

Politics & Diplomacy

Pockets of Flame

Communal Conflict in Indonesia

Dino Patti Djalal

Increasing communal violence has accompanied Indonesia's transition to democracy. Since the fall of Suharto in 1998 and the UN-organised referendum on independence in East Timor in August 1999, the intensity of separatist conflicts in Aceh and West Papua provinces has increased significantly. Community leaders on the island of Riau have threatened to form a separate state if Jakarta refuses to grant the province a majority share of oil revenues. Ethnic violence is tearing Maluku, long renowned as a bastion of religious tolerance, apart. In Borneo, the local Dayaks and the transmigrant Madurese are engaging in violent clashes. Additionally, minor ethnic confrontations that commonly play on religious differences have sprung up in Lombok, Flores, Medan, Lampung, Jambi, South Sulawesi, Central Sulawesi, West Kalimantan, Aru Island, and Sumbawa. Last Christmas, in an obvious attempt to provoke religious conflict, bombs were detonated in churches around the country, allegedly by an Islamic terrorist group. Communal violence in some regions has claimed thousands of human lives, brought about widespread population displacement, resulted in material destruction, contributed to economic breakdown, and hampered Indonesia's democratisation process.

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sonal.

To better understand the limits of democratization in ameliorating communal differences in Indonesia, it is important to note several significant features of Indonesia's separatist and ethnic conflicts. First, they are occurring simultaneously in many parts of the country. This is problematic for the government, which has limited numbers of police and military personnel to cover a vast, discontinuous archipelago of some 13,000 islands. Members of the police often express frustration at the fact that they simply cannot predict from which part of the country the next outburst of violence will come.

Second, no single cause explains the conflicts and why they are on the rise. Explanations include expressions of a relatively young Indonesian nationalism, economic dissatisfaction, inter-elite power play, human rights grievances, transmigration, historical animosity, and land-ownership disputes. Because each conflict situation is different, no single solution is applicable across the board.

Finally, communal violence has imposed significant human, economic, and social costs on Indonesia. It is estimated that over 1 million Indonesians have become "internally displaced persons" (IDPs) due to these conflicts. The conflict in Maluku alone has claimed approximately 4,000 lives and displaced some 400,000 people. To escape Dayak attacks, more than 60,000 Madurese fled from Sambas, West Borneo in 1999, and more recently some 70,000 more Madurese fled from Sampit, East Borneo. In West Timor, over 100,000 East Timorese refugees are still awaiting resettlement and repatriation.

Indonesia's History of Communal Conflict. Communally-based regional rebellions are nothing new in modern Indonesian history. Shortly after the formal transfer of sovereignty from the Netherlands in 1949, the young Indonesian Republic experienced the emergence of several ethnically-based rebel movements. In the Moluccas there was an attempt to estab-

Communally-based regional rebellions are nothing new in modern Indonesian history.

Third, communal violence in Indonesia entails both horizontal and vertical conflicts. Horizontal conflicts are between different ethnic groups, while vertical conflicts involve a particular ethnic group and the state. In horizontal conflicts, the authority and integrity of the state is not questioned. Alternatively, vertical conflicts come in the form of challenges to the legitimacy of state rule over a particular area which is often the case with separatist movements.

lish the Republic of South Maluku. In Aceh, Daud Beureu'eh led a movement to create a separate Islamic Acehese state. In Java, the group Darul Islam launched an armed insurrection to change the province into an Islamic state. These rebellions were all variants of vertical conflicts between the peripheries and the central government. They were also similar in that their leaders all resorted to violence to advance their goals.

For the most part, these early communal uprisings were short-lived. Although some contact and networking occurred among the rebels, a lack of transportation and communication facilities prevented these different rebel groups from establishing effective networks and political cooperation. All-out military operations by Jakarta, coupled with the lack of proper organization and broad grassroots support, soon doomed these movements to failure. Moreover, the rebellions usually collapsed with the capture of the rebel leaders. The Republic of South Maluku crumbled after the capture of members of the South Maluku government, including its leader Soumokil. The Darul Islam revolt came to an end not long after the arrest of its leader, Kartosuwiryo, in April 1962.

Apart from military solutions, former President Sukarno (1945–1966) also pursued a combination of political measures by offering political concessions, co-opting rebel leaders, promising local autonomy, granting amnesty, reorganizing regional governments, and redrawing provincial boundaries. Maluku was restored as a province in 1957, and Central Sumatra was divided into the three provinces of Jambi, Riau, and West Sumatra. In Aceh, the government made a separate peace with followers of Daud Beureu'eh, and the region, previously part of North Sumatra province, was made a "province and special area." Sukarno similarly divided Sulawesi into the four separate provinces of North, Central, South, and Southeast Sulawesi in 1964.

Like his predecessor, President Suharto (1967–1998) also used military means to quell regional uprisings. However, his handling of ethnic conflicts differed from that of President Sukarno in at least

two ways. First, Suharto opposed tinkering with political-territorial status as a way to address local grievances. When he took over in 1967, Indonesia consisted of twenty-six provinces. He maintained this territorial arrangement, only adding East Timor in 1976, until he resigned in May 1998. Indeed, in the mid-1990s Suharto was in favor of retracting the "special area" status accorded to Aceh, Yogyakarta, and Jakarta and making these areas regular provinces.

In addition, Suharto used his extensive control over the media and communications, the military, and the education system to silence dissent and promote a sense of Indonesian national identity. Suharto also used political symbolism—such as allegiance to the 1945 Constitution and the state ideology, Pancasila—to promote national conformity.¹ Even though Suharto was able to keep ethnic rebellions largely in check throughout much of his rule, horizontal ethnic violence began to surface, particularly in the Moluccas, in his last days in power.

Democratic Transition and Communal Conflict.

The most important development in Indonesia in recent years is the country's transition to democracy. Ostensibly, Indonesia is now the world's third largest democracy, after India and the United States. President B.J. Habibie, who succeeded Suharto in May 1998, launched a series of political reforms that scrapped oppressive laws and restored freedom of speech and association. The number of political parties, previously confined to only three, mushroomed to forty-eight. In June 1999, the country held its first free elections since 1955. Over 100 million voters participated, and a vocal national parliament, the DPR, is now in place.

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Indonesia's democratic transition has had several consequences for the management of communal divisions. Rural communities throughout the vast Indonesian archipelago, which contain some 65 percent of the total population, are becoming re-politicised. President Suharto had effectively de-politicised the countryside, banning political activities except during brief election campaign periods every four years. As a result, political parties—old and new—must now try to win over rural areas to secure seats in the 500-member DPR. There is no question that Indonesia's democratic stability will depend greatly on the ability of political parties to effectively establish grassroots rural support for constructive political purposes.

Ill-prepared for a highly-contested election in 1999, a number of political parties took a campaign shortcut by appealing to communal sentiments. Fortunately, despite minor skirmishes, the 1999 elections were generally peaceful. However, if the trend in rural Indonesian politics of emphasising communal differences to win votes continues, the country may see the rise of ethnic demagogues and mob rule. Under such circumstances, ethnic violence may accompany—and mar—the process of democratisation and political liberalisation in Indonesia.

Islam is increasingly becoming a political force in Indonesia's process of democratic transition. Suharto's politi-

cal order did much to curtail Islam's political influence on the national arena. Suharto managed to persuade the country's biggest Islamic organisations—Nahdatul Ulama with 30 million followers and Muhammadiyah with 20 million members—to stay out of "practical politics." During the 1999 elections, however, numerous Islamic political parties came to the fore. Nahdatul Ulama became the basis for the formation of a new political party, the National Awakening Party (PKB), while Muhammadiyah's leader Amin Rais formed the National Mandate Party (PAN). Scores of smaller political parties with Islamic platforms also emerged. In fact, Abdurrahman Wahid became president after gaining the majority vote in the People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) through a coalition of Islamic political parties. The rise of Islam as a political force will likely be a long-term feature of Indonesian politics. Although, how it will mix with ethnic politics remains to be seen.

The good news is that the Islamic parties who won the Parliamentary seats in the 1999 elections are moderates and embrace religious tolerance. Concomitantly, however, a number of Islamic groups—some more militant and less tolerant—have surfaced in Indonesia's society. The rise of political Islam is of particular significance in areas where religious difference is a major factor in politics. For example, the Laskar Jihad

Islamic militia from Java has taken part in communal conflicts between Muslim and Christian communities in Maluku. At a recent meeting in May 2001, certain leaders of Nahdlatul Ulama threatened to incite the province of East Java to secede from Indonesia if the MPR impeached President Wahid.

Equally pertinent to Indonesia's ability to deal with ethnic conflicts is the inadvertent impact of democratization and political liberalization on military effectiveness. The Indonesian military (TNI) today does not have the leverage that it did in dealing with ethnic conflicts during the Sukarno and Suharto years. Recent political reforms have separated the police and the military, which were previously part of a common armed forces structure, with the police focusing on law and order, including issues of internal unrest. Unfortunately, the police lack experience and training in dealing with the heavily-armed insurrection in Aceh and the intense communal violence in places like Sampit or Ambon. On the other hand, the military, eager to reform its battered image, is reluctant to act unless called to do so by the police or by the political leadership. One high-ranking general in the TNI recently stated that flawed procedures for engaging the military to quell communal violence are causing confusion and even delay in effectively dealing with this situation.

There is also the danger that the both the military and the police are overextended. The 270,000 army, 47,000 navy, 23,000 air force, and 190,000 police personnel are insufficient to deal with the many security problems that plague Indonesia. Military leaders also complain that they are unable to react swiftly to communal violence, particularly in the outer islands, due to the

ongoing U.S. military embargo that deprives the TNI of spare parts for aircraft, ships, and other means of transportation (although, spareparts for C-130 Hercules have been made available through commercial sales). In cases of intense communal conflict, such as in Maluku and Borneo, the ability to conduct speedy, forceful, and sustained intervention is crucial to separate the warring communities and prevent the spread of violence to other areas.

The hectic agenda for democratic reform also means that ethnic conflicts, especially in remote areas, often do not get the attention they deserve. In times of constitutional battles and power struggles, for example, politicians vying for their survival tend to be preoccupied with events in Jakarta. At other times, ethnic conflicts become the subject of partisan political quarrels. Such situations distract the government in Jakarta and detract from its capacity to deal with communal violence across the Indonesian archipelago in a sustained, coherent, and consistent manner.

Finally, there is the issue of political and economic decentralization, a process that began under former President B.J. Habibie. At the heart of decentralization is enhancing the role of provinces, regencies, and municipal districts in national politics by granting greater power and autonomy to local governments.³ Although there are those who expect decentralization to dampen local grievances, others warn that this process could exacerbate communal differences by creating disparate levels of socio-economic growth between resource-rich and resource-poor areas. The process of decentralization, if mismanaged, can create new sources of tension within Indonesia.

Dealing with Communal Conflict.

To contend effectively with communal conflict, a number of steps must be taken. In the case of horizontal conflicts, making resources available to support timely and effective responses to communal confrontations across the Indonesian archipelago is essential. Ameliorating conflicts between Christians and Muslims in Maluku or between Dayaks and Madurese in Borneo requires swift law enforcement measures to end violence, augmented by efficient community re-building efforts. Law enforcement forces have to act quickly to contain the situation and ensure that violence does not escalate. In particular, there needs to be quick separation of the warring groups and containment of the conflict to ensure that it does not spread to other areas. The longer it takes the government to react, the greater the casualties and damage caused by communal violence. After conditions have stabilized, there also needs to be efficient implementation of community rebuilding efforts, reconciliation, humanitarian assistance, and refugee repatriation.

Vertical conflicts between an ethnic group and the state, such as in Aceh and West Irian, usually require substantial investment in finding formalised political solutions. This necessitates negotiations between the Jakarta government and separatist groups to find a peaceful, negotiated political settlement. In most cases, this solution will take the form of self-government schemes, such as the establishment of "special areas" or "autonomous areas." In the case of Aceh, for example, Foreign Minister Alwi Shihab has stated that the Acehnese "can have everything under the sun short of independence." The government is now trying to draft an autonomy law designed

specifically for Aceh, which would be different from a national autonomy law. A draft autonomy law designed specifically for West Irian is also in the works. In both cases, the main challenge is to come up with self-government arrangements that can gain the consent of the local populations. Since both Aceh and West Irian are rich in natural resources, an attractive resources-sharing scheme will be critical to the credibility of any autonomy plan for these provinces.

The nationalism that has emerged alongside democratisation and political liberalisation is also a crucial factor behind the shaping of Jakarta's response to ethnic separatism. Accompanying the recent intensification of communal conflict is the rise of nationalist sentiment stemming from a growing sense of insecurity about Indonesia's national integrity. The concept of national territory is critical to Indonesia's sense of nationalism, and Indonesians tend to zealously guard the status quo. The current consensus among most Indonesians is that the territory of the Indonesian Republic as originally laid out by the founding fathers—namely the region covered by the former Netherlands East Indies—must be kept intact at all costs. The political parties that make up the DPR are in agreement on this issue, and Indonesian politicians will long remember that B.J. Habibie lost the presidency in 1999 chiefly because he lost East Timor. Hence, Jakarta's solutions to ethnic separatism must take place within the context of a united Indonesia. This means that Jakarta has to rule out an East Timor-style referendum in Aceh and West Irian.

The role of international assistance in Indonesia's vertical and horizontal conflicts is also limited. In the case of East

Timor, because its status was internationally disputed, the Indonesian government was willing to accept the mediation of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in its negotiations with Portugal to find a political settlement. However, as there is wide understanding that the situations in Aceh and West Irian are domestic issues, international mediation does not seem likely. Aceh is one of the few cases in which third-party assistance comes into play. Since 1999 the government has accepted the help of a Geneva-based NGO, the Henry Dunant Center, which acts as a facilitator (not a mediator) to establish contact and dialogue with elements of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). Subsequent talks led to an agreement on a humanitarian pause in fighting between the government and the GAM, but a political settlement remains elusive.

Meanwhile, the introduction of foreign peacekeepers or "monitoring forces" in horizontal conflicts such as in Maluku or Borneo is unrealistic and may further complicate the situation by unnecessarily drawing outside parties into a conflict in which they have little reason for involvement. For the time being, the Indonesian government has been content to have the international community support its national unity, facilitate peaceful negotiations, and provide humanitarian assistance.

Democratic Decay? Indonesia's predicament raises questions about the efficacy of democratization and political liberalisation in coping with communal violence within borders. The advent of democracy in Indonesia appears to fulfill Samuel Huntington's ominous prediction that the "expansion of democracy to a wide-range of non-western soci-

eties can lead to the rise of political leaders and movements that appeal to indigenous nationalist, religious and often anti-Western sentiments that increase the likelihood of conflict."³¹

Through Indonesia's experience, it is clear that democracy does not necessarily end ethnic conflicts, in the same way that democracy does not end corruption, poverty, and human rights violations. Although Indonesia's ethnic conflicts are still politically manageable, they will take time to settle, and democracy has little active role to play in these processes. The threat of national disintegration, while real, does not seem to be a serious possibility, at least for now. Despite the regularity of ethnic conflicts in Indonesia, it is erroneous to conclude that the country is on the point of disintegration. In fact, the majority of Indonesia's 200 million population resides peacefully in areas not devastated by communal violence.

Perhaps the real source of concern is that the cumulative impact of communal violence leads not necessarily to Indonesia's disintegration, but to political and social decay. Ethnic conflicts damage Indonesia's longstanding policy of multiculturalism as embodied in the national motto "Unity in Diversity." Communal conflicts detract from the capacity of the body politic to move on with the consolidation of democracy consolidation by retarding the growth of civil society. Communal violence is also detrimental to democratic development because it encourages political extremism and leaves little room for tolerance. This signals the breakdown of the ability of democratic institutions to peacefully channel and settle grievances. Such problems can prove lethal to a fragile society in the midst of transformation.

The longer these ethnic and religious conflicts continue, the more Indonesia's democracy, security, prosperity, and unity will suffer. Ultimately, rather than pushing blindly for democratization, it

is critical to first tackle the evils of communal strife in order to establish an environment conducive to building a stable foundation for long-lasting political reform and change in Indonesia.

NOTES

1 Pancasila is a concept first described by President Sukarno in a speech in June 1945. It is composed of five principles: Nationalism, Humanism or Internationalism, Representative Government, Social Justice, and Monotheism. All organizations in Indonesia have been required to adopt Pancasila as their guiding ideology.

2 Ryaas Rasyid, "The policy of decentralization in Indonesia," paper presented at a United States-Indonesia Society (USINDO) conference, Washington, D.C.,

23 March 2001.

3 Samuel Huntington, "Culture, Power, and Democracy," *Globes, Race, and Democracy*, eds. Marc Plattner and Alexander Smoler (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000): 12.

4 Robert Cooper, "Integration and Disintegration," *Globes, Race, and Democracy*, eds. Marc Plattner and Alexander Smoler (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000): 31.

WEIGHT of History

The Chinese Popular Reform Movement

The thought of democratic reform in China invokes highly emotional images—from the mass of students in Tiananmen Square to one man standing up to a column of tanks in a Beijing street. The tradition of modern Chinese political reform movements, however, goes back more than a century to the Self-Strengthening Movement of the 1880s. These reform movements have provided inspiration for some of the most important events in recent Chinese history, from the 1911 Revolution to the May Fourth Movement and the Communist victory in 1949.

Most recent in the line of public demands for reform in China is the 1989 Tiananmen Movement. Also known as the June Fourth Movement, it is comprised of a series of protests in Beijing's Tiananmen Square and elsewhere in urban China. Largely led by university students demanding government efficiency, an end to corruption, and democracy, the movement began in late April 1989 and lasted until its violent suppression by authorities on June 4, 1989.

One afternoon in late winter, Wáng Dán, one of the most prominent student leaders of the Tiananmen Movement, sat down to speak with the *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*. Wáng Dán shared with us his feelings about his experiences and political change in modern Chinese history, as well as his aspirations for democracy and reform in China.

Tiananmen student leader Wang Dan puts the struggle for democracy in historical perspective.

***** In the collection of the poems you wrote in prison, *My Solitary Journey in the Cold* (*Wo Zai Hanfeng Zhong Duang*), and in *Wang Dan's Prison Memoirs* (*Wang Dan Yu Zhong Eshiyi-ni*), you display little bitterness about your imprisonment. How did you overcome the feelings of resentment most associate with such experiences?

***** I feel that I exist within a larger process of social change. In this process, some people must pay a price for reform. It is not because I was unlucky that I was incarcerated. I do not feel that imprisonment was something targeted at me personally; rather, facing persecution for pursuing reform is a natural part of historical change. If I were not imprisoned, it would definitely have been someone else—if not someone else then it would have been me. In a sense, I deserved to be in prison. My selected vocation is to push for change in China. With this choice comes a necessary price.

***** As you were growing up, who most influenced your thoughts and beliefs?

***** The greatest influence on my thinking essentially came from both my parents, but primarily from my mother. They are both graduates of Beijing University and were influenced by the free flow of thought and intellectual discourse at the University. In bringing this experience home, they affected my beliefs about democracy. As I grew older, some of my professors at Beijing University also played a formative role in my thinking—people like the famous liberal intellectual, Fang Lishi.

***** Many great historical figures have emerged from the history of Chinese popular reform movements, from the

Hundred Day Reform, the May Fourth Movement in 1919, and even the Democracy Wall Movement in 1979. Is there anyone among such figures that you find particularly admirable or influential in formulating your own beliefs about democratic reform?

***** In the course of history, I find many of my esteemed predecessors highly admirable and I respect all of them greatly. All of them, in their collective and individual struggles for reform weigh heavily on my beliefs. Hence, I find it extremely difficult to separate any one person from this group of great people.

***** In saying that you have to pay a personal price on behalf of society for social reform, you echo the words and thoughts of nineteenth-century reformer Tan Sitong. Does he have any influence on your own effort to seek reform in China?

***** In choosing not to flee the country after the failure to reform the Qing (Ch'ing) dynasty in the 1890s, Tan Sitong provides a model to many people involved in the Tiananmen incident. There exist people in the Tiananmen Movement who choose to follow consciously in Tan Sitong's footsteps. By remaining in China, this group chooses to share its fate with the country and its people. This includes myself.

***** The process of economic reform in China is bringing substantial benefits to the common people. What can democracy offer to the average person that the current reforms cannot?

***** Most fundamentally, a person in society needs liberty and respect as a

human being. A totalitarian system cannot offer either. Democratic reform can provide people the liberty and respect they deserve. Additionally, a democratic polity can bring a multitude of other benefits which foster social and personal development—but most important is still liberty and respect.

***** But democratic development often results in instability. How can democratic reform in China provide and guarantee the stability that safeguards the interests of the common people?

***** I feel that it is impossible for a totalitarian system to be transformed into a democracy completely without some kind of instability. We cannot be too idealistic in pursuing reform and expect a completely stable process of change. In some countries undergoing such change, such as Taiwan, there is the rise of social and political instability. I feel these are necessary symptoms of transformation.

If we compare systems, I feel that there will come a point where people will choose change and its accompanying volatility rather than continuing to live under a totalitarian system. You can take Russia as an example. Despite several elections and the presence of great instability, the people have not returned the Communist Party to power. Evidently the people prefer to have some unsteadiness in their society than to revert to totalitarian rule. From the choice of the people, it is clear that some instability is an essential price that they are willing to pay.

***** Over the past 150 years, the search for reform has led China to experience much political upheaval, greatly harming the Chinese people. Yet you say that

instability is necessary for political change. How do you then propose reform while still attending to the needs of the people?

***** The only way to achieve stable political reform is if the ruling authority—currently the Chinese Communist government—initiates reform. If the basic social trend is to support reform, but the government resists, then there will be more political volatility. This is unavoidable. In comparison, the relatively stable transition to democracy in Taiwan is because the Kuomintang authorities accepted and adapted to social changes and did not use violence to resist political reform. Therefore, whether political change is stable really depends on the rulers of a country.

***** Then do you think that recent government promotion of village elections in China is a positive development?

***** I accept that village elections are a step in the right direction. Village elections have no negative implications. On the other hand, I am highly skeptical as to whether the village elections we witness today can bring about real democratic change. The government should bring elections to the cities and towns as well. This will give ordinary people experience with democracy and elections. Why has the government limited elections strictly to the villages? I am highly suspicious of the true motivations behind the government's implementation of village elections. I do not think that the government really wants to forward democratic reform and change in China. However, I admit that having village elections is better than not having them.

***** If you see change from the top as essential to stable political change, then what direction do you think political reform should take in China today?

***** I think there has to be coordination between the top and bottom, but the top should initiate the changes. The more enlightened individuals in the leadership should begin to push for reform. However, without pressure from the bottom, it will be almost impossible for enlightened members within the government to advocate reform. Hence, political change in China will most likely emerge as public pressure forces the top leadership in the government to begin changing from within. The process of political change requires both the top and bottom levels of society to act.

***** How can the democratic reformers encourage enlightened members of the leadership to begin reform?

***** There are two main factors behind getting reform started from within the government. First, I think popular pressure will build to a flash-point where any small issue will become a big one for society and incite social unrest. At that time, the government will have to reconsider its policies. It then depends on whether social pressure can coalesce into a powerful, coherent force to push the governing authorities to implement reform. This is what we members of the opposition need to encourage—the fostering of social and public pressure to bring about change in China.

***** With economic reform in China, the focus of common citizens appears to be on attaining prosperity. Are they will-

ing to sacrifice their newly found wealth for democratic reform?

***** With China's economic development, conflicts of interest are becoming an important feature of our time. The process of redistributing national wealth has compromised many popular interests. However, this increases the desire of the people for political reform. It has been more than ten years since the June Fourth incident, but you can still see the people's determination for reform. The degree to which people are demanding reform is increasing.

***** You have traveled widely after being exiled from China and visited, among other places, Taiwan and Hong Kong. What lessons do you think the democratic movement in China can learn from the experiences of other attempts to bring about political change?

***** The most instructive case is Taiwan. The current ruling party in Taiwan, the Democratic Progressive Party, developed first as a democratic movement. Taiwan has a cultural background that is similar to Mainland China. Democracy in Taiwan presents a starting point for political change in China. It is possible to look at the road to democracy in Taiwan and develop options and lessons for China that we can absorb.

The success of democracy in Taiwan—the actual peaceful transfer of power—provides encouragement to the Mainland. People on the Mainland will look at Taiwan and think, "If this can happen in Taiwan, it should be able to happen on the Mainland too."

The other case is Hong Kong. Hong Kong retains its freedom of the press. The ability of the press to write freely has

a great impact on political thinking on the Mainland, particularly the neighboring southern coastal region of China. This area is now the most politically active area in China. Clearly, the free press in nearby Hong Kong benefits the Mainland.

***** Many people claim that the Taiwanese experience is not applicable to the Mainland. Taiwan exhibits many differences, least of all in terms of scale and population size, but also in terms of its political system and history. Do you think this is true?

***** No two mandarin oranges are exactly alike. If even mandarin oranges cannot be completely alike, then it is not possible for two countries to be exactly alike. The existence of physical differences, however, does not mean that experiences are not similar. From my observation, the experiences of Taiwan and China are very similar. Although disparities exist in terms of territorial and population size, I feel that the two sides have much more in common than not. Both have the same cultural background, the same kind of totalitarian rule—the Kuomintang and Communist Party are ruling parties of one nature—and the same kind of social opposition from intellectuals and the population. Similarities vastly outweigh differences. China can learn much from Taiwan's experience.

***** In many cases where countries embarked on attempts to bring about democracy, such as in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, politicians have tried to manipulate popular outcry and demands for selfish personal gain. How can China avoid such a situation?

***** The rise of selfish, opportunistic politicians is unavoidable. As long as there is politics, as long as there is human interaction, such problems are inescapable. However, the ability of a democracy to self-correct is the best means to balance against the selfish ambitions of such people.

***** At the same time, history contains many examples of political movements that began as democratic, but resulted eventually in authoritarianism. In pushing for democratic change, how can China avoid such an outcome?

***** There are two answers to this question. The first rests on the political system. There are constant improvements in democratic systems of governance. There are many examples of such experiences and lessons that I am sure are evident to everyone. It is possible then to learn from these examples and avoid the rise of authoritarianism. Secondly, there needs to be a reconstruction of political culture. Changes to the concepts of national identity and sense of self are necessary in China. Such a result is possible through education and the spread of democratic ideals that aim to change political culture and thinking in order to reject anyone who tries to manipulate the system for personal ambition. Respectively, these two approaches provide short-term and long-term solutions to avoiding the rise of authoritarianism from political change.

***** With respect to political culture, however, many observers say that the Chinese people cannot live under an open system, that Chinese society requires some form of patriarchal authority for order and development. How do you respond to such statements?

***** Such an argument has no empirical basis. We observe in Taiwan the acceptance of all kinds of opinions and political parties. There is such accommodation in Taiwan that I saw students go to class wearing uniforms of the Chinese People's Liberation Army. As long as a good system is established, there can be peaceful accommodation of vastly different views. On the Mainland, only

Gong movement falls within this greater historical pattern?

***** These movements all relate to a larger social reality. Falun Gong is a signal that there are substantial contradictions and conflicts in contemporary Chinese society. Falun Gong is only one representation of such developments. The prominence and influence that Falun Gong has

There needs to be a reconstruction of political culture. Changes to the concepts of national identity and sense of self are necessary.

the realization of a democratic system can bring about the emergence of a political culture that is accommodating and willing to accept differences.

***** There is criticism that the movement to democracy in Taiwan has resulted in political, social, and economic uncertainty that has harmed average citizens. Are such features unavoidable in the development of a democratic polity?

***** They represent a stage in such development that is inevitable. People need to give the new government time. After some time, a democratic system will necessarily make an adjustment towards greater stability.

***** News of the Falun Gong movement and its repression by the Chinese government has recently abounded. In Chinese history, the rise of quasi-religious sects, such as the Taiping Rebellion and the White Lotus Sect, represents the moral bankruptcy and weakness of the central government. Do you think that the Falun

today stems from the dysfunctional methods the Chinese Communists are using to suppress the movement. In reality, the Falun Gong phenomenon is not something that has only developed in the past year or two—it has existed for many years. The rise of Falun Gong is the result of the authorities not knowing how to deal with new problems, contradictions, and conflicts of interest in better ways.

***** In suppressing Falun Gong as well as the short-lived China Democratic Party and the Tiananmen Movement, the Chinese government shows an unwillingness to accept pressures for social change. How can the democratic movement in China overcome such an obstacle?

***** I do not think that this is a problem of the democratic movement. It is a problem of the government, and is the real danger in China today. The rulers simply do not know how to respond to a rapidly changing social environment. They do not know how to face the current situation in new ways. The government only knows how to use old oppressive

methods to address new social pressures. It is up to the government to solve this issue. The democratic movement can do nothing in this respect.

***** You mentioned earlier that you hope reform comes from the top. If it is not possible to communicate to the government how it should change, how is top-down reform possible? How can the democratic movement encourage the government to change?

***** There are two courses that the democratic movement can adopt to help bring about reform within the government. First, we need to maintain pressure for change and hope that the more enlightened members of the government have the opportunity to raise their voices. Second, the democratic opposition movement needs to have its own views and proposals for political change that are peaceful, open, and enlightened.

In particular, the opposition movement needs foresight in considering and discussing China's future development. It needs to present a different set of goals for the country. Only with a set of objectives that is different from the Communist Party can the people truly have a choice.

I believe the ultimate goal of democracy is to provide freedom for the people. The most important freedom in China is allowing the common people to enjoy political liberty. With only the Chinese Communist Party, there is no freedom to choose. The main aim of the democratic movement should be to provide freedom of choice, to give the people a set of different options. Only then can ordinary people have the opportunity to choose. Hopefully, both the opposition movement and enlightened members of gov-

ernment will have the same vision for political change, allowing the two sides to come together. I hope the democratic opposition movement can achieve these two objectives.

***** How do you propose to achieve these goals without unleashing another political upheaval upon the Chinese people and being accused of collusion with a corrupt regime?

***** The democratic opposition movement needs come together and produce constructive plans for change and for addressing social problems. This means that we need to come up with concrete proposals and political platforms. We must show that we are very different from the government. This is essential to establishing a strong opposition movement and, I believe, more useful than inciting the public to revolt, riot, or demonstrate. Nonetheless, we must recognize that the choice ultimately rests with the people whether they choose the Communist Party or the opposition.

***** How then does the democratic opposition movement intend to bring its message to the people? After all, the Kuomintang ascendance in the 1920s and the Chinese Communist rise to power both highlight the importance of organized, mass popular movements.

***** The Communist Party claims that they are the vanguard of the proletariat; they lead and organize the people. The members of the democratic movement are merely trying to further the rights of the people through our individual pursuit of rights. We are an example for the people, an experiment for the people to see and learn from.

We are not saying that we should organize the people and lead a revolution. As leaders of the democratic movement, we are seeking our own rights, doing what we think should be done, seeking our personal freedom, saying what we want to say. We are showing the people what can be done. We are not forcing them to follow us.

***** Over the next two years, the Chinese Communist Party and government will

the enlightened faction and new leaders in government, but they were ultimately and severely disappointed. How is the current situation any different? How can you avoid a similar outcome?

***** I think the situation is not much different. Although I have hope and look optimistically toward the government and leadership, I accept that changes may not occur. There is always hope and there is always disappointment. This is a recur-

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experience a generational change in leadership. What effect do you think this event will have on democratic reform in China?

***** In principle, the change in generational leadership should bring hope. However, it is not enough to simply hope that generational change will bring about significant steps towards reforming the political system. Actually, the leadership change offers both the international community and Chinese society a chance to push the government towards reform. If substantial pressure for change exists, it will provide the new generation of leaders with an environment conducive to reform and will bring about change. Personally, I look at the next generation of Chinese leaders with a definite amount of hope and optimism.

***** During the Hundred Days Reform, reformers such as Kang Youwei and Liang Qichao also placed great hope in

ring historical pattern. Personally, if I am disappointed, I will not feel too surprised. Nonetheless, I cannot stop hoping because of the possibility of failure and disappointment. This is history.

***** Many have asked you what obstacles the democratic movement in China faces. On the contrary, we are curious to know what you see as conducive to the emergence of democracy in contemporary China.

***** I think the answer rests in the existence of human nature. All people desire freedom and the ability to pursue their dreams. A totalitarian system wants to suppress freedom. This presents a basic social contradiction. This conflict of interest is beneficial to the democratic movement. Everyone wants freedom, including people in the Communist Party. The overall situation is to our advantage.