10

A Changed International Role

Democratic Peace

The international implications of a democratic government in China will be far-reaching and profound. China's foreign policy will be turned upside down, as will the foreign policies of other nations toward China. No less important, the full compass of interactions between China and the world will be altered fundamentally. Two Western scholars do not exaggerate in predicting that democratization in China "would probably transform global politics at every level."[1]

At the most general level, the change to a democratic system internally should manifest itself in a "democratic foreign policy" externally. The China that previously used any and all means to advance its narrowly defined economic and strategic objectives would give way to one that defined both its means and ends in democratic terms, or at least tried to. The struggle to achieve a democratic foreign policy is part of the ongoing struggle to deepen democracy in every country, but consider its implications for China.

For one, a China pursuing a democratic foreign policy would be a salutary new force for global justice, peace, and development. As a democracy, China's external policies would become less aggressive and expansionist, in line with democratic peace theory. Kant's proposition has held elsewhere in Asia—helping to constrain wars within Asean, in East Asia and in South Asia—and there is no reason not to expect it will apply to China.

That will be a major change for a country whose late communist era was filled with talk of a "strong country dream," in which China would become the preeminent power in Asia, muscling aside U.S. forces and Asian rivals like Japan and India. While specific cases will be detailed below, the renunciation of this goal would bring a modulation of claims on Taiwan, border disputes with India and Russia, strident anti-Japanese rhetoric, lobbying to get U.S. forces out of Asia, territorial claims in the South China Sea, aggressive military occupation of Tibet and Xinjiang, and needless stationing of troops in Hong Kong and Macau.

Democratic peace also implies that the foreign policies of liberal democracies toward China would change. They would become less confrontational and less alarmist. Suddenly, talk of a "China threat" would be so much nonsense. A China more attuned to the international political system would find that its diplomacy is easier. The presumption that the Beijing government was now a veritable representative of its people would win for it the same tolerance and respect as is owed to other democratic governments. A common ethical foundation would now exist for engaging Beijing as an equal. With its domestic polity aligned with the normative principles of democracy, China's ties to other nations would become less emotive and more technocratic. The world community of policymakers, scholars, newspaper columnists, activists, and guys-at-the-bar will be able to discuss China's very real developmental challenges without having the conversation constantly cleft by the issue of its dictatorship. As with India, foreigners will be able to engage China with less ideological rancor. As China becomes "more political" domestically, the issue of China will become less political globally.

This is not to say that ideological issues will disappear. But what will disappear, perhaps, is the "dialogue of the deaf" that beset China policy debates in the past. Those outside China demanding that the world check its notions of political right and wrong at the door when dealing with China will disappear once such notions become the subject of heated public debate in China itself. The "realist" foreign policy analysts who urged the world to accommodate an essentialized Chinese sense of historical victimization that justified its aggression toward Taiwan and Tibet would appear ridiculous once those notions become the subject of contention and debate at home. In other words, once the world is able to debate issues in China along with the Chinese, there will be a common ground for reasonable debate. The results will not always please the world. But for once, there will be a real dialogue.

China, as a newly responsible power, would now be trusted to share the burden of Asian regional security, as Russia has begun to do in Europe and the Middle East. It could join U.S. forces in joint exercises and might take a new role in preventing piracy in the South China Sea. This would represent a significant restructuring of influence in Asia and the world. China would have new stature as the leader of an emerging regionalism in Asia. In short, China would be a boon rather than a threat to international security.

Just as China's own democratization was influenced by democratic diplomacy and "border effects," it would now project those same effects abroad. It would be expected to join in the condemnation of human rights abuses in other countries, ending its much-touted though frequently violated policy of "noninterference," in other countries. It might have a special role in moni-

toring human rights abuses and encouraging democratization in remaining dictatorships in Asia—North Korea, Burma, and Vietnam.

Even without a spirited democratic diplomacy, China's democratization would be a powerful incentive to people and elites in remaining dictatorships around the world. China's democratization would itself constitute an entire "fourth wave," but others may be brought along in the eddies. In Asia, it would almost certainly cause ruptures in North Korea, Burma, and Vietnam, whose dictatorships have benefited in varying ways from ongoing dictatorship in China. Singapore and Malaysia, which sit on the line between dictatorship and democracy, might be urged to move more firmly into the democratic camp.

Finally, a democratic China could prove a salutary force for a relaunch of a serious effort at global redistribution. The 14 percent of the world's people living in OECD countries continue to command an ever more disproportionate amount of world resources in the early twenty-first century, earning an income per capita six times that of the rest of the world and enjoying 89 percent of global health expenditures. Eleven million children—the entire population of Greece—and another 7 million adults die of poverty-related diseases every year. In the early 1950s, China was flush with a genuine esprit as a leader of a new global development drive, symbolized by Beijing's prominent role at the Bandung meeting of the the nonaligned movement in 1955. Once Mao's state went awry, however, that interest in global justice became an interest in fomenting revolution abroad and propping up corrupt dictatorships. In the reform era, Beijing became a rogue state of the right rather than left. Its state companies sold small arms to warlords in Africa, plundered the remaining tropical forests of Southeast Asia, and peddled missile technology to Pakistan and North Korea. This was not the global redistribution that the optimists of Bandung had in mind.

By joining other developing countries, China could easily emerge as the leader of a new "North-South movement," this time with the credibility that goes with being a democracy. It could take on perceived unfairness in the global regimes covering things like carbon emissions, intellectual property protection, agricultural policy, and multinational investment. It could challenge the selfishness of Western countries from the moral high ground that comes with being a democracy. China, in other words, could be a major force for creating a less unequal world.

While the ideological issue of democracy will disappear as a source of conflict between China and the world, this by no means implies that there will be no foreign policy conflicts. Just as fully-paid-up members of the democratic camp have frequent and strident foreign policy differences, so too

differences would remain with China. Not only will China's interpretation of democracy at times conflict with those of others, but also its views on a whole range of policy issues like resources, immigration, environment, weapons proliferation, economic policy, cultural protection, nationalism, and terrorism will reflect its particular views and interests. China's foreign policy, like its democracy, will be very "Chinese," a trite statement perhaps but one worth keeping in mind.

The annual U.S. State Department report on human rights, for example, might continue to take issue with China's handling of certain rights issues, such as large-scale executions of prisoners, the banning of seditious or secessionist speech, or the destruction of ancestral halls for the sake of development. China would defend itself in a way consonant with international norms: not by deriding human rights universality, nor the problems of the United States itself, but by arguing that the alleged violations were mistakes, or were not so severe, or even that they were consonant with the ideals of democracy.

On technocratic issues, China's views might be even more at odds with the West. Its powerful claims to be excluded from carbon emission bans based on its low per-capita emissions and its early-development stage would continue. Its protests at Western protectionism would remain strong. It might still argue that Uighur separatists who took refuge in a foreign country were terrorists and should be extradited.

Beijing's foreign policy will also be more liable to change than in the past. The CCP's saving grace in diplomacy was that it was principled and consistent on most issues because it did not have to answer to domestic interests. This will change with democracy. As China's people change their views on international issues, foreign policy will change with it. In contrast to their dealings with the steely consistency of the old emperors of Beijing, foreign countries will now find themselves meeting with elected politicians who are trying to keep on top of public opinion. Capriciousness and volatility would be a new dimension of China's foreign policy.

While China's nationalism may not be an antidemocratic one, it would continue to affect foreign policy. Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines have had to deal with the sudden eruptions of anti-American protestors; so too China could easily find itself swept up in anti-U.S. protests over one slight or another. And in contrast to the past where the demonstrations were often orchestrated by Beijing, this time they may be aimed squarely at Beijing, forcing the government to respond with policy changes that might anger Washington.

Finally, foreign policy will almost certainly decline in importance in a democratic China. Just as leaders no longer sought legitimacy in global grand-

standing, so too the exigencies of domestic governance would absorb more of their time. The experience of other post-communist countries like Russia and post-authoritarian countries like Indonesia shows how the domestic agenda dominates the early years of democracy, lowering the country's international profile. India is perhaps the best example of a country whose democracy demands most of the time of its leaders, who spend far less time on the road than those of the PRC.

As China's thirst for international power and recognition recedes, other democratic countries that have long punched far below their weight—Japan, India, Germany, Brazil—may rise in global importance, perhaps signified by an expansion of permanent seats on the UN Security Council. A China that no longer represents a competing ideological foe and that is increasingly devoted to solving its domestic problems will loom less large on the international stage.

Transitional Diplomacy

Like democracy itself, the pursuit of a democratic foreign policy is a process, a continued struggle to act democratically in foreign dealings that mirrors the struggle to act democratically at home. Even long-democratic countries see frequent eruptions of nondemocratic foreign policies, the United States being a tragic example.

For China, which has had a strictly realist foreign policy since Mao's death, the reorientation would be a slow one. The ups and downs of democratic consolidation would be mirrored by frequent departures from the norms of democratic foreign policy—reversions to chauvinistic nationalism, utilitarian justifications for injustice, and claims that sovereignty could not countenance foreign interference on human rights. The PRC's foreign policy—its great-power ambitions, its rejection of universal rights norms, its purely realist foreign policy, its claims on Taiwan—will not change overnight. As one Western scholar noted in light of Russia's first decade of democracy: "Even a smooth and peaceful exit from communism in China would require a good deal of foreign cooperation, patience, and delicate diplomacy if regional crises are to be avoided. . . . China's diplomatic and international role is likely to be as nerve-wracking as Russia's."[2]

As such, it will be important that the world community continue providing support and incentives to Beijing to stick to the democratic course and moderate its foreign policy. In the immediate period of collapse, as noted, there will be a threat of military aggression by the crumbling CCP regime. Yet this threat will continue to exist as the first government finds its feet. Taiwan is

the most likely target for this aggression. Yet it could be loaded onto any neighbor, including rival claimants in the South China Sea or Japan's Senkaku (Diaoyutai) Islands. The threats of a strong anti-U.S. posture are also latent. The PLA was armed with 400 nuclear warheads and around 30 long-range nuclear missiles by the turn of the century, and the safe control of these weapons would be a critical task for the world community, just as it was in the USSR.

More generally, it has been common for newly democratic states to adopt strongly nationalist positions (Russia on Chechnya, Indonesia on East Timor) in the immediate wake of the fall of authoritarianism because new leaders do not want to be blamed for presiding over the end of their empires or the decline of their country's international prestige. In history, indeed, many democratic revolutions have been accompanied by international aggression—whether the American revolutionaries who invaded Canada or the French revolutionaries who marched on Europe under Napoleon.

In China, democracy movements have typically also been accompanied by an upsurge in nationalism. The May Fourth Movement was rabidly anti-Japanese while the 1989 Tiananmen students demanded to be recognized as "patriotic." A fledgling democratic government in China grappling with flaring nationalism could be a significant challenge for the world community.

Still, even if we assume that China's transition to a peace-loving and stabilizing democratic foreign policy may be delayed by a period of quite the opposite, there is reason to be optimistic about this period if properly handled for two reasons, one practical and one philosophical.

Practically speaking, there is a qualitative difference in reacting to an aggressive foreign policy driven by the transparent imperatives of democratic transition and one driven by the secret imperatives of authoritarianism—even if the results are the same, or worse. Knowing that a given action by Beijing results from popular pressures or unstable politics rather than any considered strategy of aggression will allow foreign countries to respond more effectively and intelligently. If a newly democratic China were to threaten a military expedition to remove Japanese lighthouses from the Senkaku Islands, for example, Western leaders could downplay the threat in public while engaging in close diplomacy in private. Likewise, if a national storm were whipped up about, say, steel dumping tariffs imposed in the United States, the very openness of the debate and protests would make it easier to formulate a response.

In addition, China will be in a period of rapid learning about democracy, not only at home, but also from abroad. Unlike the transition period, which is unique and unsettled in every country, the consolidation period is one where the models and patterns of other democracies are broadly applicable.

China's new leaders, even if they feel populist pressures to wage aggressive foreign policies, may also be informed by the knowledge of how damaging such actions can be to their international credibility, aid flows, and ultimately their own political positions.

At a more philosophical level, there is an argument that some degree of saber-rattling and nationalist aggression from China may simply be one of the prices the world has to pay to see the world's biggest country through the gateway to democracy. The CCP has long appealed to outside fears of strategic instability to attract support for the maintenance of its rule. The realist assumption underlying this argument, reflecting the CCP's own view of the world, is that the outside world does not care about the establishment of a just and moral polity for the people of China, only the material impact it might have on themselves. Therefore, the world community would seek to prevent a democratic transition if it carried costs.

Certainly, the frequent vacillation between realist and moral foreign policies by the world's established democracies means that the CCP propaganda strategy gains some adherents abroad, including in the West. But the generally stronger forces of democratic foreign policy imperatives ensure that the argument is not convincing. Like the domestic violence accompanying transition, an unstable Chinese foreign policy may be a price worth paying. As with fearmongering about social and economic collapse and its impact on the world, the dangers on the foreign policy front are probably overblown. Either way, the costs need to be put into the perspective of the larger gains for China and ultimately the world of the establishment of a democracy there.

It is that calculus that led the world's democratic majority to continue to urge political transition on the CCP in the late PRC era, despite the likely up-front costs. There might be doubts about that policy in the heat of the first foreign policy crisis involving a newly democratic China. But the ethical logic would hold.

Relations with the United States

China's relations with the United States may not loom so large after the fall of the PRC. A whole industry of China-watchers in government and the academy may be put out of business. Just as democratic Russia became less threatening and more cooperative in the wake of the fall of communism, so too China can be expected to diminish in immediate importance to the United States and the West in general. Like Japan, its influence in world affairs will be exerted more and more through its economic rather than its military or political muscle.

China's Leninist insistence on political control, its rejection of international norms of rights, and its realist foreign policy will all be removed as obstacles in Sino-U.S. relations. In their place will come less flammable issues of business, trade, environment, and cross-border crime and immigration. It is probably safe to say that Kant's "democratic peace" will work to improve Sino-U.S. relations.

Still, relations between Beijing and Washington will remain complex and far from trouble-free, as are Washington's ties to other democracies.

As above, China's ties to the United States should be separated into the transitional and the long-term perspectives. The transitional period, which could last a decade or more, will be the most difficult since all the promises of a democratic foreign policy may remain unfulfilled in this period. Some scholars believe that in this period, Sino-U.S. relations will remain tense on virtually all the same issues as before—human rights, Taiwan, rogue regime relations, and global peacekeeping—because China's foreign policy fundamentals will not be changed at first.[3]

For the United States, this will require the creation of a new foreign policy. Whereas under the CCP, the guiding U.S. policy was one of seeking to change the political system, it will now have to pursue truly "constructive" engagement, ties that aim to bolster the political system not dismantle it. If elements of the CCP are returned to power in the initial elections, the United States will have to treat them as respected officials. State Department reports on human rights in China will need to draw greater attention to achievements of China's new democracy such as growing civil society, political institutionalization, and of course participation.

Through the timely provision of financial assistance and the adjustment of strategic priorities in East Asia, the United States could ensure this process is a rapid and nondisruptive as possible. One shortcoming of post-Soviet U.S. assistance to Russia was the lack of funding—less than 2 percent of total aid in the period 1992 to 2002—which went toward supporting democracy.[4] This may have made the consolidation phase more difficult than it might have been. The same was true, with lamentable consequences, of aid for South Africa after its initial transition.

Thus a sensible policy for China would be the pursuit of a plan with a higher priority on spending to support democracy. As with the new democracies of Europe, that aid should be aimed at building the foundations of democracy through help to independent pro-reform media, policy think tanks, investigative arms of government, the judiciary and legal systems, and parliamentary powers and capabilities, all of it helping to create the internal momentum for reforms.[5]

The costs to the United States of aiding democracy in China should be compared to the billions spent maintaining 100,000 forward deployed forces in the region. In that light, the costs would be relatively small. All this needs to be carefully tailored to meet China's needs and phobias. The highly visible and condition-based support for democracy that the United States gave to Mongolia or Cambodia might be inappropriate for China, where fears of being manipulated by Western powers are longstanding.

Longer-term, China will be a major world power with which the United States needs to share global responsibilities. U.S.-led regional security structures in Asia should be expanded to include China, just as NATO expanded into Eastern Europe after the collapse of the Berlin Wall. China might be invited to join in the annual Cobra Gold exercises between the forces of the United States and Thailand or the annual Ulchi Focus Lens exercises between U.S. and South Korean forces. Ideally, China will emerge as a stable and responsible democracy that will make any U.S. forces in Asia unnecessary. After more than a half-century as the dominant power of Asia, the United States could finally go home.

Relations with Asia

The realization of the democratic peace will be no less important to China's relations with the rest of Asia. Asia would feel the fallout from an unstable transition or rocky consolidation of democracy in China most of all. China's role in regional security and across a range of technocratic issues—AIDS, drugs, crime, the environment, communications and transport, travel, and much else—already looms large in Asia. That alone gives Asian countries a big incentive to join with the West in making contingency plans to reduce and mitigate such impacts.

It is probable that some elements of the "strong country dream" will persist in Chinese minds vis-à-vis the rest of Asia. But they will come in a very different form. Most important, regional hegemony will no longer be official policy while the open political system will make any regional ambitions less threatening. Some liberal Chinese officials spoke in the late PRC era of being mainly a "cultural power" of Asia whose impact did not extent into the political arena.[6] All this portends a new gentleness in China's regional ambitions. A democratic China, predicts one liberal, would be more likely to pursue an "elephant strategy" (*daxiang zhanlue*), lumbering peaceably through the undergrowth of Asian politics munching on vegetation and trying not to step on anybody.[7]

China may be more able but less willing now to demand a larger role in

Asia's politics since the driving imperative behind that was one of seeking legitimacy at home. As India and Russia's leaders have found, pressing domestic concerns mean they get little traction out of engaging in high-minded diplomatic strategies abroad. One Chinese liberal has suggested that a democratic China should join the United States, Japan, and Taiwan in establishing an Asia Security Commission to keep the peace in the region.[8] Some such arrangement—although certainly also requiring India and Asean involvement—might be useful.

By removing a major undemocratic nation from the map of Asia, China's democratic change would be a major boost to regional security. Not only would the threat of aggression fall, but the developmental impact, assuming it is a positive one, would foster stronger economic and social links between China and the region that would further enhance security.

Strategically, India, Spratly Islands claimants, and Central Asian countries would need to ensure they do not provoke a flaring nationalism in China. Some countries might be willing to make unilateral concessions as a show of goodwill. India, for example, could agree to withdraw troops from the 90,000 sq. km of former Tibetan territory that is now inside the line of control it defends. Japan might declare a ban on its nationals landing on the Senkaku islands.

Preeminent among Beijing's ties are those with Japan. Asia's largest economy and its largest country need to get along better, both for their own sakes and for the future security of Asia. From many perspectives, the democratic process in China should help to moderate China's long-standing militant attitude toward Japan. A more moderate and less racist nationalism, a sense of the losses incurred under Mao compared to the Japanese Imperial Army, and a belief in a commonality of interests in promoting a peaceful and democratic Asia will all help reconciliation between Beijing and Tokyo, just as they have in Seoul's relations with Tokyo.

Democracy in China will also allow Tokyo to engage Beijing more in issues of human rights and democratic consolidation. If it took this step, Tokyo would help change Japan's image in China as a greedy economic power with a grisly historical record, both of which, in Chinese eyes, previously disqualified it from raising moral issues. Japan could be the leader of Asia's democracies in financially supporting China's consolidation. It is already the largest donor and now its aid could be grounded in clear moral aims.

Issues will remain at the social level, especially from World War II. No Chinese leader could be seen to toady to Japan, as South Korea's leaders have found. These issues still excite passions in open Hong Kong and Taiwan. But they will no longer dominate diplomatic ties. Beijing's new political openness

will allow Tokyo to put on hold its cautious rearmament and engage in arms control talks with China. At a deeper level, the cultural jealousy with which China looks upon Japan—the country of "pirates and midgets" that took China's best culture, improved on it, and became a world leader—would moderate. As one Western scholar wrote: "Only a democratized China, made less nativistic by confronting its own repressed expansionist and inhuman activities and able to comprehend Japan as something other than inherently and cruelly militaristic, can realize the Tokyo-Beijing reconciliation required for prolonged peace and prosperity in the Pacific."[9]

Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang

How will a democratic China ultimately resolve the burdens of empire inherited from the Qing dynasty? As we have seen, Taiwan's autonomy could be tested at any point during China's transition to democracy—from a last-ditch effort by PRC politicians to maintain power to an early gambit by a newly elected politician to prove his or her patriotic credentials to a sudden policy decision in later years as China's democracy enters its troubled youth. Avoiding this will require all the wisdom and patience that Taiwan and its leadership have accumulated since the island began to democratize in the mid-1980s.

It will be important for Taiwan leaders not to take advantage of the situation in China to bolster their country's autonomy. Indeed, statements from Taiwan leaders to the effect that the transition makes prospects brighter for some form of political reconciliation would help the transition and further reduce incentives for an attack. The achievement of democracy in China will meet one crucial precondition for reunification long demanded by Taipei. If it is not to be seen as reneging on that stand, Taipei will need to at least pay lip service to the idea of closer political cooperation.

While the newly democratic China may have legally banned secession, Taiwan will not likely feel bound by this injunction given its de facto independence from China. Thus arguments against a formal declaration of independence by Taiwan will be not constitutional but political and strategic. Those arguments suggest that it should refrain from seeking independence—meaning shutting the door on any future political relationship with the mainland—in order not to sabotage the democratic project in China itself, which may be the best guarantee for Taiwan's future freedom. Russia's attacks on Chechnya, reflect the dangers of preemptive bids for independence when a former empire is going through democratization. Indonesia was a rare, if bloody and troubled, exception in begrudgingly allowing East Timor to se-

cede. As with the difficult issue of secession, this provides a principled and just reason for foreign governments to urge Taiwan to constrain its justified desire for formal independence until such time as that independence can be guaranteed and will not undermine the quest for freedoms in China itself.

The "federal" arrangement long proposed by the CCP in which Taiwan would forfeit its de facto sovereignty and its de jure claims to international recognition was unacceptable because it would have been a backward step for Taiwan. A democratic China would be more likely to negotiate a pact acceptable to Taipei. Beijing could now conceive closer political ties with Taiwan as an issue of "contract" (freely entered into for mutual benefit) rather than "coercion" (necessary to accept in order to avoid punishment). Politicians in China who could show they had achieved progress on reunification would win electoral kudos.[10] Beijing may then be able to offer conditions that are attractive to Taiwan, such as some commonwealth-style arrangement.

Taiwan may be attracted since a democratic China's politicians will be more reliable given that hidden agendas are less feasible. The newly democratic ethos of China would appeal more to people in Taiwan too. Given the island's close economic integration with China, political cooperation could be widely welcomed beyond the tired old pro-China crowd in Taipei.

In some confederate arrangement, Taiwan and China would agree to a joint foreign policy and integration of their military commands. Something like the "Community of China" (*zhonghua gongtongti*), "New China" (*xin zhonghua*), or "Federation of China" (*zhonghua liangbang*) could be formed, with China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan as members. Taiwan's long insistence that China be democratic before any political coalition could be considered would thus emerge as more than just an ideological statement, although it had ideological roots in Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People. Given that any confederation would require both sides to have independent judiciaries to mediate legal disputes and strong liberal institutions to manage them politically, a working democracy in China would be a very practical need.[11]

Still, such an arrangement could be torn asunder by strong independence sentiment in Taiwan and strong reunification sentiment in China. In Taiwan, as in East Timor, there will be a strong drive for independence no matter what China offers. China's flimsy assertion of sovereignty over Taiwan—it was first settled by Austronesian people, had tributary relations to Japan, and was ruled by the Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese for longer than by China—makes even loose confederation seem illogical. A popular referendum, which Taiwan politicians were already proposing in 2002, might result in a landslide for independence once the threat of an invasion from China was removed.

In China, the response might be stern. It will take a long time before democracy cultivates a belief in the inherent right of self-determination of peoples. Canada only allowed Quebecois to hold the first of what would become periodic referendums on independence in 1980 after more than a decade of resistance to the idea. The UK took 80 years to accept the notion of self-determination for Northern Ireland. The experience of most countries, especially newly democratic ones, is that this belief appears only slowly. In China, long schooled to believe that Taiwan was an inalienable part of the mainland, coming to terms with the island's desire for independence will be a long-term process. At the very least, China might try to apply sanctions against Taiwan.

Even without bids for independence in Taiwan, the threat of irredentist claims from China will remain. Politicians in China may say that the loose political arrangements only provide the cover for Taiwan's quest for independence, just as the Commonwealth of Independent States provided cover for Russian politicians in asserting national unity while countries like the Ukraine and Georgia seceded.

The United States and its allies in Asia will play a crucial stabilizing role in making it clear to China's new leaders that the costs of attack on Taiwan would far outweigh potential benefits. They may also help to engender the belief in self-determination for Taiwan. Ultimately, the most that can be hoped for may be a formally independent Taiwan with perhaps some brotherly relationship to China as that between Britain and its former colonies in Canada and Australia who share consular resources and a monarch. This would be good for regional stability as it would remove the threat of war in key waterways. China would benefit politically as well as economically.

What of Tibet and Xinjiang? We left these regions under conditions of a ban on secession coupled with grants of real autonomy and the arrival of UN monitors to check on the condition of rights. We noted that even with fully implemented promises, the drive for autonomy in these regions will be strong, despite the best efforts of international leaders, their own elected governments, and of course Beijing itself. Such a drive in the period before democratic consolidation would threaten the democracy in China. It was an open-ended question about the results.

Now assume that democracy has consolidated in China, in spite of ongoing secessionist pressures in Tibet and Xinjiang. That is, suppose China is in a position like Spain, Canada, India, the Philippines, or Russia where a consolidated democracy confronts a secessionist land in its midst. How strong will secessionist strengths be in a truly democratic China? And what would be the results?

Suppose real freedom and autonomy have come to these places. Beijing may also have made many special concessions in terms of self-policing, cultural promotion and group rights policies, vetoes over constitutional changes, special fiscal transfers and control over natural resources, and much else, such as separate time zones that allow these regions to live in normal daylight hours. Democracy in China will allow many to argue that it is best for the regions to remain. In addition, proponents of union will be able to argue that on their own the regions might fall prey to theocratic political instability—highlighted by Nepal's royal family massacre in 2001—or international strategic posturing.

Tibet's government in exile has long stated that acceptable autonomy would be possible within a democratic China. Beijing could return to the liberal ideals of the 1980s under Hu Yaobang, which included a large-scale retirement of Chinese cadres in the region, the promotion of Tibetan culture, and the granting of real religious freedoms. Under an elected leadership and with the spiritual leadership of a returned Dalai Lama, Tibet could thrive, as have cultural fragments within larger states like Quebec and Tamil Nadu. The same goes for Xinjiang.

Still, there are likely to be splits within the Tibetan and Xinjiang ethnic communities on the issue of self-determination. Even with rights enhanced greatly, many people will not feel "liberated" by democracy but merely the subjects of a new colonial order. In the 1,000-member national parliament, the two Tibetan members and 14 Xinjiang representatives will be swamped. Both places will have groups arguing the merits of formal independence and statehood. Those in Tibet could argue that the region is a prime candidate for separation because, like East Timor, it has a strong national identity, a central leader, geographic unity, and global support. Whatever its modern-day softness, Chinese rule was imposed by force and kept in place by repression for decades and that alone justifies secession, they will argue. After a certain period, the ban on secession would come up and it is reasonable to assume that this would energize independence groups.

If, say, Tibet, did decide through a UN-sponsored referendum among Tibetan citizens of the PRC to become an independent states, it would be a complex affair. Negotiations with Beijing, probably sponsored by the UN, would need to resolve the boundaries of the new state, the status of Han populations there, and the ownership of extensive infrastructure and industry investments made by the PRC since 1949. The six-million odd Tibetans would also have to confront the sensitive issue of the democratizing their own nation by gently relieving the Dalai Lama of his political power.

How would China respond to such initiatives? To be sure, democracy would have lessened chauvinist attitudes toward Tibet and Xinjiang. The anti-

Western nationalism nurtured on a sense of victimization that saw any expression of Tibetan wishes as an externally generated Western conspiracy to split China would be weakened. The Marxist view, which sees ethnic identity as a result of economic deprivation, would also change. A new awareness of the financial and political costs of suppressing secession movements would also temper attitudes. As one Western scholar notes in a comment that could equally apply to Xinjiang: "China does not need Tibet, and if the Tibetans are lucky the Chinese will finally acknowledge that Tibet has become a huge and nonessential economic drain on China."[12]

But for the most part, people in China, even strong democrats, would most likely continue to feel opposed to the breakup of the country, just as nationalists in England long opposed any idea of self-determination for Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. Even if this issue is not going to sink democracy in China, it would make politics more unstable. As two Chinese scholars write: "If it cannot be resolved it will be difficult for democracy to flourish."[13] The key "equation," in the political calculus of both places then will be the balance between two dynamic factors: the extent to which improved conditions and enlightened policies in the regions moderate demands for independence; and the extent to which democratic development in China moderates hard-line attitudes toward national political unity. The more this is the case, the greater will be the overlapping area which could form the basis of a permanent solution.

The possibility of such a solution, with Tibet and Xinjiang remaining in the Chinese fold, reminds us of the nonsense of an ineluctable "clash of civilizations" that promised to tear our world asunder along ethnic and cultural lines. That never has been the main line of contention in our world, which concerns economic deprivation and political repression, not constructed and manipulated "cultural differences."[14] Just as Huntington's prediction that the Ukraine would split into a Europeanized uniate west and a Russified orthodox east was proven wrong, so too the break-away of Tibet and parts of Xinjiang is by no means inevitable. A successful democracy in China could well embrace these regions as part of a liberal multiethnic state.

A China that exercises a just and legitimate sovereignty in Tibet will be a China that all the world can celebrate. As with Tibet, so too for the rest of the country. Democracy will not be a cure-all. But it will offer hope for a resolution of many problems that by the early twenty-first century had reached a deep impasse. China's democratic future will remind us that humanity, far from being the inert victim of history and structure, can be the agent of its own better destiny.