracy as it lives under democracy. In this respect, it will face monumental but by no means insurmountable challenges.

New Institutions

The first order of business will be to write a new constitution and establish new institutions of state. Along with the first national election, this stage can be considered the epilogue of democratic transition and the overture to democratic consolidation.

No less than other aspects of democratic consolidation, this is a path-contingent process. Scholars of China who make a close reading of elite discourse on the future shape of democracy in the country may be disappointed by what actually takes shape. In South Korea, for example, opposition demands for a directly elected president emerged in 1985 only in response to a gambit by the military-backed government to democratize the parliament while keeping control of the executive. In Thailand, an appointed Senate set up under the first democratic constitution was replaced by a directly elected one in 1997 in response to popular demands.

There is no fixed model for constitution writing. It can be done by the interim regime or by a constitutional assembly, elected or unelected. The resulting document may be put to a popular referendum or simply passed into law. In Asia, there are examples of constitutions drafted by the ruling regime with a referendum (Philippines and South Korea), by the ruling regime without a referendum (Thailand), and by an elected constitutional assembly (Taiwan).

Many theorists have argued the case for a strongly democratic constitution-writing process—one involving an elected assembly and a referendum—on normative grounds. This normative case is even stronger in the case of constitutions written in new democracies where the legitimacy of the former system was low and the socioeconomic consequences of the new system potentially huge.[10] But evidence from many transitions suggests that the most successful constitution-writing processes are the least democratic, involving unelected if broadly representative assemblies and no referendum.[11] That is because the relatively simple matter of writing a constitution can become hostage to insistent interests that emerge as part of the new political drama. It is important that those battles be fought on the electoral field rather than on the constitution-writing one. The window of opportunity for getting the democracy into operation may be small and cannot be further constricted by debates that in the end will have little relevance to the success of the democracy.

Fortunately, China may be well-served by its history. In both the Republican and Communist eras, constitution-writing was considered to be the prerogative of the state. Unelected but broadly representative bodies were created to write new constitutions in Republican China in 1938 and in Communist China in 1953. Hong Kong's mini-constitution, the Basic Law, was drafted by a similar committee set up in 1985. It is probable that China would choose the same path for its post-CCP system, an arrangement already endorsed by several Chinese democrats, although they differ on whether the resulting document should be put to a referendum.[12]

As in 1938 and 1953, one can expect that delegates would be chosen by the interim leadership from three broad groups: national figures representing a broad array of political, economic and professional sectors; local representatives from each province and major city; and representatives of ethnic minorities and possibly religious groups, women, and Overseas Chinese. The more representative the body, the more immediate legitimacy the constitution will have. There would be wide scope for significant input from Hong Kong, whose well-developed legal system and highly-skilled constitutional law community could be of great support. Unlike Hong Kong's Basic Law drafting committee, however, which took a leisurely five years to complete its task, China's assembly will be under pressure to act quickly. The first national elections will be expected within a year or so of the end of the PRC, meaning that a constitution will need to be passed well before that. The urgency of the task will be all the greater given that the "hollow" nature of the PRC constitutional order has left a residue of popular mistrust of constitutions.

While broad social and political forces will make or break democracy in China, the new constitution will be a useful support or a damaging impediment to that project. Constitutions can act as a touchstone for social pride in a new democracy, or a progenitor of new social tensions. Experience elsewhere shows that the process is more likely to succeed when it is conducted in full public glare, seeks consensus and outside inputs on issues, and borrows liberally from established laws and customs.[13] The resulting document will be more valuable when it does not attempt to encompass every aspect of society but rather confines itself to the basics of the political system. Values like development, morality, and nationalism are best left to be settled in the political arena.

At the most fundamental level, the new constitution will need to embrace the core value of democracy, namely the equality of individuals and their endowment with inalienable rights. This will be entrenched in the constitutional design, just as it has been for every major constitution promulgated in China since 1908. It will be followed by an extensive system of guaranteed

rights and liberties for all, including the right to vote and run in regular, free, and fair elections.

Critically, no party or other force can be given any paramountcy over the constitution or exclusion from it. This, of course, assumes that there have not been any secret antidemocratic details in the transition pact, such as a promise to insert a clause asserting that all political parties must serve "state interests," or that the media must not cause "social instability." In Hong Kong, hardliners who were stunned by the colony's role in the 1989 Tiananmen movement inserted a clause in the otherwise highly democratic Basic Law requiring new laws against "treason, secession, sedition, and subversion," the passage of which in 2003 provoked half a million people to take to the streets in protest.

A formula for constitutional amendments would also be needed. Given China's regional diversity, which we come to below, the formula would need to ensure that the populous rural heartland, which will hold a near plurality in the national parliament, cannot push through constitutional changes against the opposition of coastal or minority regions. Some higher plurality level, like two-thirds or three-quarters, plus a regional distribution requirement (say at least one province from minority and coastal areas) might suffice to meet such concerns.

A more tricky issue will be emergency powers to suspend constitutional rights in the case of a state crisis. Most democratic transitions show that such a situation can emerge early in the consolidation phase. Framers need to make allowances for such crises in a way that will save the democratic project. If emergency powers are imposed too readily, the democracy can be undermined and discredited. If too laboriously, it can be vulnerable to sabotage. Russian president Boris Yeltsin's imposition of "special presidential rule" on two occasions in 1993 is now seen as a necessary stroke to break through resistance to democratic reforms from the Soviet-era parliament. Civil liberties were not affected and Yeltsin enjoyed wide popular and international support for the moves.

The conditions for emergency powers would have to be given in some detail, involving some phrasing like "imminent threats to security of the state or the constitution." Thus, while an armed rebellion would pass the test, the existence of an anti-constitutional party (say a secessionist party in Xinjiang) would not, unless the party were elected to office and moved to fulfill its promise. In Russia in 1993, the parliament had attempted to block a referendum and appoint a new president; both actions were clearly at odds with constitutional government.

The invocation of emergency powers would also need extra checks. In the 1989 Tiananmen crisis, martial law was imposed without the approval of the

NPC. A revised Martial Law Act of 1996 made NPC approval mandatory. That points the way to the necessary checks on the executive's imposition of emergency powers. The new constitution might also impose mandatory judicial review as an added level of safety. As one Chinese scholar has written: "A well-designed article regulating emergency power cannot resolve the complex problems of the transition, but it can provide a due procedure to resolve a crisis."[14]

In designing a new political system, delegates to the constitutional convention will have to strike a balance between preserving and breaking with the PRC political system. There is bound to be a significant group, tracing its intellectual origins to the constitutionalism project of the late communist era, that argues for continuity. With Party rule struck from the constitution, they will argue, the people's congresses at all levels, if directly elected, could assume their role as the supreme organs of state power. The premier would be chosen from the national parliament, along with his cabinet. A largely titular presidency appointed by the parliament would be retained. Political consultative conferences would remain and possibly gain new powers of review and supervision. Villages would retain autonomy along with minority areas.

This argument will be a convincing one, as it has been in most transitions where framers opted to retain large chunks of the previous system. It not only makes the transition easier, it also makes political sense. As Santayana wrote, the success of revolutions "is generally proportionate to their power of adaptation and reabsorption within them of what they rebelled against."[15] The greater institutionalization and empowerment of the people's congresses in the late PRC era will provide an existing structure for democracy. Building on those foundations will strengthen the sense that China has finally escaped from the tyrant's cycle of "broken mandates" (*geming*) that wipes away all that came before.

Some might argue for a stronger, directly elected president, claiming that the pressing needs of socioeconomic reconstruction demand a single leader above the fray of party politics who can push through necessary policy changes. Former Party reformer Yan Jiaqi, for example, has advocated a strong president with control over the military, foreign affairs, federalism, and overall state administration as well as the power to dismiss cabinets.[16] The experience of former communist countries in Eastern Europe and of former authoritarian regimes in South America shows that this can be dangerous. Not only are strong presidents—or "superpresidents"—prone to engage in patronage and cronyism. They also are vulnerable to what has been called the "authoritarian temptation," overriding democracy when things don't go their way and claiming "the national interest" is at stake. When combined with a fragmented

legislature, a common result of the first few elections, the results can be disastrous. A parliamentary-oriented system is usually a better way for the flux of new competing interests to work out their differences without the additional complication of an external actor claiming to have discerned "the national interest" or to be "the hero of democracy."[17] In addition to this normative reason there is a practical one: conducting national elections for parliament will be a major job as it is. An additional election for president, with perhaps the need for runoff elections, might be unmanageable.

In China's case, the arguments of continuity and of the dangers of a return to Republican-era and later Maoist strongmen subverting the political process will bolster the case against a strong presidency. Indeed, most existing plans for China's new democracy already describe a state president who has only symbolic power, or who is in charge of only foreign affairs and defense while domestic affairs are entirely in the hands of the cabinet under the premier.[18] Nonetheless, a president appointed with cross-party support and great moral authority could be a unifying figure for the new democracy, an embodiment of the nation above the compromises of electoral politics.

The creation of the national parliament will be a prime issue to consider. It would be unlikely that a parliament could function with the 3,000 deputies to the present NPC. Yet in such a large country as China, reducing the number of parliamentarians to the several hundreds common globally would make each constituency impossibly large. India's 545 parliamentarians represent 1.6 million people each, surely the upper limit. The 437 U.S. congressional representatives have around 600,000 constituents each. One Chinese democrat suggests that each member of a new parliament represent two million people, which would create a house of 650 members.[19] For expository purposes, we make the arbitrary assumption of members representing 1.3 million people each for a neat total of 1,000 delegates. This would make China's the world's largest parliament, ahead of Britain's 650-strong chamber.

By going to a strictly representative system, the new democracy would be overturning the late-PRC era system that counted city-dwellers as four times a rural dweller and coastal areas more heavily than inland areas. The result would be a drastic shakeup in the seats held by each province, and within each province by each area. Inland and largely rural provinces like Henan and Sichuan would see their weight increase while coastal and urban provinces like Liaoning and Shanghai would see their share fall, as shown in table 2.

Some new features of the political system may be added to the old one. In the late PRC era, there was a growing espousal of an independent anticorruption body to tackle official graft. Hong Kong's Independent Commis-

Table 2 Seats in a 1000-seat parliament

Area	Seats[a]	Change[b]	Cumulative Total
Henan	75	+15	75
Shandong	71	+3	146
Sichuan	68	+12	214
Guangdong	58	−1	272
Jiangsu	57	+1	329
Hebei	53	+9	382
Hunan	52	+8	434
Anhui	50	+9	484
Hubei	47	+1	531
Guangxi	38	+5	569
Zhejiang	36	+3	605
Jiangxi	34	+4	639
Liaoning	33	−10	672
Yunnan	33	0	705
Heilongjiang	30	−9	735
Guizhou	30	+6	765
Shaanxi	29	+4	794
Fujian	27	+3	821
Shanxi	26	0	847
Chongqing	25	+3	872
Jilin	21	−5	893
Gansu	21	+4	914
Inner Mongolia	19	−2	933
Xinjiang	14	−8	947
Shanghai	12	−14	959
Beijing	10	−12	969
Tianjin	8	−9	977
Hainan	6	−1	983
Ningxia	5	−1	988
Hong Kong	5	−8	993
Qinghai	4	−3	997
Tibet	2	−5	999
Macau	1	−3	1,000
33 Total			

a. Based on proportional representation. Each seat represents 1.3 million people
b. Compared to figures for the ninth NPC of 2,703 members, excluding Taiwan and PLA delegates and normalized to 1,000 seats

sion Against Corruption and Taiwan's Control Yuan, created from the designs of Sun Yat-sen, show how such institutions can help stanch corruption in a cronyistic political culture. Indeed, given that corruption will likely be a prominent issue in the overthrow of the CCP, the promise of such an institution in China may well be an explicit part of the transition pact.

Another possible new institutional feature would be a civil service exami-

nation system such as exists in Britain and Singapore and as existed in imperial China. Support for a merit-based bureaucracy spans the political spectrum in China. Rightists see it as a guarantee of rule by the educated, while leftists conceive it as an impediment to patronage.[20] In the raucous new era of electoral politics, a respected civil service might, like the state presidency, be a source of stability and hope.

There are bound to be calls for purges of old bureaucrats associated with the CCP. Fears that old personal networks would secretly control the country would run high. Yet the experience of Eastern Europe showed that bureaucrats rapidly swung into step with their new masters—seeing their self-interest in doing so—and that their retention helped maintain the effectiveness of the state.[21] In any case, the pressing demands of governance in the new era mean there is often not much choice. As in the interim period, retaining most of the existing civil servants will ensure that the new state has the capacity to carry out necessary reforms.

Although the late PRC era had seen a significant revamping of the ministries in lines with the imperatives of market and functionality, some further changes would be needed. The Ministry of State Security, the all-powerful CIA of China, would need to be disbanded and turned into an agency under the control of a home affairs ministry. There may also be demands for a separate regional development ministry.

Pulling the fangs from the military has been an urgent task in many democratic transitions. In China, it will be less pressing, for all the reasons that we saw in part 2. Nonetheless, it will be important to institutionalize the military's professional and nonpolitical ethos with new policies and structures. The Ministry of Defense will need to be transformed from a hollow shell established for the sake of foreign exchanges into the real command structure of the military once the Party's Central Military Commission is abolished. The military's mission will need to be stated exclusively in terms of external threats, and possibly disaster and emergency relief—paralleling the mission statement of PLA forces in Hong Kong—no longer in terms of supporting the ruling Party. The end of any political role will be symbolized by the military's loss of seats in the national and provincial parliaments along with the disbanding of the PLA's General Political Department.

More general policies to keep the military satisfied with its defense mission should include generous budget increases to pay for both arms acquisitions and better living standards, laws entrenching the aspects of amnesties agreed in the democratic pact, and a slate of new promotions. It would also be wise, and likely, for the number of troops to be slashed. One democrat suggests

slashing the combined PLA and PAP complement from 3.5 million to 1.5 million soldiers while keeping the budget at two-thirds of its previous level to ensure fealty from the officers.[22] Those kinds of cuts were already being considered by top brass in the late PRC era as the military transformed itself. All this should make it easy for democratic China to dispense with the threat of military involvement in politics.

The court system will need some revamping as well. Most important will be the introduction of judicial review of laws passed by the national parliament, especially those bearing on constitutional essentials, something the PRC never allowed since the courts were servants of the Party, not guardians of the constitution. The new higher profile of courts, in particular the Supreme Court, will raise questions of judicial appointments. Who will be the first chief justice of democratic China? In this respect, as in so many others, the prior institutionalization of the state in the late PRC era will offer an important resource. The growth of the legal profession, the countless foreign-financed courses for training China's judges, and the norms of examining government behavior built under the Administrative Litigation Law will all come into play. Unlike other totalitarian states, China will have a head start in building the rule of law.

Though I will not return to the issues of building the bureaucracy, judiciary, and police again, it is worth remarking that the strengthening of these institutions is critical so that the state can carry out the tasks of economic and social refurbishment and political justice that democracy promises. This "state capacity-building" will be no less important in democratic China than it was elsewhere. In many of the areas outlined here—rule of law, federalism, emergency powers—the natural urge of democrats for constraints on state power will need to be balanced by the need for a measure of concentrated state power if the entire democratic "package" is to succeed.

Finally, the constitutional convention will have to consider the whole gamut of new symbols for the reborn state. What will it be called? The title "People's Republic of China" will likely retain strong emotive attachments. So too will the existing five-starred red flag, even though it is Marxist-inspired. The national anthem, a 1935 anti-Japanese war song, the March of the Volunteers, may also be retained despite its negative concepts of victimization and enemies. The central bank will issue new currency to celebrate the new state. But the world should not be surprised to find that Mao manages to hold his pride of place on the national specie. Adapting the legacy of communism to the challenges of democracy may entail holding onto past symbols no less than past institutions.

Federalism

The contentious nature of central-local relations in the late PRC era has led some to warn of a breakup of China under democracy. "Many people who thirst for political reform and faster democratization are concerned that it would threaten central power and thus oppose democratic political reform," says one mainland scholar.[23] Certainly any introduction of democracy without a devolution of power to the provinces would be risky. The Russian example showed how the launch of national elections without simultaneous devolution can be disastrous for attempts to create a workable federal state. Newly elected local officials come under pressure from voters to act in their interests and demand the power to do so. What's more, the imbalance of seats in the national parliament resulting from a strictly population-based scheme stokes demands for greater autonomy from smaller and more remote provinces—in China's case places like Gansu and Jilin (21 seats each). As a result, many scholars believe that a substantial and sweeping federalism will be one of the most likely institutional changes in a democratic China.[24]

The political arguments for a significant devolution of power in China will be powerful. Empirical evidence strongly supports the claim that smaller jurisdictions make democracy more successful, as seen in China's villages. It makes it easier to develop democratic values among citizens, increases the accountability and responsiveness of government, brings marginal groups into the public arena, enhances checks and balances on central power, and gives small national parties a chance to hold power at local levels. It also makes state finances more stable because taxpayers can more easily monitor the spending of their tax dollars.[25] This is not unimportant in a country where two-thirds of county governments run budget deficits. Overall, federalism will allow China to "mimic" the conditions of small states, devolving powers to 33 provincial-level governments with an average population of 39 million. They might in turn devolve power to the 3,200 counties, regions, and large cities that on average contain 400,000 people.

In many ways, federalism will be simply an entrenchment or formalization of the growing provincial power that arose in the reform era and made the PRC so prone to regional power struggles. But the new arrangements will go well beyond the ad hoc economic federalism and de facto political federalism that developed in the PRC. One prominent university professor in China predicts that federalism "will have a clear direction in future: legalization, systematization and coordination" to replace the current system's use of fiat, ad hoc policies, and bluster. This, he says, will be "a necessary component of democratic politics."[26]

According to one proposal made by a scholar and government advisor, the powers for provinces would include commercial regulation, economic and social development, education, healthcare, culture and sports, and basic infrastructure. The central government would be left with foreign affairs, macroeconomic management (including monetary policy), income redistribution, interprovincial commerce, foreign trade policy, and universal aspects of healthcare and education.[27] New fiscal arrangements concerning the sharing of tax revenues, especially new income, sales, and social security taxes, would be needed as well. So would arrangements governing redistributive transfer payments to poor provinces. In the PRC era, transfers were dictated by arbitrary political considerations, which forced needy provinces to embellish reports of their plight.

The break with the unitary state in which virtually all power resides in Beijing and is doled out to the regions as and when the center sees fit is bound to incite some opposition. Some will argue that it threatens national breakup and will make China a weak state. Yet throughout its history, China has been a loose confederation as often as a unitary state, despite the assertions of monistic historians.[28] Reasoned arguments will suggest that a real federalism will reduce secessionist tendencies and make the country better governed at all levels, as it has done in countries like India. There, an explicit and transparent federalism—rather than a de facto one that developed in the PRC—has created two-way virtues, making central authorities more sensitive to regional concerns while "widen[ing] the horizon of regional parties on matters of national importance" thus enhancing the loyalty to the national state of otherwise parochial local politicians.[29]

The introduction of federalism will be a historic move, the first attempt to end China as a unitary state and admit the regional diversity it contains. With single-party rule removed at the top, the gates will be open to a real federalism based on explicit and open sharing of power rather than the might-is-right, covert, and unstable power sharing of the late PRC period. The argument that democracy would bring national breakup would finally stand tattered as yet another poor excuse for dictatorship. Federalism will be portrayed as a bulwark, not a threat to the nation.

A second institutional change might be an upper house of parliament—like a Senate and perhaps constituted from the CPPCC—that is based on regional rather than proportional representation. This might be the solution to the weakened position of places like Shanghai, Qinghai, and Liaoning in the lower house. As in the Republican era, its members could be appointed by the directly elected provincial parliaments. An alternative, suggested by one scholar, would be to impose a "one province, one vote" body inside the

national parliament when it was considering certain types of legislation, such as financial bills.[30] This would be in addition to whatever regional considerations are built into the formula for constitutional amendments. A constitutional court might also be useful to arbitrate on central-provincial disputes, something likely to loom largest in the first years of the new system.

Finally, there would be good arguments for a redrawing of some provincial boundaries. In the reform era of the PRC, the megalopolis of Chongqing was carved out of Sichuan province while the island of Hainan was separated from Guangdong province, both becoming provincial-level jurisdictions in order to meet developmental needs. One could imagine that in the interests of development, authorities may opt to create more provincial-level cities, such as the Yangtze River cities of Wuhan and Nanjing, or break up some large and easily divided provinces like Shandong, which was historically two separate states.[31]

One of the most detailed redrawing of boundaries as part of an imagined federal democracy in China comes from Peng Ming.[32] His plan includes six "self-governing provinces" (*zijue sheng*) where the central government handles only foreign affairs, defense, and some economic coordination, similar to the "one country, two systems" arrangements in Hong Kong. These would be Hong Kong, Macau, an enlarged Tibet, Southwest Xinjiang (with the capital as Kashgar), Eastern Inner Mongolia, and Hainan. Next would be 26 "autonomous provinces" (*zizhi sheng*) with a high degree of autonomy similar to that enjoyed by the special economic zones and would-be ethnic areas in the PRC. These would largely cover the minority and mixed areas of Western China and Manchuria. Beyond them would be another 52 regular provinces and provincial-level cities (*zhixia putong sheng* and *zhixia dushi sheng*), mainly in central and coastal areas. This 84-province federation would represent a more than doubling of the 33 provincial-level areas of the PRC, cutting the average population size of each unit to 15 million.

Federalism would also open the way to a minor but strongly symbolic change: the introduction of separate time zones. In a hangover from the imperial era, Beijing has long imposed a single time zone (Greenwich plus eight) on the whole country as a symbol of unity.[33] As a result, the farther west you go, the more time spent in the prolonged darkness of the morning. When you cross into Pakistan from western China, the clock moves back three hours. Many places keep an unofficial local time, forcing people to specify which is being applied, adding to confusion. Under the new federalism, there could now be four separate time zones, ranging from Greenwich plus six in Xinjiang to Greenwich plus nine in Manchuria. Many a foe of early morning starts in western China or of the confusing unofficial "local times" around the country

would bless the new federalism of democratic China. As elsewhere, time zones would also save energy, reduce crime and traffic accidents, increase worker productivity, and cut health costs. More importantly, the introduction of time zones would be part of the process of reimagining the country, appreciating its diversity and its linkages to surrounding periphery countries rather than as an inward-looking monistic whole.

Secession

While a new federalism would significantly enhance provincial autonomy, it would not likely by itself avert the specter of secession in Tibet and Xinjiang. Indeed, experience elsewhere shows that, improperly managed, devolution can lead to a rise of secessionist pressures in minority regions. More than half of the 47 new states born between 1974 and 1997 were a result of the breakup of multinational countries following the introduction of federalism under a new democracy.[34] The USSR, Yugoslavia, and Indonesia are striking examples of how democracy resulted in secessionism and countervailing irredentism, creating conflicts that threatened the democratic project in the center itself.

Secessionist pressures are not an automatic result of democratization of course. In many countries—the Philippines, India, South Africa, Turkey, and Canada—democracy actually contained such pressures by creating federal arrangements with real regional autonomy for distinct regions and by making the national political system legitimate in the minds of minority groups.

There are no hard and fast rules, but in general, the stronger is the new democratic state and the greater the degree of cross-party unity among national leaders, the less are the chances of national breakup. A strong new state gives minorities confidence that their interests will be protected. Elite consensus, meanwhile, reduces the likelihood that a political party will use ultranationalist or irredentist claims to gain the upper hand over rivals.

The experience of Tamil areas in South Asia demonstrates the importance of a properly handled deal. In India, the central government helped create a largely Tamil state—eventually named Tamil Nadu—in a series of reforms in the 1950s. Tamil became the state's official language and locals gained greater autonomy over their affairs. The result was a prosperous and productive member of the new nation where secessionists found (and continue to find) that they had little electoral appeal. In Sri Lanka, chauvinist Sinhalese limited the rights of Tamils from the 1950s onward, leading to the outbreak of a violent insurgency for an independent Tamil state in 1983. As one Western scholar says: "An early, generous offer of autonomy, made before extreme separatist leaders outflank moderate leaders, may avert secession."[35]

What would happen in China? Secessionist tendencies, as we saw, remained strong in Tibet and Xinjiang in the late-PRC era because of the lack of autonomy and freedoms. Those pressures would certainly not disappear with the end of the PRC. This is a concern not only for its own sake but also because it could undermine the democracy itself.

Democratic principles suggest that the two regions should be allowed to conduct referendums on their status and relationship to the rest of China. Yet that prospect might cause irreparable harm to democracy in China. For one thing, the idea of "losing" Tibet or Xinjiang would be anathema to many. It would thus discredit the new system because of its inability to maintain national unity. The rise of ultra-nationalist leaders in Russia and Serbia in the late 1990s in response to ethnic insurgencies is ample warning of this. Han Chinese who supported democracy might quaver if it appeared likely to result in a division of the country. Democracy in China would then be under threat, just as the war against secession in Chechnya almost scuppered Russian democracy in the second half of the 1990s.

In addition, any consideration of secession would raise divisive questions about the boundaries and electorates of these regions. Would Han Chinese who had migrated on their own and lived in peace with the minority peoples be disbarred from voting in Tibet and Xinjiang? Which Tibetan areas outside the Tibet Autonomous Region would be included (they exist in four other provinces)? Would the Kazaks of Xinjiang be allowed to secede from a proposed Uighur state? There are also very real concerns about the rise of violent ethnic reactions against Hans, not to mention the strategic vulnerability of the places so close to unstable regions in Central and South Asia.

One can imagine an immediate referendum in multiethnic Lhasa or Urumqi being a disaster, recalling those in the capitals of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan where ethnic Russians were in the majority. Extreme nationalist Han politicians would appear in these cities and gain electoral support. In the charged atmosphere, Tibetans and Uighurs would vote along ethnic lines out of fear, even if they were not ethnic chauvinists.

For all these reasons, several Chinese scholars have suggested a solution that is both principled and practical.[36] The new state should, they argue, impose a temporary constitutional ban—say of 10 to 20 years—on secession in the interests of creating a solid foundation for democracy. Such a limit on the "secondary right" of secession would be justified in the interests of the "primary rights" of civil and political freedoms, an acceptable trade-off in most normative political theories. Secession would be deemed unconstitutional in the interests of the protection and enhancement of basic freedoms in potentially secessionist regions.

In the meantime, real autonomy would be granted similar to that in Hong Kong. Beijing would approve whatever leader was elected to head the regions, provided they disavowed secession, and the central government would handle only defense and foreign affairs. Tibet's Dalai Lama (the current one will be 75 in 2010) might be appointed as that region's titular or religious leader and a civilian leadership constituted from among the Tibetan population, while a popular local leader in Xinjiang might be allowed to gain power there. Local police forces would be constituted in the regions. Several plans call for the withdrawal of the 150,000 to 300,000 Chinese troops in Tibet and the creation of an autonomous border protection force there. This would depend not a little on India's goodwill in allaying Chinese security concerns. The demilitarization of Xinjiang would also require similar moves by Central Asian neighbors.

In the meantime, émigrés would be allowed to return to both Tibet and Xinjiang and political prisoners would be released. Some sort of international monitoring of rights in the regions could be invited—a UN special envoy for Tibet and Xinjiang for example—to ensure that the ban on secession did not become an excuse to deny rights. If this rapporteur asserted that all was well, the regions would find little international support for secession. Over time, the theory goes, the real enhancement of rights in these regions would reduce secessionist pressures, allowing them to remain part of China while enjoying the religious rights and sense of self-respect that they were denied in the communist era. If it did not, then at the very least, the complex issues of secession could be decided within a more mature democratic polity.

Obviously, it will be easier to convince Tibetans and Uighurs to remain a part of China the more evidence there is of an improvement of rights and enhanced political status. The autonomy over local affairs promised under the PRC system would have to be implemented quickly. It might be appropriate, as part of the revamped federalism, to give minority regions a veto or opt-out power over constitutional changes, such as granted to Quebec in Canada. Long-standing grievances over everything from the location of military bases in pastoral land to official inquiries into historical issues would need to be addressed. And although secondary in importance, evidence of economic payoffs from remaining inside China would further blunt secessionist urges. International support could play a critical role in this respect.

Since we are predicting an elite-led democratization in China—albeit with bottom-up pressures—in a well-established state, there is reason to believe that such a solution could work. Both Tibet and Xinjiang could see in the new polity a chance to live at peace in a new broad-minded and free China,

while Beijing politicians would not "play the national unity card" against these regions.

That said, there will be a significant danger that this ethical solution to a complex problem will fail. The experience of countries like Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and Indonesia shows that ethnic minority regions tend to make their dash for freedom the moment the authoritarian weight is lifted even where there is some prospect of a democratic federal state. Years of resentment against the colonial power are simply too hard to bottle up with reasoned arguments along the lines of "this is for your own good." Even with a special UN rapporteur declaring that rights are being respected in Tibet and Xinjiang, raw ethnic hatred may be hard to assuage.[37]

In addition, the very plausibility of the scenario sketched above—that a democratic China might be able to integrate Tibet and Xinjiang successfully—would encourage separatists to urge an immediate break. Fervent believers in an independent homeland would fear becoming another Quebec, Basque region, Puerto Rico or Tamil Nadu, where ultra-nationalist yearnings are constantly frustrated by the very reasonableness and tolerance of the "colonial" power.

The key then will be for outsiders and insiders alike to convince ethnic minorities that secession is not in their interest, whatever the law says. Influential countries and NGOs would have to lean heavily on politicians in minority areas—not just Tibet and Xinjiang but also in Yunnan, Inner Mongolia, and Guangxi—to refrain from secessionist politicking. In short, keeping secessionism from ruining China's democratic project will require a real commitment to the principles of democracy in these regions. At that level, stemming secession will be as much an issue of democratic learning as of national unity. Whether such a case can and will be convincingly made must remain unanswered. But the creative solutions of liberal Chinese scholars offers real hope. We return below to the longer-term future of these places.

The First Election

The holding of a national election in China will be the single largest event in the world. At present, that title is held by India's national elections, where 600 million people go to the polls. There, the task of voting requires 800,000 poll stations, 5 million poll station managers, a corps of specialized elections police, and two entire months. In China, there will be 900 million voters. Although infrastructure and technology will be light years ahead of what was used in the 1912–13 elections, there will also be 20 times more eligible voters. In logistical terms alone, democracy in China will not be easy.

Elections for the national parliament will need to be scheduled within a short time of the constitutional convention to ensure that the democratic momentum is not lost. At most, an interim government could rule for around two years in the face of a rapidly politicizing society. The interim government will need to appoint an electoral commission headed by a person of unimpeachable integrity to choose the method of election of parliamentarians, define electoral boundaries, conduct voter registration, set the rules for candidates and campaigns, and organize the voting days.

In the method of election, the choice is broadly between proportional representation, where parties gain seats in proportion to their share of the popular vote, and first-past-the-post, where seats are allocated to the winners in each constituency. Proportional representation systems are more inclusive but may lead to more unstable and inefficient governments, constantly trying to forge coalitions from a multiplicity of parties. When combined with a titular presidency, the results can be doleful.

In the PRC era, local people's congress delegates were elected through multiple-seat constituencies, a mixed system. Hong Kong shifted from a first-past-the-post system to a similar multiple-seat constituency system after the 1997 handover. There is thus good reason to believe that, in the interests of inclusiveness, some type of mixed system like this will be embraced in the new China too.

Given the size of the electorate, it may be advisable to conduct a two-stage campaign, with the national polls first, followed by the provincial and local elections. The remnant strong state from communist China would help immensely in the organization of the polls. Also, by the time China holds an election, computers will have greatly simplified the task, one of the benefits of a latecomer to democracy. The role of the United Nations, assisted by funds from supportive Western and Asian nations and from NGOs that support elections in new democracies such as the UN-backed ACE Project, could also be critical, helping to provide both technical expertise and moral support.

Who will contest the first election? The campaign will begin even as the constitutional convention deliberates on the new democratic structure. Political parties will form the moment they are legalized, probably before, and the campaign for the first election will erupt in earnest. Even if the transition pact has imposed some limit on the formation of political parties, or sought to retain some favored role for a continuist party created by the breakthrough elites, it is unlikely that such provisions will survive, a reminder of how the terms of the transition change quickly.

The creation of competing political parties becomes a necessity once universal suffrage is affirmed because parties are the only way to create coalitions

of interests and opinions. In new democracies, it is normal for a vast proliferation of new parties given the uncertainty and unfamiliarity of democratic politics. The Beer Lovers' Party won a frothy 16 seats in Poland's first elections of 1991, one of 29 parties competing for seats in the 460-seat parliament. Indeed, political parties proved a boon to young democracies in Eastern Europe, where a weakened civil society was ill-prepared for the burdens of self-rule. They channeled new social demands, acted as mediators with the state, and integrated competing demands into viable governments. Along the way, they showed "a reasonably strong capacity for responsible political behavior and surprisingly high levels of commitment to democratic norms."[38]

The formation of political parties will be one of many significant milestones in China's democratization. The officially-sanctioned "flower vase" parties that co-existed with the CCP in the PRC era are certain to be displaced by genuine new contestory parties. Their creation should be welcomed as a first step toward a mature polity. As one former Chinese official predicts, once national elections become a certainty, "we will see a proliferation of political parties. The airwaves will be filled with candidates making speeches and debating policies. . . . We will see how the light of freedom brings out the enthusiasm, creativity and proactive spirit of the people."[39]

What kinds of parties will appear? By the late PRC era, China had an emergent and distinct political spectrum, which we can loosely arrange in terms of left, right, and center. This spectrum, including a vast array of what were called "illegal organizations," is a good guide to the kinds of parties that will compete in a democratic polity.

On the left, locally based groups representing peasants and workers—like Hunan's Society for Reducing Peasant Taxes or the northeastern Association to Protect the Rights of Workers would be common. They would gain their support from those excluded from the spoils of China's reforms, possibly a majority, as we have seen. They would be akin to a neocommunist movement, basing themselves around the leftists in the CCP who had been shunted aside in the late PRC era. Unlike in Mongolia, Russia and some Eastern European countries, the mainstream of the CCP had abandoned Marxism even in the late Mao era, focusing on holding power rather than realizing utopia. Those yearning for communism will not likely try to resurrect it through the CCP. Instead one can imagine a "New Communist Party" (*xin gongchandang*) emerging to bear Marx's torch.[40] As in Russia, it would retain strong loyalties from those who believed that the end of the socialist dream had been a disaster for China and those fearing the economic and social impact of further reforms. The left might also include a noncommunist alternative based around

left-leaning intellectuals and the poor, perhaps named the China Welfare Party (*zhongguo fuli dang*).

On the right, more liberal, white-collar groups like the Alliance for Development or the China Development Union, representing coalitions of business leaders, liberal economists, and well-off urbanites, would also appear. Right-wing nationalists would likely find their home here too. Pro-democracy groups, like illegal organizations of the late reform era such as the Northeast Peace and Democracy Assembly or the China Democracy Party, might find their supporters on this side as well.

In the center would sit some form of continuist party constituted from the reform elements of the CCP who led the transition. It would of course enjoy the largest organizational resources and might be called the China Social Party or the China People's Party. This party would be a roughly centrist grouping that favors the market but also advocates a return to better welfare. But within its ranks would be wide divergences based on regional, economic, and ideological lines. Many of the candidates for the positions may be the former local CCP party secretaries not tarnished by the old regime.

Just as new parties would be permitted, it would be important not to limit or repress symbols of the old regime. Democrats might oppose the continuist party built on the remains of the CCP, while the breakthrough elites in turn might oppose a neo-communist party. Acquiescing to these demands would however threaten the legitimacy of the new system. Fortunately, the number of people who might oppose any suggestion of a communist return—in new or old garb—would likely be small. Unlike Chile or Argentina, where vast human rights abuses by the regime created a mentality of opposing its very reappearance, China had to some extent already made peace with the CCP by the late PRC era.

One way to envisage the riot of new parties is to imagine the politicians who might appear:

- An economist who argues for China's integration with world trading and economic system as the primary task
- an ex-CPPCC delegate espousing the type of corporatism and democratic harmony that will appeal to many
- a city mayor from a coastal city which has drawn in lots of foreign investment arguing for a Malaysian-style developmentalism
- an ultranationalist scholar arguing for limited democracy and a strong military
- a judge from the lower ranks who represents a Confucian-style morality and sense of justice

- a Buddhist-sect mystic who embraces ancient healing remedies and appeals to a forgotten era of kung-fu knights-errant
- a charismatic peasant mobilizing the vast village populations, abjuring the business suit for the homespun vest and arguing for a better deal for rural China

It is likely that the new polity will include far greater numbers of women running for office, and winning. Women have normally played a big role in overthrowing authoritarian regimes—as Beijing's Chai Ling, Taiwan's Annette Lu, and Hong Kong's Emily Lau remind us for the Chinese world—and continue to play an equally large role afterwards.

By contrast, one group that will likely not contest the first elections, at least not with any success, consists of the very intellectuals and activists who argued for democratic reforms in the late communist era. Since democracy is a system of representing various interests, idealists who represent no interests except the ideal of democracy cannot "represent" anyone, unless they go back to find a constituency after the communist collapse. Practically speaking, democracy activists often prove less than effective campaigners, having fought their struggles in journals and bookish circles. As one Western scholar puts it: "Democratization will not hand over control of policy to the proponents of democracy."[41]

The conduct of the elections will be an important litmus test of the new democratic spirit. Campaign violence, administrative blunders, and vote-buying will all be a threat. Experience suggests that the less ingrained are the "rules of the game," the more fraught are the first elections. On the other hand, even limited experience with elections under authoritarian rule can ensure that the first democratic polls are a success, as shown in Indonesia and Taiwan. A strong sense of the rule of law can also make the transition easier since people feel bound to respect the decisions of an electoral commission when the inevitable disputes arise. In China, of the 900 million potential voters, perhaps 300 million, representing half of those in villages, will have voted in a meaningful and properly conducted election by the time of the transition. Meanwhile, rule of law norms were basically established in theory if not in fact. On that basis, China has good prospects for a successful first election.

Typically, voter turnout and enthusiasm is high in first elections. This is a blessing since it ensures that the results are respected, especially when turnout exceeds half the electorate. Yet predicting the results is well nigh impossible. Empirically and logically, there are good arguments that the continuist party could do well. Taking into account China's weak corporatism, desire for sta-

bility, and the skewed distribution of organizational resources, it all augurs well for the success of a continuist party. In the first semi-free elections in June 1990, Bulgaria's Socialist Party, the ex-communists, won 47 percent of the vote and 211 of 400 seats.

On the other hand, as was seen in other countries like Poland and Czechoslovakia, the first elections can be occasions for strong votes against anyone associated with the old regime. The elections become an occasion for a thorough ventilation of the political system. Parties with strongly anti-continuist platforms do well.

A best guess for China is that a continuist party would take most votes. In that sense it would have the chance to become "hegemonic"—meaning having a predominant influence—like the dominance in the early years of democracy by the KMT in Taiwan, the Liberal Democrats in Japan, or the Congress Party in India. Nonetheless, in the interests of both inclusiveness as well as securing a strong majority, the dominant party may seek to build a coalition out of the scattered, regional-based parties which collect marginal seats.

Assuming that the results are declared legitimate and are accepted by most parties, we can at this point consider the transition to democracy as completed—even if the consolidation phase has only just begun. Having removed the CCP from power, agreed on a new constitution, elected the first democratic government, and eliminated "powers behind the throne," China will have made a successful democratic transition. Now comes the challenge of a successful democracy.

Rights and Interests

Beyond the first elections, we are peering at the journey of democracy in China through a misty lens. At best we can point to the rough outlines of the landscape ahead, if not to its likely impact. From here, we are less concerned with the sequence of events than with the setting. What will democracy look like?

The issues at stake can be broadly divided into two categories. One is *the struggle for rights*, the contention over the meaning and application of the universal and normative demands of democracy as the country goes through the growing pains of freedom. This can also be called the struggle for political justice. Second is *the struggle for interests*, the contention over "secondary" issues of macro-economic and fiscal policy, social justice, job opportunities, regional disparities and much else. This is the struggle for socioeconomic justice.

Typically, the struggle for rights looms largest in a new democracy. Since equality is the highest core value of democracy, other aims such as economic growth, national power, or cultural revival must now be pursued only in ways consonant with it. Fundamental rights can only be overridden in order to protect even more fundamental and extensive rights—as when protestors threaten the personal safety of bystanders. Basic liberties "trump" other aims.

Throughout history, democracies have failed because this core tenet was violated. Communism was a goal-based value system, a means to an end, which is why democratic rights could be shelved in order to "launch a sputnik" of socialist development. Likewise, nationalism, with its aim of national greatness, can make rights all too dispensable. The goals of economic growth or social stability likewise can provide the pretext for an overthrow of democracy when it fails to deliver these goods. Zionist Israel and Islamic Iran have troubled democracies because of the constant clash of rights with the imperatives of religion. In Singapore, attempts to uphold an imagined Confucian moral order mean that rights are suspended every time that order is threatened.

As a democracy matures and rights become settled, the struggle for interests takes over as the dominant issue of politics. Political debates are less about the banning of opposition parties and more about the funding of the national healthcare system. Those struggles are no less intense. But they are not taken as signs that the system is about to collapse.

The separation between the struggles for rights and interests is not hermetic. If the struggle for rights results in a victory for patriarchal nationalism over individual rights, as it did in Malaysia or Singapore, this can provide the pretext for giving certain groups better access to public resources than others. On the other hand, if the struggle for interests results in the rise of a dominant party which favors soaking the rich, for example, that may provide the basis for violating the fundamental rights of some. In both cases, there is a threat to democracy.

Both struggles are bound to be intense in China, so intense, indeed, that many will often despair of the country's future. As participation rises and identities are created within the new polity, levels of violence and disagreement may actually increase before they decrease into a Valhalla of responsible citizens solving their differences through civilized debate. A new liberalism in politics will provide a means of reaching consensus. But it will also generate even greater pluralism in the political arena. Conservative scholars will begin to wax nostalgic about the wonderland of authoritarian stability that was the PRC, as they did in Yugoslavia, Indonesia, and the USSR.

One thing is sure: as in France, with its bloody postrevolutionary century,

and in Russia, with its troubled post-1991 era, the challenges of democratic consolidation in China will loom far larger than the transition itself. Overthrowing dictatorship is the easy part. Making democracy work is the most difficult, and unending, task of any society. For a China that toiled longer than others to remove the rock of dictatorship, this will be no less true.

Rights: Threats and Safeguards

The struggle for rights will be played out in an evolutionary and accretionary drama of speeches, court decisions, legislative actions, and public opinion. Through it, China will attempt to consolidate its democracy.

Predictions of a debacle in the struggle for rights are legion, grounded as they are in the baleful memory of Republican China's failed democracy. One scholar predicts that China after the first election will suffer from deteriorating law and order, political factionalism, an obstinate bureaucracy, and an ongoing crisis of legitimacy.[42] A journalist warns that China will likely join Indonesia and Russia as "messy states" where authoritarian rule gives way to corruption, political instability, violence, and secession.[43] A mainland native predicts "utter chaos under heaven."[44] Another warns: "The legislature will be so torn with conflict that it cannot carry out its constitutional functions; governments will have little time to implement a policy program before falling from power and governance will enter a state of semi-paralysis; money and violence will plague elections making them unfair; corruption will be rampant; and people's basic rights and freedoms will not be protected."[45]

Of course, all this may be true and yet not prevent the eventual consolidation of democracy. Ten years after its transition, Russia, for example, was widely considered a stable, if minimal, democracy. So too with China. While it is important to be honest about the challenges the country will face, it is still a large leap from there to predictions of outright failure. Most Third Wave transitions were a ultimately a success, and China's own scorecard bodes the same.

The challenges to rights faced in consolidation can be broadly grouped into state-centered and society-centered concerns. The former include weak institutions, weak norms of conduct among elites, and remnant authoritarianism. The latter includes things like violent, extraconstitutional social movements and popular illiberalism.

Every country's "biggest challenge" (or threat) to consolidation is different. The countries that confronted state-centered problems were diverse. Chile had to get the military out of politics. Pakistan faced persistent elite-level violations of democratic norms. In Taiwan and Thailand, weak institutional-

ization hampered progress. Society-centered challenges are no less varied. Colombia faced major anti-system movements from both the left and the right. In India and Indonesia, violent communal politics plagued democracy.

In China, the most prominent state-centered problems may be weak elite norms of conduct and remnant authoritarianism. In Eastern European countries where state repression was worst "communism was so harsh it destroyed the trust in the public good necessary for political cooperation or a modicum of honesty in public life."[46] In Bulgaria, both the former communists and the opposition made frequent departures from democratic procedures in the early years "each side justifying deviations from democratic norms by referring to the anti-system behavior of the other." The actions included invalidating local elections, election fraud, and jailing journalists. As two scholars wrote of this elite-led transition, similar to the one that we predict for China: "The revolution from above [spawns] a pattern of elite interaction that constrains democracy by weakening the commitment of key actors to its basic rules."[47]

In China, weak traditions of public compromise, a lack of political engagedness, a weak legislative process, and minimal experience with elections and public life could bring about the kind of paralysis noted by two students of democracy worldwide: "an increase in political cynicism and apathy, decline in effective political participation, and inability of the political system to generate stable, representative ruling coalitions."[48] If the process of state capacity-building is slow, it will further weaken the ability of the bureaucracy to implement legitimacy-enhancing policies.

Nonetheless, weak elite norms may be compensated for by strong institutions. As we saw in part 2, the coercive and organizational strength of the state created by the CCP is an essential bulwark against outright collapse. While the state became increasingly unable to govern properly in the late PRC period, it remained a large and powerful organization that could easily be reoriented for new purposes. It had rules for policymaking, a large bureaucracy, and a legal system. Corruption was widespread, but professionalization was increasing as education levels and technocratic credentials rose. The idea of cadres as servants of the public—symbolized by the national police force's switch from military-green to citizen-friendly blue uniforms in 2001—had begun to take root.

Since the agenda for governance should be clear, any new government in China should be able to make rapid headway in reorienting the state. By controlling corruption, empowering local governments and communities, addressing economic and environmental crisis, and providing an atmosphere of social enthusiasm similar to that in the 1950s, a new regime could enjoy immediate new legitimacy and political stability.[49] The old state will help

uphold new institutions, ensuring freedoms and enhanced welfare. A new federalism that empowers provincial and local governments would make the state even stronger.

There is a flipside to the persistence of a strong state, however: the threat of remnant authoritarianism. Worldwide, new democracies have often experienced "a gradual erosion of the substance of democratic rule through intermittent repression of opposition groups, emergency measures, and declining integrity of legal guarantees," write two students of democratization, until "though still short of a formal transition to authoritarian rule, electoral institutions are rendered a façade."[50] Closet authoritarians may seek military support, portray the opposition as disloyal, and break constitutional norms.

The authoritarian temptation will loom large in China. The country's long legacy of dynastic rule coupled with the elite-led nature of the transition will leave a rich vein for would-be dictators to tap. If instrumental goals like social stability, economic growth, and national unity appear threatened, a strongman leader could quickly emerge to impose new clamps on "irresponsible media," "traitorous regions," and "bickering politicians." Such a leader might attempt to institutionalize those changes through limits on opposition parties and a weakening of parliamentary power.

This temptation may be supported by the unreconstructed members of the old security apparatus. While we have generally ruled out any overt military interference in politics, that leaves wide scope for a corrosive covert role. A totalitarian state's internal security apparatus is often the hardest to change given its ingrained traditions. When a pardons commission of prominent intellectuals in Russia released a convicted American spy in 2000, it noted that "the investigative organs of our country still bear the marks of the Soviet system, more so than society in general." In China, the very existence of the Ministry of State Security was often denied.

Even among new democratic leaders, a strong elitist tradition would help to feed the authoritarian temptation. Those who construe democracy as a means toward "scientific decisionmaking" and "efficient rule" rather than a just and fair working out of differences will contribute to this urge. They may argue that parliament should be reconstituted with a majority of seats elected by narrow franchises of business and social elites, much like the legislature in Hong Kong.

Some in society might abet the backsliding. Neo-authoritarians might be egged on by a people disillusioned by the poor performance of the new democracy on issues like the economy and effective governance. The foreign business community, which hailed warlord Yuan Shi-kai's "decisiveness" over Sun Yat-sen's "conspiracies" after the 1912–13 elections, might join the cho-

rus, along with domestic business leaders pining for the old certainties of authoritarian rule. As a former Chinese official warns: "If our people lack patience with democracy and simply want a 'great leader' or 'outstanding politician' to step in and solve all the problems according to some vision, then the biggest loss of all will be the loss of democracy."[51]

If the reversion is significant and sustained, then China could slip from being a troubled consolidation to an outright democratic failure. Of course, the outside world and pro-democracy forces in China will have to be careful not to declare a "return to authoritarianism" too readily—as many did unfairly when former security service head Vladimir Putin was elected Russian president in 2000. If an election brings to power a continuist party with strong roots in the former CCP, this need not be prima facie evidence of reversion. Parties finding their roots in the old communist groups came to power in Hungary, Poland, Russia, and Mongolia; and a Francoist party did the same in Spain. None sought to implement a return to dictatorship. Like the rest of the old state, they adjusted quickly to the new democratic norms. Cambodia's People's Party, the inheritors of its authoritarian legacy, continued to sweep elections in the country after 1993, but at the same time presided over an enlargement of democracy—not just elections at local levels but also widened civic freedoms, a vigorous press, growing civil society, and norms of public debate.[52]

Fortunately, failed one-party dictatorships like the PRC are typically harder to reconstitute than military dictatorships because the former have been stripped of their resources while the latter remain a well-endowed and organized force (one reason why reversions to military rule occurred in places like Peru, Thailand, and Pakistan). Within the political elite, the same balance of forces that led to the initial democratic breakthrough remains to prevent a return to authoritarian rule. The multiplicity of actors, each with their own toehold in a new constituency, makes any "recompression" of the system more difficult. No influential actors can be sure that a newly-empowered autocrat will protect their interests.

In addition, moves by the state to limit the exercise of some political rights need not themselves be proof of democratic reversal. Campaign funding limits, limits on hate articles in the media, or bans on individuals facing criminal charges from holding office can all be consonant with upholding rights. The litmus test is whether rights are being restricted for the sake of other more extensive and fundamental rights or whether they are being restricted for nonadmissible goals such as purging political opponents or boosting economic growth.

Within society, the array of pro-democracy forces typically prevents back-

sliding despite growing disillusion with democracy. While new democracies have often faced the threat of a return to authoritarian rule, it has not come to pass. In Huntington's memorable phrase "nostalgia . . . is a sentiment, not a movement."[53] The middle class fears a return to cronyism and instability. The poor fear renewed economic crisis. China's civil society, especially that recently demobilized, would be an important bulwark. So too would the media and its ability to raise the specter of a return to dictatorship, as Russia's did throughout the 1990s. Whatever the attractions of strong rule, no one would vote in favor of a widespread curtailment of liberties. Newly independent courts, meanwhile, could play a role by striking down limits on rights or rejecting emergency powers. Openness and elections also tend to curtail the dreams of closet-dictators by bringing out their unsavory features.

No less important would be the international community, recalling the sanctions and suspensions of official contacts after Tiananmen. Assuming China has won wide plaudits for its democratic transition, it will not want to return to the dog-house of international relations by reversing its democratic gains. Eastern European countries and Russia were frequently steered away from the authoritarian temptation by pressure from the European Community.

In all, there are good reasons to be hopeful that China's millennia of authoritarianism will finally fade into irrelevance. As one Chinese democrat wrote: "The spirit of democracy will infuse the whole government. If the government tried to implement a new dictatorship, it would not be accepted by its own members. In addition, if it came to power with the support of the West, the new government would risk losing that support, even facing sanctions if it backpedaled."[54]

Society-centered challenges to democratic consolidation may loom less large. One well-known threat to new democracies, ironically, is populism. This does not mean popular participation in politics, the basis of democracy. Rather, it refers to popular desires to override the democratic process. The political system may generate stable governments, but they may be constantly challenged by street protests. This would arise if there was a widespread feeling in society that the "revolution" had failed and a "second revolution" was needed to complete the process. If the newly elected government appears as little different from the overthrown CCP, or if it is unwilling or unable to begin implementing the ideals of the democratic breakthrough, the threat of a second popular mobilization would grow.

One Western scholar of China believes that since the first government will be unable to deliver on instrumental goals of economic growth and political stability, "the prospect of a radical, possibly violent, political rupture would become more likely."[55] In the wake of the elections of 1912–13, for example,

students, women, and the poor began agitating for the right to vote, arguing that the restrictions on the franchise deprived them of the fruits of revolution. This time, populism might arise from the marginal groups left out of the transition pact and possibly left out of the first elections. In distant Yunnan, an ethnic minority-led armed insurgency such as Peru's Shining Path (or indeed the "bandits" that continued to oppose CCP rule well into the 1950s throughout southern China) could emerge. The demagogues of this movement would gain their strength not from debates in the legislature but from "street politics." Some might resort to violence. Poor farmers seeking immediate salves for their plights might make use of new freedoms to storm the national parliament.

As mentioned, the very notion of dynastic change—the "broken mandate" or *geming*—is a cultural legacy that will fuel populism. Having overthrown the CCP, society may feel a heavenly righteousness that justifies any and all actions, democratic or not. Populist activity might also draw on the "mass movement" politics of the PRC era. While state-directed mass politics had been significantly weakened in the reform period, this era had seen the rise of spontaneous mass politics, as evidenced in the growing incidence of entire villages or religious sects that marched on government offices. More salient would be the degree of popular mobilization which preceded the democratic breakthrough. The more that popular mobilization was present in the transition, the greater would be the threat to normal representative democracy, with all the instability and impairment of democratic processes implied.[56]

The threat of populism is usually larger in countries that have experienced an elite-led transition, as we predict for China. Countries like Brazil, South Korea and Taiwan, where authoritarian leaders headed off growing popular movements by initiating change, typically faced an anti-establishment movement that felt "deprived" of a real revolution. In all three cases, the anti-establishment parties finally won the presidency around the turn of the century, topping successful efforts to keep populist pressures within the political system.

A key factor in mitigating this threat in China will be the degree to which the new government can gain legitimacy. It will also depend on the inclusiveness of the new government, something that bears on coalition-building in the first election. As with Brazil's rubber tappers or Mexico's urban poor, China will have to ensure that its dispossessed—the industrial workers of the northeast or the farmers of Sichuan—feel their interests are being heard inside the distant Beijing parliament.

Another society-centered challenge will be illiberalism. This may result from an undemocratic tyranny of majority rule or a tyranny of unelected top

judges. Instances such as the passing of laws in newly democratic Ukraine, Estonia and Latvia to deny rights to ethnic Russians or the regular use of courts in Singapore and Malaysia to silence the media and purge political opponents are a reminder of how democratic institutions can be misused for illegitimate purposes.

Unlike the threat of authoritarianism, the threat of illiberalism reflects more deeply the strength of undemocratic norms in society at large—a fact that allows undemocratic leaders to "go through the motions" of democracy, as Hitler did in forcing parliament to grant him emergency powers. In some cases, leaders may even be forced by their electorate to act undemocratically. Indonesia's post-Suharto government refused to legalize the Indonesian Communist Party, banned in 1966, and allowed police to arrest people selling Karl Marx t-shirts, because of strong anti-communist sentiments in the country.

As we saw in the last section, illiberal beliefs and norms continued to be widespread in China's society in the late PRC era. The vast popular indifference, even support, for the government's brutal crackdown on the 100,000-member Falun Gong religious group beginning in 1999 was one example. Another was Beijing's racist exclusion of 5,000 non-Chinese, mainly South Asian, lifelong residents of Hong Kong from holding Hong Kong passports after 1997, a move that made them stateless yet attracted little concern even among Hong Kong's Chinese. To a certain extent this reflected the impact of living under dictatorship, where society is polarized and taught that politics is a process of identifying, labeling, and purging "enemies." Yet no doubt it also reflected some degree of latent illiberal feeling in society, such as has survived, even revived, in the mature democracies of the West.

There are four areas where illiberalism would likely appear: group discrimination, social morals, nationalism, and criminal justice.

The abolition of the PRC's legalized discrimination against peasants, religious groups, and minorities might face opposition in society. Urbanites unhappy with seeing their cities flooded by migrants might urge their politicians to reimpose a ban on internal migration. Uighurs who wanted to send their children to religious schools might incite the opposition of "scientific" educationalists in Beijing. Villagers speaking an unintelligible patois in some remote part of the heartland could declare a cleansing of outsiders, just as residents of Hong Kong's New Territories tried to exclude women from inheritance rights after 1997. The 10 percent of the country that is not Han Chinese and the 30 percent that does not speak Mandarin Chinese could face exclusion from public office under new laws passed by ultranationalists intent on "purifying" the culture.

Such group discrimination would strike at the heart of rights since it in-

volves a systematic rather than just sporadic inequality. Averting it will require a national government and active civil society that exposes instances of discrimination and offers means of recourse—like ombudsmen, rights commissions, and legal mechanisms.

Closely related is the threat of attempts to impose a sort of Singaporean-style conservative moral order. Fukuyama describes a universal impulse in democracies for a return to an "older, purer set of values" as liberalism continues to generate and encourage a pluralism that many find jarring.[57] Iran's fledgling democracy was overthrown in 1979 by radical Muslims demanding a return to veils, prohibition, and religious rule. In China, conservatives could appear to demand continued bans on homosexuality and rock concerts. Others might hearken back to Mao's day of women in dowdy outfits and teenage partying limited to ballroom dance. One thinker, who is considered a liberal in China, asserts that China "cannot adopt the Western concept that 'anything not forbidden by law is the right of individuals' because this would destroy our concept of rule of law and social morals." He points to examples such as doctors who smoke and female university students who earn money as karaoke hostesses as instances of behavior that would be unacceptable even in a democratic China. His solution: impose "moral sanctions" and "social sanctions" as well as "administrative measures" and "disciplinary measures" on those whose behavior is considered "irregular" (*bu guifan*).[58]

As for nationalism, as we saw the contention between rival liberal and illiberal notions was growing in the late PRC era. Illiberal nationalism, such as that which encouraged racial slurs against Japanese or which applauded the terrorist attacks on the United States in 2001, was widespread, if not dominant. The emergent liberal nationalism would now be bolstered, as elsewhere, by pride in the values, institutions, and practice of public life in China seen as embodying shared notions of justice.[59] It will be a testing time for whether this new nationalism, whose emergence we traced, can grow strong enough to withstand its ugly counterpart. As one Western scholar noted: "Constitution-making alone will be a weak reed against hurricane-force anti-democratic gales" unless key players in government can draw upon "a deeply rooted popular democratic nationalism."[60]

Criminal justice is the other area where democratic norms will face illiberal pressures. Crime has risen to epic proportions in many newly democratizing states, notably South Africa and Russia. The end of the authoritarian state may open the way to a rise in violent and organized crime, even if democracy promises to address the fundamental causes of crime in a way that dictatorship could not. Certainly, it is likely that the social consensus in China will remain inclined toward a widespread use of the death penalty: China's

15,000 executions per year in the four years 1997 to 2001, accounting for 97 percent of the world total, were heralded in the country as a sign of success.[61] But for the first time there will be a real public debate on the value of capital punishment and more space for domestic opponents to air their views. Media exposés of unjustly convicted prisoners will introduce doubts into society. The illiberal desire for vengeance will be moderated by the growing democratic demands for due process and fair punishment. Even by the late PRC era, there was a growing awareness of the legal and social costs of draconian criminal justice, and a growing legal consensus that executions should be reduced.[62]

The battle against illiberalism in China will of course be the first step in an endless battle against illiberalism fought in every democracy, as the U.S. civil rights movement of the 1960s or the global debate on the use of the death penalty today reminds us. It will determine how quickly the country can move from the "starting blocks" of simple electoral democracy into the long, indeed endless, run to build a truly liberal democracy. Institutions ensuring that minority views are represented in elected bodies and independent courts that uphold fundamental rights will be critical bulwarks against illiberalism. So too will that part of civil society that supports democratic norms. Containing those impulses will require not only the commitment of government leaders but more widely of society as a whole.

As with the authoritarian threat to political rights, observers will need to be sensitive to the fact that China's interpretation of fundamental rights may differ in some respects from that of other democracies. The debate on where to draw the line is a normal and constant part of every democracy. Just as the limits on rights vary between Japan and Thailand, or between France and the United States, so too China will find its own way, probably leaning toward a more restrictive exercise of rights. If it chooses to pass laws against religious cults that manifestly threaten the safety of children, as France has done, that need not be a sign of a triumphant illiberalism.

In any case, we might be surprised to find that illiberalism was less powerful in China than many imagined. Taiwanese intellectual Bo Yang coined the phrase "The Ugly Chinaman," in the 1960s with his piercing critique of Chinese society as deeply illiberal. Yet that very society he critiqued, Taiwan, has changed immeasurably in that short time, becoming one of the first liberal Chinese societies, something once thought to be an oxymoron. Likewise, many believed that Serbs were deeply illiberal until they suddenly overthrew their elected tyrant Slobodan Milosevic in 2000 and sent him to the UN war crimes tribunal in the Hague. Other Eastern European countries that went through similar illiberal phases, like Bulgaria, Romania, and Slovakia, also

veered toward the norms of political (though not necessarily social) liberalism eventually. Confucian fragments South Korea and Japan have proved how the liberal political project can work even alongside specific cultural values like consensus and nationalism, even emperor worship. King-worship in Thailand backed by draconian *lèse majesté* laws has given way to king-worship based on social voluntarism and genuine national pride.

In China too, illiberalism will be contained by the powerful influence of free and open public debate. The mullahs of "older, purer" values will face new challenges from the reason and humanity of democracy. China's political identity will be in full play, and with everything to play for.

Toward Consolidation

In the battle to consolidate democracy against all manner of undemocratic gales, society and state alike will be engaged in a torrid process of learning. There is a great scholarly debate about whether the classroom progress of society or the state is more critical to consolidation. The consensus seems to be that while the changing behavior of politicians is "preeminent," it cannot be isolated from the "stimulus and support" provided by society.[63]

This of course mirrors the relationship during the transition stage, where the actions of political elites, however decisive, are critically informed by the behavior of society. In China's case, the behavior of state actors will be even more important given the elite-led transition. The commitment of political elites, the bureaucracy, political parties, the coercive apparatus, and the judiciary to uphold democracy irrespective of any pressures from society will make or break the consolidation.[64] Democracy failed in China in the Republican era because of frequent departures from constitutional norms and resort to violence by elites. Many of those same tendencies will remain next time around. Yet China's elites will be further along the road to democratic beliefs than other countries—Bulgaria, Chile, and Indonesia come to mind—where democracy eventually triumphed. Moreover, if civic groups perceive backsliding or democratic deterioration, they can mobilize again, through newspaper columns, marches, petitions, and legal actions.

This learning of a constitutional culture is an important underlying element in the success of new democracies and has been widely studied as a result. It comes about as leaders, groups, and individuals—who in their personal lives might espouse antidemocratic doctrines—learn to espouse democratic ones in public life.[65]

Some learning will occur through explicit civic education. One can expect in China that supporters of democracy will stimulate wide-ranging discussions

and debates on the normative values that underpin every successful democracy. Quasi-government organizations that promote public consciousness, like the PRC-era China Society for the Study of Human Rights, set up in 1993, or Hong Kong's quasi-government Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education, will become more prominent.

The expansion of civil society will also provide an important formal arena for democratic learning. Civil society is critical in democracy because it keeps the state within the agreed confines of action. A faltering or divided state can be bolstered by civic groups. An overreaching or illiberal one can be chastened. It is the invisible fiber that ensures liberty. One well-known political reformer in China with much experience in community-level democracy imagines a day when China will be characterized by the ideal situation of "a strong state and a strong society."[66]

Most of the learning, however, will be implicit. It will take place endogenously, through the very political struggles that threaten democracy. Through the fires of conflict, democracy will produce democrats who uphold the ideal of tolerance, a belief in pluralism, a suspicion of authority, and a deep-seated pragmatism. The long struggle to bring about political change will already have created some of these values—recalling that the Cultural Revolution bestirred modern Chinese liberalism. Now they will germinate at a faster pace.

The emergence of an elite commitment to democracy may seem irrational because elites in a fledgling democracy might have better chances for survival in the chaos of transition by acting outside the rules of the game, grabbing for power, and purging rivals. But the Third Wave democracies have shown that such a commitment can be rational for a variety of reasons.

Most basic, the new political elites may genuinely value democracy and the need to administer the new system impartially and consistently. In China the growth of beliefs in justice, political liberalism, and freedom among elites will powerfully help this cause. The mere belief in the possibility of a constitutional democracy among political elites can be one of the most powerful factors in making it a success.[67] One group of scholars found that worldwide such a genuine commitment was more likely in countries "where memories of past absolutisms convince key political actors that the dispersal of political power is a public good that should be institutionalized if possible."[68]

If so, then China, with its memories of emperors, Republican warlords, and Mao—not to mention his successors—will benefit, echoing one of the legacies mentioned earlier. The constant ferments of democratic discourse in China since the fall of the Qing—in the Republican era, the early PRC years, the "humanist" project days of CCP chief Hu Yaobang in the 1980s, and the reform faction of the CCP in the 1990s—reflects this emergence. By the turn

of the century, many political elites had begun to widely regard the notion of democracy as an end of itself, and one that could possibly flourish in China.[69] As one official scholar wrote in a book published in 1998: "Even a strong state must not impede on personal freedoms."[70] The hope that China might create a democracy which surpasses those in the West—the so-called "surpass sentiment" (*chaoyue qingxu*)—would bolster this commitment.

Second, international pressures may help consolidation just as it helped transition. In Russia the vision of the "return to Europe" was a powerful influence shaping the behavior of politicians. In China, the vision of becoming the predominant power of Asia through cooperation with mostly democratic Southeast Asia, South Asia, and East Asia might do the same. So might a desire to attract Taiwan into closer union.

Third, it may become more and more electorally wise to be seen as a party or a politician who is a defender of democracy. Even if society is largely antidemocratic at first, typically one part of the electorate is critically concerned with protecting democracy and votes accordingly. Unlike other voters, who may vote for a variety of candidates, the pro-democracy voters choose the most democratic candidate.

One irony of this process is that the more deadlocked are political forces, the more quickly democratic norms may become entrenched. India, with its impossible diversity, is proof of this. China's huge potential struggles over interests, considered in the next chapter, may be a blessing in disguise. Successive elections will tend to bring into power politicians who are more and more committed to democratic norms because they find that this is electorally appealing under conditions of dire conflict. While China may have come up short on all the factors needed for an immediately functioning democracy in the late PRC era, every passing year would see that change. The numbers on its scorecard will shoot up quickly as learning progresses.

Of course, the lessons may be learned at some cost. Historically, the struggle for rights has led to a great deal of bloodshed in democracies, not to mention much political, social and economic disruption. Americans fought a civil war to end slavery, while in Asia the early years of democracy in South Korea, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Indonesia were accompanied by years of sporadic violence.

No less than democratic transition, velvet political change is rare when it comes to democratic consolidation. In the process of learning to be democratic, a society struggles, often violently, to overturn the legacy of authoritarianism. As with the violence and unrest of transition, every society will constantly evaluate whether it is a price worth paying. Time and again they have decided that it is. When Russian president Boris Yeltsin summoned a battalion

of tanks to end an armed uprising by filibustering anti-reform parliamentarians in October 1993, some warned of the costs. In the ensuing battle, more than 300 civilians and soldiers were killed. Yet Yeltsin won widespread popular backing for his actions and there were no reports of military defections to the side of the parliament. Seen in the broader light of democratic consolidations, and in light of Russia's subsequent improving democracy, this may be one example of the "acceptable" costs of consolidation.

The same goes for China. Again and again commentators have warned that the struggle for rights in China will be a "protracted and difficult process."[71] We can probably go further and assert that there will be much violence and many deaths. This is not inevitable, but it is likely. If paralysis, populism, authoritarianism or illiberalism threaten the new democracy, pro-democracy forces will need to reemerge to repulse that threat, and violence may ensue. Foreign commentators might wring their hands about "the situation in China," but if the alternative is a steady collapse of democracy and a return to dictatorship then the people in China might find the struggle worthwhile.

With the rapid spread of democratic institutions at the end of the twentieth century, learned commentators in the West began to denigrate those institutions for creating formal elections but not real freedoms.[72] Often, they accurately described the pain of democratic transitions. But in blaming that pain on democracy, rather than the accumulated ills of dictatorship, and in prescribing a return to dictatorship, they were sorely out of touch with the very people whose interests they claimed to speak for. The problems of a return to dictatorship are almost always worse than those of muddling through with imperfect democracy. Moreover, this is a choice to be made by the peoples concerned. South Africans, despite their soaring crime, AIDS crisis, and economic slide, have no desire to return to apartheid, or any other form of dictatorship for that matter.

Survey evidence shows that people will rise up to fight for a new democracy if they believe that it is a truly democratic system. Empirically, people tend to believe this more when the new system has produced economic as well as political benefits, perhaps reflecting the coincidence of political and economic success. If regionalism, corruption, and factionalism plagued China's political system before, then perceptions that these things are being reduced will help. Since injustice, inequality, unfairness, and repression of basic rights was common before, if people experience improvements in these areas, they will support the new democracy more.[73] This is a reminder that it is the relative, not absolute, efficacy of the new government that will matter.

Even if the new democracy is plagued by infighting among parties, stalled legislation, ethnic insurgencies, street protests, and sex scandals, the mere

recognition that this is a result of democracy may help to undergird an "irrational pride" that ensures legitimacy. As one scholar puts it: "Culturally, democracy remains a valued goal."[74]

This explains one of the great paradoxes of democratic consolidation—that disillusion with the results may be accompanied by support for the system. An explosion of open griping about political leaders may be one of the healthiest signs that people have accepted that democracy is a solution to tyranny but not much else. The beginning of realistic expectations and a sense of empowerment to criticize and even oust shoddy democratic leaders is the beginning of democracy's triumph.

Thus society may simply say that whatever the costs and whatever the instrumental failures, democracy is a good thing merely because it is democracy. As the years pass and China gains world praise for staying the course, its people, as elsewhere, will view their construction of democracy as a great achievement of their civilization, especially given that it was done in the face of a difficult legacy. This will help to make the system more stable as people develop pride in democracy, a pride that transcends instrumental outcomes. To quote one Chinese democrat: "People will have to understand that many problems cannot be solved simply with democracy. Rather it is to ensure that a bad government cannot stay in office, so that its destructive effects do not spread to every area, so that when people realize the government is bad they do not have to wage a war, coup, or violence to exercise their democratic rights and replace a government, but just have to cast their ballots."[75]

Typically, as in Eastern Europe, it takes a decade or more for a democracy to be consolidated. In Asia, democracies in the Philippines, Indonesia, and Cambodia took more than a decade to settle down. In Latin America, democracy remains unconsolidated in countries that made the transition to democracy in the immediate post-World War II era like Venezuela, Argentina, and Peru. When will the people of China be able to breathe a collective sigh of relief and say that their democracy is consolidated?

Some analysts define consolidation as an uninterrupted change of government after the first election. That would make the opposition victory in Taiwan's presidential election of 2000 the signpost of democracy's triumph there. Yet this may be an overly stringent criterion in new democracies with a dominant party. In India, Mexico, and Japan, for example, ruling parties continued to hold office long after democracy was visibly consolidated. By the same token, frequent changes of government in Latin America belied still-unconsolidated democracies. Since China's democratization is likely to be elite-led and therefore accompanied by the rise of a continuist, or hegemonic party, the change

of government criterion would also be less useful. Democracy may be entrenched even if the opposition struggles to win seats.

Other measures of consolidation may be more instructive. One scholar looks for a polity in which constitutional norms are followed irrespective of results, all political interests are properly represented, all actors behave within the political system, and society itself takes an active role in upholding the system.[76] Another scholar says consolidation occurs when 70 percent of the public consistently says they prefer democracy to any other form of government and when no more than 15 percent say they prefer dictatorship.[77] On both these definitions, consolidation represents a fundamental shift in the political culture of authoritarianism. For the first time, the public is truly engaged and included within the political system, while the state and parliament are regulated by constitutional norms that do not brook violation.

Of course, consolidation need not involve a fully tolerant, inclusive, orderly, and public-minded polity. Such a utopia has never been achieved anywhere, even in "core democracies" like Britain and the United States, where these things reign only uneasily over opposing tendencies. In China, as was the case in Russia, democracy will likely achieve consolidation despite the continued presence of notable antidemocratic elements in state and society alike. The absence of the high-minded civic culture and law-abiding political traditions that some Western scholars see as critical to democracy's survival will no more condemn China to democratic failure than it did Russia—or the United States.

Consolidation does not require that everyone be democratic or liberal in their personal views, but only an agreed public way of doing things. The persistence of antidemocratic views and behavior in society need not be fatal. In the metric above, as much as 15 percent of the population may still be advocates of a return to dictatorship and another 15 percent advocates of other nondemocratic solutions. For better or for worse, many in society will see democracy as a solution to crisis and a means to instrumental ends—national unity, social stability, or economic growth. Yet as long as political elites and state administrators cling to the importance of the democratic vision, democracy will survive.

Beyond consolidation lies the vast realm of democratic deepening, where a country takes up fundamental issues like the equal value of political freedoms and the achievement of social and economic justice. The challenge moves from building a functioning democracy to building a perfect one. Having confronted the problems of entrenching democratic norms, a country now confronts the challenge of realizing democratic ideals. That road is a never-

ending one of course. In the case of China, it is bound to be a centuries-long work in progress.

Political Life

What will democracy in China look like? While certain fundamental values and institutions are universal, democracy also allows for considerable variation in the details. Democracy is sure to be very "Chinese," just as it is strongly redolent of the local culture of every country where it operates. China can and must have its own values to fill in the blank spaces of democratic practice. "The sheer recognition that China's democracy may not be our democracy is a brave starting point," says one Taiwanese scholar.[78]

As with institutional design, the question can be seen broadly in terms of continuity and change. Many scholars argue that political culture in the PRC was more culturally than politically determined.[79] If so, then the aversion to open conflict among competing political parties, the spectacles of mass mobilization for political events, and the corporatist-looking interest groups might remain. But evidence elsewhere suggests that political culture in authoritarian regimes is heavily politically determined. As the Taiwan example has shown, Chinese cultures prove themselves every bit as keen to embrace open, pluralistic, contentious, and individual-focussed politics as other cultures when given the chance.

Take the issue of language. As mentioned, a universal trait of democratic transitions is that the language of politics shifts from the stylized and elitist language of dictators to the vernacular and populist language of the people. In Taiwan, the local Fukkienese dialect gradually took over from the imposed Mandarin of the Nationalist Party. In Mexico, the first non-PRI president began using local Mexican Spanish rather than the elitist European brand of his predecessors. In former French colonies, the local creole has replaced European French. India, going through a democratic deepening under the Hindu nationalist BJP party after years of Congress Party rule, has had ministers who speak neither English nor Hindi.

For China, this "universal" phenomenon will be manifest in a very "Chinese" new political discourse. Local dialects, which are spoken by 30 percent of the population, will flourish in public life for the first time. Cantonese will get its rightful due in the national polity, along with the distinct dialects associated with Fujian, Shanghai, Jiangxi, and Hunan. Provincial leaders will speak in their own local twangs. Foreign scholars of China will complain long and loud about having to hire translators because of the limits of their assiduously practiced court Mandarin, as they did in Taiwan. Meanwhile, a pop-

ulist discourse will emerge as politicians personalize politics more and more. Speeches will be cued to prompt applause, not note-taking.

The "Chineseness" of China's democracy will also be seen in the nature and behavior of political parties, something we alluded to in the first election above. After a decade of volatility, the huge splintering of parties and interests in the initial period typically settles down as the struggle for rights is settled and the struggle for interests creates broadly united groups of several major points of view. The extent of this winnowing of parties depends on many factors. As a general statement, the more that the transition was driven by economic crisis and popular mobilization, the more fractured will be the polity and the longer it will take to settle down.[80] In Poland, for example, where crisis and mobilization were high, the number of parties in the legislature began at 29 in the 1991 elections, but fell to just six by 2001, when the largest party, the Democratic Left Alliance, held 47 percent of all seats, almost a plurality. In China, given an elite-led transformation, we can predict that a fairly bounded period of winnowing will take place. The broadly left, right, and center views that were already apparent in the late PRC era will coalesce around one or two national parties, perhaps holding alliances with provincial and local parties (of which there will be many).

Given the nature of the transition, China's party system is likely to be an elite-dominated rather than populist system at first. The elites in charge of parties will channel and control popular pressures, as in Thailand or Japan, rather than being controlled by them. This can be stable as long as elites in charge of parties satisfy popular pressures. When they fail to, a period of upheaval can lead to the rise of popular-dominated parties which eventually win power, as occurred in India and Taiwan in the 1990s.

Some aspects of China's collective and corporatist culture will surely color the practice of democracy. While claims of a uniquely collectivist nature of Chinese society are usually either overblown, ill-defined, or simply an excuse for dictatorship, this does not mean that a collective spirit will not remain, or even grow stronger and become a nurturing force. Japan's single ruling party and extensive social consensus-building, for example, accords with that society's collective streak. South Korea and France with their powerful trade unions are another example. Collectivist institutions, voluntarily formed, are perfectly at home in a democracy.

China's political culture since the late Qing has been suffused with a normative goal of creating a "great harmony" (*datong*) in the public sphere, wherein a civic-minded community is ruled benevolently by a virtuous leadership. Several Chinese scholars talk of wanting to avoid the confrontational and boisterous politics of countries like Taiwan or Britain and forge a pattern

of "democratic harmony" (*minzhu hexie*) or "harmonious cooperation and consultative discussion" (*hexie hezuo, xieshang taolun*).[81] This distaste for open disagreement has its roots in the Chinese notions of not having public disagreements in which one or both parties would lose face and thus social standing. The idea of "glossing over problems to settle people's hearts" (*xishi ningren*) was historically rooted and later encouraged by the Leninist demands of democratic centralism of the PRC. It would certainly color political life in a democratic China, especially as the normal disruptions of democracy are played out.

There is nothing wrong with this. Indeed it is admirable, as long as it is not an excuse to infringe on rights or repress interests. Many democracies function without the slugfests of the Taiwan legislature or the puerile name-calling of the British-style parliaments. Still, the harmonious impulse may prove less than ironclad in China, with its ethnic and geographic diversity and the damage done to the collective spirit and deference to authority by communist upheavals like the Cultural Revolution. One would not like to see a Hui and a Hakka duking it out in the national parliament, but a more unvarnished politics is likely. While the frequent backstabbing and infighting of the overseas Chinese dissident community was to some extent conditioned by its exiled and excluded status, it may provide some preview of the realities of life in a democratic China.

One persistent feature of politics may be *guanxi*—the existence of a "hidden structure" of personal relationships that determines critical policy outcomes. This was not just a result of the Leninist polity but also a reflection of cultural facets of etiquette, morality, and emotion in China.[82] If so, then it will not die with the PRC. *Guanxi* politics and political corruption, so pervasive in Taiwan and in local elections in China, would remain a perennial problem in political life. This may reflect cultural as well as political legacies where democracy is seen as a simple exchange of favors ("your seafood banquet for my vote"). Yet the openness of democracy typically brings this problem under control.

Politics may also come to have strong overtones of traditional Chinese morality drama—as it has in Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. A deep infusion of morality can be a positive influence in politics as long as it does not override rights. Appeals to behavior based on individual moral doctrines cannot be made mandatory, but they can and should play a role.[83]

Some will decry the revival of "feudal culture" evident in the reinfusion of traditional morality and the persistence of *guanxi* in politics. But on a normative basis, the people's freedom to choose and form their own identities

is a good thing. We may not like the way democracy is practiced in China any more than we like the way it is practiced in Japan or India. But it will be incumbent on the world to respect China's democratic course provided it does not clash with universal democratic norms.

One key change for China's democratic politicians will be that they spend far less time than their predecessors in formalistic and pompous activities—meeting foreign businessmen, traveling abroad, presiding over ribbon-cutting ceremonies—and a lot more on the ground, especially in the villages, keeping their popularity high. This was always a key difference between leaders in India and China. The former spent far less time on publicity-making overseas travel and far more time touring the rural heartland and in off-camera policy-making. It was inconceivable that a CCP leader would make a *padyatra*, a foot journey through the villages to garner electoral support, as in India. When they darkened the doorstep of rural areas at all, it was in convoys of black Mercedes headed by a phalanx of sirening police cars. That would now change as China's leaders "discovered" their own heartland.

Another change in political culture may be the "depoliticization" of politics. After the consolidation period, economic and social issues will rise to the forefront of public life and issues of ideology, law, Party machinations, and constitutionalism will recede. Like all totalitarian societies, China was overpoliticized, and by the late reform era there were signs of a strong anti-political undercurrent where people did not want to hear about politics because it gave them a "headache."[84] That means that political participation—the extent to which China's people become engaged in democracy—is hard to predict. Election turnouts may be high but out-of-election participation may be low. Typically, new democracies see a high turnout for the first election and then the population becomes "demobilized" as the thrill of transition gives way to the drudgery of consolidation.

One heartening new aspect of political participation will almost certainly be the rise of women. The PRC lagged badly on this issue, reflecting a general fact that authoritarian regimes—with their machismo, chauvinism, militarism, and intolerance—are usually no place for women. The highest ranking women in communist China, with the late exception of Wu Yi, elected to the Politburo in 2002, were always the wives or mistresses of senior CCP leaders. By contrast, democracy brings many more women to prominence not only because of the enfranchisement of women but also because women are more aligned to its political culture of tolerance, compromise, and empathy. Women usually play a prominent role in the overthrow of authoritarian regimes and in their subsequent consolidation.[85] In China, the roles of Tian-

anmen mother Ding Zilin, Tiananmen protest leader Chai Ling, environmental and political critic Dai Qing, Taiwan vice president Annette Lu, and Hong Kong democratic legislator Emily Lau remind us of this.

As in so many respects, democracy will bring out the latent diversity of a country long represented by Han males schooled in a particular northern plains culture. That political culture is bound to change dramatically. Many of the seemingly "deep-rooted" features of China's politics that orientalist foreign scholars harped upon will appear in retrospect to have been nothing more than the defile of dictatorship.

Local Politics and Hong Kong

Enhanced political freedoms and formal political devolution will give new prominence to provincial and local-level politics. For the first time, politics at the local level will assume the importance that it was long denied by a centralized and undemocratic state. The various identities and particular political cultures of each province and subprovincial region will emerge from a long sleep. Provincial political cultures developed over centuries will spring back to life.

The resulting China will bear some resemblance to the early Republican era, when local powerholders held sway. When people talk about "what's going on in China" they may well be referring to a constitutional crisis or an insurgent poor people's movement in a province rather than to the comparatively settled affairs of Beijing. "This loosely amalgamated China will be functional in many respects, but it will not be neat," notes one Western scholar.[86]

The struggle for rights within each province will loom no less large than at the national level. A consolidated national polity may mask regional enclaves of unconsolidated democracy. Some places will gain a reputation for being more liberal and democratic, while others will be rued as havens of intolerance. In India, West Bengal and Kerala are the liberal leaders, while in the United States, California and Vermont are ahead. In China, we might expect Guangdong and Fujian to emerge as pioneers of the new democratic politics. Meanwhile, more politically conservative places like Henan and Shaanxi may retain stronger vestiges of authoritarianism. Some places, like Shanghai, will be clean orderly cities while others, perhaps Guangxi, will be near-gangster kingdoms. Middle-of-the-road places like Shandong, Sichuan, Hunan, and Jiangxi will waver between traditional and reformist, collective and individual personalities.[87]

Overall, just as some provinces "blazed a trail" with the economic reforms

and political liberalization of the post-Mao era, so too some places will lead the nation in creating a stable democratic polity. Beijing may recede in the political life of the nation, becoming merely the arbiter of the competing notions of the just polity that will emerge from powerful centers like Shanghai and Sichuan.

One part of political life that may change very little is village politics. Yet even here, despite being democratic to some degree, national-level democracy will exert influences. Candidates will ally themselves more closely with national issues and parties rather than maintain strictly parochial profiles. Real mavericks and plain crackpots, kept out of power in the past by matronly Party committees, will gain power in villages. China will be awash with stories of the village chief in some distant remote area who was elected with bizarre promises, recalling the mayoral candidate in post-Soviet Vladivostok who claimed he was the son of God.

The new prominence of local politics will be most marked in Hong Kong. Former Party patriarch Deng Xiaoping, in a typically self-serving warning, said that the fall of the CCP in China would see "the end of prosperity and stability for Hong Kong."[88] Yet from every possible angle, the opposite seems to be true. Hong Kong has much to gain and little to lose from democracy in China. (This also applies to the half a million people living in the nearby gambling enclave of Macau.)

Since Hong Kong is undisputed sovereign Chinese territory, there would be no question of secession; indeed support for an independent Hong Kong was weak even under British rule. At the same time, the Joint Declaration between Britain and China that formed the basis of Hong Kong's return to Chinese rule in 1997 was an international treaty lodged with the United Nations. Such treaties continue to have force when regimes change, and there is no reason to expect that a democratic government in China would want to renege.

But a democratization in China would create an immediate demand for full democratization in Hong Kong and election of the chief executive. Hong Kong is a virtually self-governing city-state which has been unable to achieve full democracy and whose freedoms and rule of law were constantly being challenged as a result of dictatorship in China, its sovereign after 1997. It is also a city overendowed with the ingredients for a successful democracy—a large well-educated middle class, a tolerant society, successful local elections, strong legal system, a robust free press, and more. Giving it full democracy—a promise Beijing made in the Basic Law—would make it better run and protected, would eliminate a source of criticism of China, and bolster a key entrepôt for Asia's economy. Autonomy would entail a fully elected legislature

and chief executive to hold the "separate system" powers promised under the Basic Law.

Fortunately, one might expect that the new government in Beijing will look favorably on such demands. Still, it may well be that the development of democracy may proceed faster in places like Guangzhou and Shanghai, where a people long denied rights embrace them with greater vigor, than in Hong Kong, where the post-1997 period revealed a modest political apathy bred by the comforts of colonial rule.

Assuming that a new federalism comes into force in China as a result of democratization, Hong Kong will also fit more easily into the Chinese state. As a "special administrative region," in the unitary state, its relations with Beijing were troubled and confusing because of the lack of an institutional structure to handle central-local relations. With a new political and judicial apparatus able to manage and mediate central-local relations in a more regular and predictable way, Hong Kong will find that its relations with Beijing are less fraught. The forces of the PLA stationed in Hong Kong and Macau as an assertion of sovereignty might be withdrawn as a token of good will.

Hong Kong's economy would benefit far more from the spinoffs of a successful democratic transition in China than it would lose as a place with special status within a dictatorial state. It would be better off as an average city in a dynamic country than as a glittering exception on a dismal landscape. Certainly, as happened in the Great Leap Famine and the Cultural Revolution, there would be a danger of new immigrant influx if the transition in China goes wrong. But assuming it does not, there is little to fear. Indeed, the continued legal migration of people from China into Hong Kong—roughly 200 per day—could slow. As in the 1930s to 1950s, when Guangzhou and Hong Kong were seen as equally inviting—indeed Guangzhou was long thought superior—the creation of a normal polity in China would reduce the incentives to migrate to Hong Kong. This would help to ease intense population pressures in the territory, which had a population of seven million by 2002.

It may take decades before Shanghai or Guangzhou can match Hong Kong as a center of business services for Asia. But in other respects—quality of life, political dynamism, cultural vibrancy—the coming of democracy will narrow the gap quickly. Most important, everyone will be better off.